RTA delivers 755 projects halfway through 20-year plan

Halfway through the Regional Transportation Authority plan, the RTA has delivered 755 multimodal transportation improvements across the region. More than 300 people helped the RTA celebrate this 10-year milestone on May 12 at the Westin La Paloma.

The $2.1 billion RTA plan and half-cent excise tax were approved by Pima County voters on May 16, 2006, following extensive public outreach.

“The RTA Board pledged to deliver and we have honored the voters’ wishes,” said Ramón Valadez, a member of the RTA Board and Pima County Supervisor. Valadez was among the 2005 RTA Board members who voted to place the plan on the ballot.

The multimodal plan includes roadway, transit, safety, environmental and economic vitality enhancements.

“The RTA plan offers choices for everyone and we have worked diligently to construct roads, expand transit services and provide new sidewalks and bike lanes, among other amenities,” said RTA Board Chair Ed Honea and Mayor of Marana. “In some cases, we have worked across jurisdictional boundaries to deliver projects on or under budget and on schedule. The premise of the RTA has been collaboration and we continue to strengthen those partnerships to meet the needs of our communities and region.”

One of the signature projects of the RTA plan was the Sun Link streetcar project. The project has generated over $1 billion in public and private sector investments in downtown Tucson to strengthen the region’s urban core.

New bike lanes, sidewalks and neighborhood Sun Shuttle service that connects to Sun Tran provide expanded mobility and accessibility options. From traffic signal...
Regional Profile

Daniel G. Sharp
Interim Town Manager
Town of Oro Valley

Served in this capacity since: June 3, 2016

Professional background: Daniel G. Sharp has served as Chief of Police for the Town of Oro Valley since January 2000. Prior to his appointment as Chief, Sharp spent more than 21 years with the Tucson Police Department, working in virtually every area of the department. Sharp also has served as an adjunct faculty member for Law Enforcement Programs at Pima Community College and as an adjunct lecturer at the University of Arizona.

Civic/Community Involvement: Sharp is a member of the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP), appointed by the president of the IACP as a member of the IACP Highway Safety Committee, as well as chairman of the Traffic Incident Management Subcommittee, the Police Executive Research Forum, the FBI Law Enforcement Executive Development Association, the HIDTA Management Subcommittee, the Arizona Association of Chiefs of Police, and the FBI National Academy Associates. He is also a member of the Arizona Criminal Justice Commission, is currently the vice chairman of the Arizona Automobile Theft Authority Board and the vice chairman of the Pima County Wireless Integrated Network Board of Directors.

Region’s most pressing issue in your opinion: Our most pressing issue as a region is twofold: economic development and quality jobs. We must work together to not only attract new businesses but also retain existing businesses and large employers that will sustain our region’s economy and provide quality jobs. The other side of that coin is workforce development and job placement, so that our region is producing skilled employees to fill those jobs.

Region’s best opportunity for economic success: Regional partnerships and cooperation are our best opportunity for economic success. We must work together to ensure quality services are provided to a growing population. The PAG/RTA model of cooperation should be replicated in other areas of business and economic development. That level of regional collaboration will be the engine that drives us into a prosperous future.

What do you like best about what is currently happening at the regional level? New U.S. Census data shows that much of the region’s growth is happening in Marana and Oro Valley, the fourth- and fifth-fastest growing Arizona communities, respectively. So right now, we have a robust homebuilding industry and affordable housing for an ever-increasing demographic. This type of growth and activity is very attractive to prospective businesses, and that is good for the health of the entire metro region.

Region’s best opportunity for economic success: Regional partnerships and cooperation are our best opportunity for economic success. We must work together to ensure quality services are provided to a growing population. The PAG/RTA model of cooperation should be replicated in other areas of business and economic development. That level of regional collaboration will be the engine that drives us into a prosperous future.

What’s your No. 1 priority in your current role? As the newly appointed Interim Town Manager, my priority is to ensure management stability and smooth transition of leadership while the Town of Oro Valley undergoes a nationwide recruitment process for a new town manager.
**ADOT to conduct study to evaluate alternatives to proposed Sonoran corridor**

A 3-year planning study for the proposed Sonoran Corridor (State Route 410) is anticipated to commence later this year by the Arizona Department of Transportation and the Federal Highway Administration. Earlier this year, Pima Association of Governments’ Regional Council approved funding toward the study.

