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Phoenix to pay for I-10 rail study

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Phoenix agreed Wednesday to fund transit studies that could speed the addition of rail lines to Interstate 10 and carve a new path for a light-rail extension to Glendale.

The Phoenix City Council voted unanimously to advance Metro \$6 million to study the 11-mile freeway transit corridor between about 83rd and Central avenues.

The acceleration could lead to freeway trains as early as 2015. Expanded transit options probably will come as a relief to beleaguered commuters on I-10, where traffic has increased 86 percent in the past 10 years.

"Ultimately, light rail or any other public transit system doesn't work unless it's truly regional," said Greg Stanton, a Phoenix councilman.

The Phoenix council also approved making a \$100,000 contribution to a study of three potential transit routes in Glendale.

Maricopa County's current regional transportation plan would connect Glendale to the 20-mile starter line now under construction with an extension running through the city's downtown.

But that route fell into disfavor after the opening of University of Phoenix Stadium and the Westgate Center. Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs and business leaders have since endorsed a route that would connect visitors to Westgate and the sports complex.

The original route, stadium route and a route serving Arizona State University West will all be considered in the eight-month study. The study will help Glendale and the Maricopa Association of Governments decide which route to pursue, said Marty McNeil, a Metro spokeswoman.

Phoenix chose to support the study because of the effect the chosen path will have on its own transit users, officials said.

"It impacts our community, too, so we want to be involved in how they get where they want to go," Hyatt said.

Glendale will pay the remaining \$150,000 to fund the study. Scruggs was traveling Wednesday and could not be reached for comment.

The extension is scheduled to open in 2017.