

Northeast AZ - Local leaders address region's transportation challenges

By **Arizona Rural Headlines Examiner**, Trudy Schuett
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Public Works Director Homero Vela (L), County Manager James Jayne (center) and White Mountain Publishing editor Greg Tock (far R corner) spoke to regional transportation issues and possible solutions at the Arizona Town Hall meeting at JDz Black Bull on September 22, 2009. Navajo County photo

SHOW LOW — Concerned by the strain of growth on the region's transportation system, local leaders gathered on Tuesday to discuss transportation issues and possible solutions with Arizona Town Hall President Tara Jackson. The meeting, hosted by the White Mountain Rotary Club, included representatives from Navajo County, Gila County, White Mountain Publishing Company, Show Low schools, the Show Low police

department, the City of Show Low and the Town of Eagar.

"Arizona Town Hall is a think tank for Arizona's leaders," Jackson said. "Today we get local leaders in a room to talk about transportation issues and come up with some solutions. This is what makes Arizona Town Hall so unique: our goal to bring voices together and build bridges between different parts of the state to create statewide solutions."

Arizona Town Hall is an independent, non-profit membership organization that identifies critical issues facing Arizona, creates a forum for education and exploration of the topic and fosters leadership development.

County Manager James Jayne spoke to the issue of maintenance and the availability of funds for issues critical to our area, such as snow removal, currently being discussed by Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). Jayne asked Homero Vela, Public Works director for the County, to speak of about an Arizona Town Hall on transportation he attended in the spring.

"It was a very invigorating discussion," Vela said. "Phoenix and Tucson don't comprehend the problems in our rural areas, such as the challenge we will face this winter with snow removal. This is why I believe we need one plan for the state that includes a solution set

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for our area.”

Greg Tock, publisher of the White Mountain Publishing Company, was a speaker for the meeting. He addressed the necessity and success of the White Mountain Connection—the regional commuter bus line that runs from Pinetop-Lakeside to Holbrook and back three times per day--the eventual need for multi-modal transportation, and the need for good arterial routes in and out of the White Mountains.

“We want good, safe roads for our families to be traveling on,” Tock said. “Anyone who was here during the Rodeo-Chedeski Fire in 2002 would not contest that.”

Other regional transportation needs the group identified included public safety, accessibility for handicapped and elderly, and elk/vehicle accidents because of improper fencing in heavily wooded areas of the highways.

“I want you to know that we will be doing something with this discussion,” Jackson said. “The summary of today’s Town Hall will be taken back to ADOT for their review.”

Jayne concluded by thanking Jackson for her work and commitment to the White Mountains.

“We want to thank Tara and the Arizona Town Hall for listening to our White Mountain

communities,” Jayne said. “We appreciate the chance to partner locally to affect change.”

Where is this?



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