

News

Council agrees to fund Soleri-designed bridge

by **Lesley Wright** - Apr. 23, 2008 03:01 PM
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SCOTTSDALE - After nearly 10 years of talk, Scottsdale is ready to build a Paolo Soleri-designed bridge over the Arizona Canal.

It was an item that city officials specifically excluded from the initial fiscal 2008-09 budget.

But it was one that Scottsdale City Council members and residents said Tuesday they could no longer ignore.

"Public art is the defining characteristic of this community," said resident Mark Ortega, one of dozens who have urged that the bridge be built. "The funding of public art is just as important as what we put up and where we put it."

The council voted unanimously to contribute the remaining \$1.7 million needed to build the bridge. The rest of the \$3.2 million fund has come from other sources.

The renowned architect, 89, was present for the council's vote and said he was grateful the design would finally come to life.

The bridge will span the canal southwest of Camelback and Scottsdale roads and feature one of the largest bells ever cast by Soleri. It will connect the Scottsdale Waterfront on the north side of the canal with SouthBridge and other retail outlets on the south side.

Craig Clifford, the city's acting treasurer, had excluded the bridge from the new budget because of lean economic times. But Clifford said the money could come from funds for transportation, capital projects and the city's bed tax.

The council asked the Tourism Development Commission, which has already recommended not using bed taxes to build the bridge, to hold a special meeting on the issue before the next budget hearing on May 6.

Councilman Ron McCullagh said the tourism fund provided the most appropriate source of financing for the bridge.

"I believe the Soleri Bridge is a perfect example of the type of thing contemplated by voters when this tax was passed," McCullagh said.

The council also voted this week to retain control of the Loop 101 photo enforcement cameras for another couple of months.

The Arizona Department of Public Safety was supposed to take the cameras over this month, but now wants to wait until construction begins on the freeway's carpool lanes. At that point, the cameras will temporarily go dark.

Scottsdale Police Chief Alan Rodbell said the timing of the construction was a "moving target," but should start about mid-July.