The corridor, which will connect Interstate 19 to Interstate 10 south of the Tucson International Airport, was designated as a future interstate and High Priority Corridor on the National Highway System in December 2015 under the latest federal surface transportation legislation.

PAG approved a $3.5 million contribution toward the study from its FY 2016-2020 Transportation Improvement Program.

The proposed Sonoran Corridor would provide cross-town mobility in the southern area of Pima County and increase access to the region’s international airport. The new corridor is expected to generate new economic development activity, such as industrial development, at the nexus of interstate highways, railroad lines and/or air cargo facilities for enhanced economic benefits to the region.

The purpose of the federally required study is to identify and evaluate corridor alternatives and seek public review and feedback in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA. Final alignment would require additional planning and design, and project funding would then need to be identified to move the project into construction.

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**ADOT moves forward on I-11 environmental study**

In March 2016, the Federal Highway Administration and Arizona Department of Transportation launched a three-year environmental study to further define Interstate 11 within a 280-mile corridor between Wickenburg and Nogales.

The first step in the environmental review process will be to develop an Alternatives Selection Report, which assesses a wide range of corridor alternatives and options, along with opportunities and constraints. Next, a Draft Tier 1 Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will evaluate in greater detail a smaller number of corridor alternatives, including segments that may advance as independent projects. Pima Association of Governments’ Regional Council supported the development of the EIS with a resolution that acknowledges the importance of the corridor for trade, economic development, expansion capacity and mobility.

As part of the National Environmental Policy Act, or NEPA, the FHWA and ADOT will ensure a compliant public process by involving affected agencies, stakeholder organizations and members of the community. The study will lead to a federal Record of Decision.

See “I-11,” page 8
More than 300 people attended the Regional Transportation Authority’s 10-year anniversary event on May 12 at the Westin La Paloma.

Celebration photos include:

1) RTA stakeholders gathered during the RTA 10-year celebration.

2) The University of Arizona Pep Band entertained during the closing of the RTA’s 10-year celebration.

3) Pima Association of Governments Deputy Director Cherie Campbell with Si Schorr, former RTA Board Chair (2006).

4) RTA Board Chair and Marana Mayor Ed Honea, RTA Board Member and Pima County Supervisor Ramón Valadez and RTA Executive Director Farhad Moghimi.

The Regional Transportation Authority debuted a video on the success of the RTA plan as part of its 10-year anniversary celebration. To view the video and the RTA’s multimodal projects, please click here.

http://youtu.be/GGKfsxTUu6E

The Regional Transportation Authority is managed by Pima Association of Governments.

The RTA plan, approved by voters on May 16, 2006, is a 20-year, $2.1 billion multimodal transportation plan with roadway, transit, safety, and environmental and economic vitality elements. For more information about the plan and projects, visit www.RTAmobility.com.

Guide plan oversight and implementation.

“The Citizens Accountability for Regional Transportation (CART) Committee and our Technical Management Committee are also helping to ensure we deliver the plan as promised to the voters,” Honea said. “Thanks to our Pima County voters, the RTA has invested more than $1 billion in the region during its first decade to provide a better future for everyone.”
City of Tucson receives 2016 Timothy M. Ahrens Partnering Award

Pima Association of Governments and the Regional Transportation Authority presented the 2016 Timothy M. Ahrens Partnering Award to the City of Tucson during the May meetings of the PAG Regional Council and RTA Board.

The City of Tucson received the award for the $20.6 million 22nd Street and Kino Parkway intersection/overpass project. The project is a component of the RTA-funded 22nd Street corridor improvement project between Interstate 10 and Tucson Boulevard.

The award was established in 2013 to recognize the spirit of collaboration and partnering as exemplified by the late Timothy M. Ahrens, who died on Oct. 23, 2013, after a brief illness. Mr. Ahrens was the RTA manager during development of the $2.1 billion, 20-year RTA plan. He managed the RTA’s 35-member citizens’ advisory committee and gave hundreds of presentations during the public outreach phase before the RTA plan was approved by Pima County voters on May 16, 2006.

