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## Pima County bond program gets high marks from state auditors



Pima County voters can have confidence that the bond projects they approved are being managed appropriately and efficiently, according to a presentation Friday by the State Auditor General's Office.

The extensive review of the 1997, 2004 and 2006 bond programs found that without exception, bond proceeds were spent the way voters intended, said Financial Audit Director Jay Zsorey.

In combing through reams of documents, auditors also determined that of 513 completed projects, 93 percent were finished early or on time, Zsorey said.

He added that any changes in terms of cost or timing of projects were appropriately documented and approved,

But it is Pima County's collaborative approach to bond projects that really sets it apart from other areas, the audit found. Other governments tend to issue bonds for projects that benefit just their own jurisdiction, Zsorey said.

Pima County, however, relies heavily on a 25-member appointed Bond Advisory Committee to prioritize projects based on public benefit, regardless of jurisdictional boundaries. As a result, the County bond programs have funded hundreds of projects, with many benefiting specific incorporated areas.

Zsorey said not only is the approach unique in the state, but he has been unable to find any similar program in the entire nation.

Pima County Administrator Chuck Huckelberry thanked the auditors for doing a thorough job. Although it was a lengthy and painstaking process, he said it was also worthwhile because it demonstrated through an independent review that the County's project has been well and fairly managed. The County may now move forward with planning to meet future needs, he said.

Pima County Supervisor Richard Elías agreed, saying he is proud of the results. "We are about doing business correctly and putting our best foot forward," he said.

Larry Hecker, the Chairman of the Bond Advisory Committee, said the audit should assure County residents that checks and balances exist, including stringent citizen oversight. "We do have a system in place that the voters can be confident in," he said.

To read the full report, please visit <http://www.pima.gov/bonds/pdf/bd-auditor.general.bond.audit.report.pdf>