



Goodyear OKs paying \$2.1M to speed I-10 widening

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The Goodyear City Council pledged Monday to pay \$2.1 million to speed up the Interstate 10 widening.

Goodyear is the first of three Southwest Valley cities to vote to share the expansion costs. The Avondale and Litchfield Park city councils will vote next week whether to pick up the costs, too.

"We are sending a strong message, and it's a message of integrity," Goodyear Mayor Jim Cavanaugh said after the 6-0 vote. "We feel morally committed to pay because we said we would."

Vice Mayor Rob Antoniak abstained from voting because of a potential conflict of interest.

The three Southwest Valley cities had been on the hook for nearly \$10 million to fast-track the expansion. The Legislature set aside \$10 million to offset the acceleration costs, but the Maricopa Association of Governments regional council last week decided the cities would get only \$6 million of the reimbursement money directly.

Avondale and Litchfield Park wanted the full \$10 million to funnel back to the cities. Without the full reimbursement, the mayors of the two cities have been unsure their councils would agree to pay \$1.4 million and \$110,000, respectively.

Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers, who came to the Goodyear council meeting Monday evening, said she's concerned about her residents paying to expand a federal highway.

"I'm disappointed they are settling," she said after the vote, referring to the Goodyear council. "I think we should've stuck together."

Meanwhile, Valley cities have been talking about reimbursing Goodyear, Avondale and Litchfield Park more than \$6 million.

Rogers would support a compromise in which the three cities receive \$8 million and therefore are responsible for a smaller portion of the costs.

"Avondale, Litchfield Park: I, too, was disappointed the entire \$10 million was not approved," Goodyear Councilwoman Georgia Lord said during Monday's meeting, addressing Rogers. "I feel it's irresponsible of me not to support this (agreement). I beseech Avondale, Litchfield Park to support this reimbursement."

If they drop out, Cavanaugh said he would ask other cities - such as Phoenix, Scottsdale and Tempe - to chip in. But the mayor, who also serves as MAG's chairman, acknowledged that would be a tough sell.

The expansion project would widen I-10 between Loop 101 and Sarival Avenue, making the freeway five lanes in each direction for much of the way. Now, the freeway narrows to three, then two lanes in each direction in the Southwest Valley.

If construction isn't accelerated, the project won't start until 2011.