

ADOT seeking ideas for future of transportation

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The Arizona Department of Transportation is trying to think beyond the traditional way it plans roadway projects based on the money it expects to receive.

And it's asking the community to help by sharing its ideas and vision for ways to move people and goods in the years to come as the state's population growth outpaces its transportation systems.

"We are facing challenges with personal and freight traffic," Richard Travis, ADOT deputy director, told the Yuma City Council during its work session Tuesday evening.

He issued an invitation to city officials and the general public to help shape the future of transportation in the community and the state by participating in a workshop the agency is holding in Yuma today.

The workshop will be offered twice - from 1:30 to 4 p.m. or from 6 to 8:30 p.m. - at the Pivot Point Conference Center, Yuma's newly completed conference center along the riverfront off Madison Avenue and 1st Street. The same information will be presented at both sessions.

The workshop is one of a series ADOT is holding around the state as part of the Building a Quality Arizona long-range transportation planning effort.

Travis noted that Arizona has been experiencing rapid growth with a population that is projected to reach 16 million people by 2050.

"Our transportation systems are at or near capacity," he said.

At the same time, he said, the traditional funding source for roadway projects - the Highway User Revenue Fund - is in decline as people turn to more fuel-efficient vehicles, alternative-fuel vehicles or mass transit as a result of rising gas prices and the movement toward greener transportation.

According to The Associated Press, ADOT reported that the money flowing into the fund totaled \$428 million for the first four months of the fiscal year. That's a 2.5 percent drop from last year and nearly 4 percent below the expected amount.

"Traditionally we build on a five- and 10-year plan by the money we expect," Travis told the city council. "What we don't do is look beyond finances to what is actually needed."

That's why the agency has embarked on the Building a Quality Arizona framework studies of each section of the state, he said. "The whole purpose is to open dialogue on how people want transportation to operate."

Travis noted that people are first being asked what they want for transportation, and second how they want to pay for it.