Success of the city’s project is demonstrated in the following areas: achieving a common goal, embracing regional stakeholders, resolving conflict, improving communication on the project with all audiences, incorporating team-building activities, delivery of a quality product, finding innovative funding solutions, and perpetuating the spirit of cooperation.

Primary partners who received recognition for making substantial contributions to planning, design and construction of the project include:

- AECOM
- The Ashton Co. Inc.
- The Project Citizens Advisory Committee

Other project partners include: Structural Grace Inc., Psomas, GLHN, McGann & Associates, Public Artist Barbara Grygutis and Kaneen Advertising & Public Relations.

“The success of this project is due to the collaboration between many individuals and organizations,” said Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild, who also serves on the RTA Board.

“The project is an excellent example of what the RTA plan has achieved and will continue to achieve for our region,” he said. “It has supported good-paying jobs, will attract investment and will contribute to the region’s economic development and quality of life.”

Bridge links wildlife habitat

Pima County Board Supervisor and RTA Board Member Ramón Valadez is joined by Supervisor Richard Elias, left, and Pima County Board Chair Sharon Bronson on May 10 to recognize the late Supervisor Ann Day during the grand opening of the wildlife bridge on State Route 77. The RTA funded the design and construction of the bridge, which was built by the Arizona Department of Transportation.

Members of the public stroll up to the new wildlife bridge over State Route 77 on May 10, the only day the bridge allowed public access. The project was funded as part of the critical wildlife linkages category designated within the 20-year RTA plan. Mule deer, coyote and javelina are among the wildlife that already have been filmed crossing the bridge that connects wildlife habitat of three mountain ranges. The first video of deer crossing the bridge can be seen by clicking here. http://youtu.be/oLcfwGMF7Xk
Efforts to conserve water in our region have contributed to a savings of 8 million gallons of water since 2011. These savings have come through participants of Conserve2Enhance, a program of the Center for Pima Basin Sustainability.

CPBS, a 501(c)3 nonprofit entity managed by Pima Association of Governments through a memorandum of understanding, addresses the issue of connecting water savings into environmental benefits, through the C2E program.

Water and wastewater utility bills have check boxes for customers who wish to make donations of their financial savings to C2E. The donations provide funding for community water restoration grants. Funds collected since 2011 have supported community green infrastructure and riparian restoration grants.

Learn more about how to conserve water at https://conserve2enhance.org/ and view winning grant projects that enhance urban waterways and wildlife habitat. Go one step further and create a free account, which will automatically track water use at your home or business on a personalized dashboard.

C2E is guided by an Advisory Committee representing diverse organizations throughout the PAG region. Key partners include the Sonoran Institute, the UA Water Resources Research Center and Tucson Water.

Did you know …

Did you know that businesses are joining C2E to help keep our beautiful desert environment healthy? Business sponsors can partner by donating materials, time, events and tax deductible funds. Business participants, in addition to households, can receive free water conservation evaluations and track water savings.

Mike Lallozzi, president of Borderlands Brewery, is active on the Outreach and Advisory Committee for C2E and provided this testimonial:

“At Borderlands, we strive to reduce our landscape water needs and reuse water whenever possible. We only use cleaning chemicals that are safe and non-toxic, and we send nothing down the drain that doesn’t belong in our water table.”
Signalized bike crossing earns place on best practices list

The national Pedestrian and Bicycle Information Center featured Pima Association of Governments’ and the City of Tucson’s collaborative efforts to develop a signalized bicycle crossing, called the BikeHAWK, on its list of best practices in February.

The center, funded by the Federal Highway Administration and housed within the University of North Carolina Highway Safety Research Center, strives to improve the quality of life in communities by promoting safe walking and bicycling as a viable means of transportation and physical activity.

Tucson currently has five BikeHAWKs funded by the RTA and is set to double that number. The key to the BikeHAWK’s success is that it was designed to match the observed natural behavior of bicyclists at locations that have pedestrian crossing with activated signals.

The BikeHAWK helps accommodate the safe and legal crossing of bicycles at busy roadways. Each entrance to the BikeHAWK on a low volume residential street has a clearly marked, two-way separated bike lane painted solid green. This design provides clear, intuitive guidance on how cyclists should use the crossing, reduces potential conflict points and legitimizes cyclists’ use of the crossing.

