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News Update

Pinal weighs road-building tax

By Garin Groff, Tribune

November 6, 2005

Pinal County voters go to the polls Tuesday to keep or dump a tax that pays for road construction in their booming — and increasingly crowded — part of the state.

The tax will live or die through Proposition 400, which would allow the county to renew a 20-year, half-cent sales tax on transportation projects. The county estimates the tax will generate \$951 million in the next two decades.

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Supporters say the county will fall into gridlock if voters say no. They point to the congestion drivers already suffer in places such as Johnson Ranch and ask how much worse things will get when the county grows from its more than 200,000 current residents to more than 1 million in 20 years.

Supporters also say the tax is too small to meet the area's needs, adding the county will have to find additional ways to pay for roads.

"It's not enough, but it's part of the puzzle," said County Supervisor David Snider, D-Dist. 3.

Proposition 400 has sparked an informal group of opponents, such as Bill Bridwell of Casa Grande. The real estate agent argues the county will have plenty of money for roads and that the election is a perfect opportunity for voters to cut the flow of cash to the county.

"I'm a conservative guy," Bridwell said. "And I don't believe it's the place of government to take unencumbered revenues and just keep growing government."

County officials also are exploring the implementation of impact fees charged on each new home to fund specific needs such as transportation and law enforcement.

The county projects the Proposition 400 tax would build or improve 384 miles of road. All the details — which roads, the specific improvements and construction schedules — are left to be made in future years depending on growth and how much money comes in.

Proposition 400

What: Election to renew a 20-year, half-cent sales tax that funds transportation projects in Pinal County. Projected to raise \$951 million.

When: Polls open 6 a.m. to 7 p.m. Tuesday

Where: The county has 67 polling places. If you don't know yours, call (520) 866-6237.

Contact Garin Groff by [email](#), or phone (480) 898-6554



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