

Southwest Valley cities strike deal on I-10 widening

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Goodyear and Avondale on Thursday struck a deal to divvy up their shares of the Interstate 10 widening acceleration.

Litchfield Park, the third city that needs to agree, meets tonight.

The cities are expected to owe \$2.7 million for the acceleration. Under the compromise deal, which lawyers were still hammering out Thursday morning, Goodyear will pick up the heftiest chunk: \$1.85 million.

That's more than what Goodyear had thought the city's share should be, but less than what Avondale and Litchfield Park had proposed.

The agreement also would require Avondale to pitch in \$760,000 and Litchfield Park to pay about \$60,000.

"If we fight it, we delay I-10 by a couple more months," Goodyear Mayor Jim Cavanaugh said Thursday morning. "That is inexcusable and unacceptable."

The state Legislature this year earmarked \$10 million to offset interests costs related to the acceleration of the I-10 widening between Loop 101 and Sarival Avenue.

But the Maricopa Association of Governments decided the cities should be reimbursed \$7 million, leaving them to come up with the remaining funds - \$2.7 million - themselves.

In addition to MAG and the three cities, the State Transportation Board has to sign off on the \$10 million allocation. The board called a meeting about I-10 acceleration funding for Friday.

In special City Council meetings, Goodyear approved the deal 6-0, and Avondale, 4-0.

"It's still not a bad deal," Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers said. "You know, when all are not happy, then it's usually a good compromise."

Arriving at the compromise

Goodyear thought the \$2.7 million obligation should have been split up based on how many miles of I-10 runs through the cities. Under that plan, Goodyear, with the most miles, would have paid \$1.6 million. Avondale would have paid \$1 million, and Litchfield Park, which doesn't touch the freeway but is a partner because of proximity, would have picked up \$80,000.

But Avondale and Litchfield Park said they lobbied MAG to get \$7 million, up from \$6 million that MAG had approved earlier. They said Goodyear was content to get the smaller sum.

So Avondale and Litchfield Park wanted to divide that extra \$1 million only between themselves. Under

that scenario, Goodyear would have owed about \$2 million, with Avondale picking up \$640,000 and Litchfield Park paying about \$50,000.

The compromise struck Thursday focuses on that extra \$1 million. Half will be divided under Goodyear's calculations, and the other half will go only to Avondale and Litchfield Park.

"I just want to see the bickering end and the project to move on," Goodyear Councilwoman Joanne Osborne said. "For years, we've had great regionalism. I don't want to see that slaughtered.

"If we would've voted no on this, months of delays would have occurred, and none of us want that."

Rogers of Avondale said that despite hard feelings, that mindset can't linger.

"We share borders, we have to" put the bad feelings aside, she said. "We've got to work together. I was recently elected to another four years, and I expect to be working with them for the next four years, so we have to put this behind us and move on."

The fast-tracked I-10 expansion puts the project four years ahead of schedule on a narrow stretch of the freeway that becomes a parking lot during rush hour.

Upcoming meetings:

- The Litchfield Park City Council meets at 7 tonight at City Hall, 214 W. Wigwam Blvd.
- The State Transportation Board meets at 1 p.m. Friday at the Arizona Department of Transportation auditorium, 206 S. 17th Ave., Phoenix. The only agenda item is the I-10 project.