The BikeHAWK was originally designed in 2012 in a collaborative effort between PAG and the Tucson Department of Transportation, with input from the Tucson Police Department.

PAG managing regional procurement process to advance alternative fuel vehicle technologies

Pima Association of Governments has teamed up with an alliance of the National Association of Regional Councils, or NARC, to manage a procurement process for alternative fuel and/or advanced technology vehicles in the Western region.

The Aggregated Alternative Technology Alliance aims to reduce petroleum consumption by 2.5 billion gallons per year by 2020. The alliance is a partnership among five regional councils, nine Clean Cities’ coalitions and five technical partners to advance alternative fuel vehicle technologies through targeted outreach and education, and the coordination of five large regional procurement initiatives and one national scale initiative.

The U.S. Department of Energy’s Office of Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Clean Cities Program is funding this initiative. PAG’s Clean Cities program will administer and manage the procurement process for the Western region under a contract with NARC. “NARC is excited to lead this highly qualified alliance as it makes alternative fuels and other advanced vehicles more accessible to communities,” said NARC Executive Director Leslie Wollack. “By coming together regionally to reduce costs and streamline the procurement process, we’ll make big strides in the alternative fuels and technology market to reduce petroleum dependence nationwide.”
White paper

state’s per gallon tax has been $0.18 since 1991 and the federal tax has been $0.184 since 1993. While increased fleet fuel economy (e.g., more hybrid and electric vehicles) has many societal benefits, this trend results in less fuel sold per mile driven. As a result, less transportation tax revenue is collected.

PAG’s white paper identifies current funding sources and the growing funding gap to meet long-range transportation needs. The paper also provides examples of what other states are doing to address their transportation funding challenges.

In PAG’s 2045 Regional Mobility and Accessibility Plan, funding of nearly $17.3 billion is identified for projects and programs. In addition, funding totaling $15.2 million has not been identified for other anticipated long-term projects and programs.

Potential options identified in the white paper for new or enhanced funding sources – without recommendation at this time – include:

- Maintain the status quo
- Engage in state and federal discussions (ex.: Raise the federal or state gas tax)
- Levy a countywide half-cent sales tax
- Increase the RTA plan excise tax
- Levy a property tax for transportation
- Create a regional transportation utility

The funding issue, perpetuated by steadily declining gas tax revenues on a per capita basis, will eventually need to be addressed. Locally approved revenue sources may be an obvious place to start the discussion needed to ensure our region maintains a viable transportation network that supports mobility and economic vitality.

For more information, and to view the white paper click here.

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I-11

of Decision on the preferred corridor alternative, allowing the project to advance to the next phase of delivery.

Once funding for a particular phase of the project is later identified, a more detailed NEPA-compliant environmental analysis, such as a Tier 2 EIS, can be conducted within the corridor to meet final design and construction requirements. ADOT previously completed a two-plus year feasibility study with the Nevada Department of Transportation in 2014.

ADOT recognizes that I-11, as a multimodal corridor, has the potential to support large-scale manufacturing, enhance movement of people and freight, and be a corridor for trade, communications and technology.

In a May 20 Federal Register notice, the FHWA and ADOT requested comments on the scope of the Tier 1 EIS until July 8. For more information about the study and how to comment, please click here. http://i11study.com/Arizona/

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Basin study

Water Resources, Central Arizona Water Conservation District, the University of Arizona and PAG. Cost-share partners include organizations representing municipal, agricultural, environmental, industrial and tribal water providers and users.

PAG will host public and stakeholder meetings as part of its Watershed Planning Subcommittee and Environmental Planning Advisory Committee meetings and coordinate other public outreach opportunities. PAG also will lead the Environmental Sub-Team to integrate applicable metrics into the models and assist with management response scenarios.

Updates and opportunities for feedback will be available at PAG Management Committee and Regional Council meetings.

To be involved or stay informed about the study and upcoming public meetings, please contact Co-Study Managers Eve Halper (ehalper@usbr.gov) or Kathy Chavez (Kathy.Chavez@pima.gov).