



The Daily Courier

Yavapai County's News and Information Center Since 1882

ADOT study aims to get ahead of future transportation challenges

By Cindy Barks

The Daily Courier

Wednesday, November 19, 2008

PRESCOTT - When it comes to methods of getting around in the Prescott area, RoJean Madsen sees public transit as a crucial piece of the puzzle.

Indeed, it was her strong interest in transit that prompted Madsen to venture out Monday night for the Arizona Department of Transportation's latest round of public presentations on its long-range "Building a Quality Arizona" (BQAZ) study.

"We have a lot of problems here with people who can't drive," Madsen said after participating in a group discussion. "I really wish we had more public transit options."

Madsen was not alone in her views about transit. At an earlier round of BQAZ public presentations in March, the need for mass transit was a common theme among the attendees.

Consultants took the earlier feedback into consideration when compiling three northern Arizona map scenarios, which they presented at this week's meetings.

While one of the scenarios focuses on the use of vehicles as the primary mode of transportation, another looks extensively at transit methods, including intercity buses, passenger rail, and local transit services.

The third scenario targets "focused growth," which would depend on mixed land uses to foster a "non-auto dependent lifestyle."

ADOT Public Information Officer Bill Williams explained that the three scenarios represent "broad-brushed strokes," in an attempt to come up with transportation solutions for as far in the future as 2050.

"This is an opportunity to dream a little bit," Williams said.

James Zumpf, planning supervisor for ADOT, told the 20 or so residents who turned out for the Monday evening presentation that BQAZ was the state's attempt to answer a basic question: "How do we get in front of some of these issues our state is going to face?"

The study is projecting that Arizona's population will more than double in the next four decades, Zumpf said - from about 6 million in 2005 to more than 14 million in 2050.

More specifically, consultant Brent Cain told his group, "We are hearing that this Prescott region could grow to one million people (by 2050). Now, do we get reactive or proactive?"

But concerns arose among the residents about some of the study's basic premises.

Gary Beverly of the Sierra Club, for instance, challenged the consultants about projections of heavy population

growth in the area northwest of Chino Valley and south of Interstate 40.

"Where are the resources going to come from to support that kind of growth?" Beverly asked, pointing to the network of conceptual new roadways in the area. "If there's not water to develop...why put a road up there?"

Consultants took scores of comments Monday evening, as well as at an afternoon Prescott presentation, and plan to compile those issues into their next round of planning.

Similar meetings are also taking place in other northern Arizona communities.

Zumpf said a third round of public presentations would take place in spring 2009.

The statewide BOAZ study, which kicked off in May 2007, involves four different consultant firms - each handling a different region of the state - as well as a fifth firm to compile it all together.

The Arizona Transportation Board earlier allocated \$7 million to cover the cost of the study, according to ADOT.

Contact the reporter at cbarks@prescottaz.com

Related Links

Content © 2008 Daily Courier/dCourier.com
Software © 1998-2008 **1up! Software**, All Rights Reserved