



REGIONAL

Outlook

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Pima Association of Governments • Setting the Pace for Positive Change

Tucson, Southern AZ projects included in federal transportation earmarks

A \$300 billion transportation act was signed by the President on August 10. This legislation earmarks \$286.4 billion for nearly 4,000 public works projects across the nation.

Southern Arizona earmarks include \$23.4 million for specific projects, including \$10.64 million for designing and improving railroad crossings for three busy intersections; \$4 million for expanding South Houghton Road to include an overpass; \$4.8 million to the Town of Marana for extending Twin Peaks Road and \$1.36 million for the widening of Interstate 10 from Marana Road to Cortaro Farms Road.

The act also includes support for a City of Tucson application to the Federal Transit Authority for a matching-funds grant of up to \$75 million for a modern streetcar transit system.

U.S. Reps. Raúl Grijalva (D-AZ) and Jim Kolbe (R-AZ) were active in the legislative process to ensure the success of the measure.

PAG's 2005 traffic count program is complete

The 2005 Traffic Volume Map, produced annually by PAG, should be available this fall. PAG collects information for the map by counting weekday traffic on most major roadways in the Tucson region at least once every three years.

Traffic count data are usually collected on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday in February or March. The method used to count traffic typically involves the placement of pneumatic tubes connected to recording devices at selected locations for a period of at least 48 continuous hours. Visit www.pagnet.org for map availability and 2003-05 traffic counts.



Tom Fisher, a PAG staff member, answers questions from a citizen during one of the Regional Transportation Authority's public meetings held in Marana. The second phase of public meetings will begin the week of September 19.

Regional Transportation Authority completes first phase of public comment

2nd phase set to begin

The Regional Transportation Authority wrapped up its first phase of public comment at the end of August and its committees are in the process of reviewing the comment. Upon review, the Citizens Advisory Committee in conjunction with the Technical/Management Committee will make recommendations for changes in the initial draft plan to the RTA Board.

A second draft of the 20-year regional plan will be presented to the public during a second round of public meetings scheduled during the last two weeks of September.

"We collected hundreds of public comments during the first phase of our public meetings and through our RTA Web site," said Rick Myers, chair of the Citizens Advisory Committee. "The feedback we have received so far has been very insightful, and the committees will carefully consider what the public is telling us."

Please see RTA insert inside this issue

A request to approve the RTA plan is expected to be placed on the ballot in May 2006 along with a request for a 1/2-cent sales tax to fund it over the next 20 years. The sales tax is expected to generate \$1.9 billion over the next 20 years.

The draft plan considers projects regionwide, includes road widening, improved transit, additional sidewalks and bicycle pathways.

The first draft includes key regional corridors encompassing all of the modes of transportation listed above. In addition to road widening along these corridors, transit service will be enhanced to include better frequency, later evening service and weekend service. The draft also includes 150 new bus pullouts, 165 miles of bicycle lanes, 70 pedestrian safety improvements and 5 park-and-ride centers.

Final approval of a plan is expected by the RTA Board at the end of October.

In the News

Amphitheater School District moves to use clean fuel in buses

Amphitheater School District started running its buses on B20 (20 percent biodiesel and 80 percent petrol diesel) this fall and is one of a handful of other school districts nationwide using clean alternatives to diesel fuel.

This effort is part of a U.S. Environmental Protection Agency program, called the Clean School Bus Initiative.

Tucson gas station chain now offers clean fuel

A major retail outlet in Tucson is offering E-85 fuel (15 percent ethanol and 85 percent gasoline) for the first time in Arizona.

Loma Catalina Co., which owns and operates a chain of convenience store-gas stations in Tucson, held a grand opening on Aug. 6 of its new Catalina Mart at 2075 W. Ruthrauff Road at the intersection of Ruthrauff & La Cholla Boulevard.

Easy access to Interstate 10 and downtown municipal complexes makes this location ideal for drivers of the rapidly growing list of flexible fuel vehicles as well as the state, municipal and school district vehicles that run on ethanol fuel.

For more information, contact Colleen Crowninshield, Clean Cities manager, at 792-1093 or Susanna Minegishi, Loma Catalina marketing coordinator, at (520) 323-2755, ext. 106.

Oracle Road improvements continue in Oro Valley area

The improvements to Oracle Road between Pusch View Lane and La Reserve Drive continue on schedule. During the next month, drivers can expect to see the following:

- The new northern half of First Avenue will be constructed, including a new signal between the commercial centers on the north and south sides.
- New traffic signals will replace the temporary signals throughout the project area.
- The northern half of Pusch View Lane will be under construction.
- Northbound traffic on Oracle Road will be diverted to the new pavement, allowing construction of new wider (two-lane) medians in Oracle Road.

The contract completion date is Nov. 14, 2005.



The above photo of downtown Tucson is an example of oblique imagery (image from an angle). PAG recently signed a license to use oblique imagery that covers 35 square miles of urbanized Tucson.

PAG signs license to use new image technology

Obliques (imagery at an angle) by Pictometry Inc. are exciting new images that recently arrived at PAG. In cooperation with the City of Tucson's GIS Co-op (a group of technical employees at the city), PAG acquired and signed a two-year license agreement with Pictometry Inc. for 35 square miles of oblique imagery.

The imagery encompasses the downtown area including the University of Arizona. The agreement allows all PAG jurisdictions' staff members the opportunity to view high resolution 4-directional oblique imagery and perform geospatial tasks, such as measuring and calculating acreage and perimeters of buildings and other image features.

Other GIS type tools such as overlays of ESRI shapefiles (a propriety file), spatial queries, and onscreen digitizing are possible using the application. PAG coordinated six training sessions with jurisdictional staff, including more than 120 people over a 2-day period in August, and also will conduct a training session this fall.

The oblique digital imagery is not a typical imagery product and does not conform to PAG's orthophotography (imagery from a straight downward view) accuracy standards; however, it is expected to be sufficient for many applications. The ability to integrate specific GIS layers, such as the county parcel base, with the oblique imagery will allow departments to inventory transportation infrastructure, perform property assessments and assist in public safety functions.

PAG's Regional Data Center advisory committee considers the acquisition and usage of the imagery as a pilot project. PAG will monitor the volume and type of usage and will document its effectiveness. A technical report will be available at pagnet.org.

PAG Regional Council

- **Robert Walkup**, Chair; Mayor of Tucson
- **Ramon Valadez**, Treasurer; Pima County Board of Supervisors
- **Herminia Frias**, Member; Chairwoman, Pascua Yaqui Tribe
- **Vivian Juan-Saunders**, Member; Chairwoman, Tohono O'odham Nation
- **Paul Loomis**, Member; Mayor of Oro Valley
- **Charles Oldham**, Member; Mayor of Sahuarita
- **Ed Honea**, Member; Mayor of Marana
- **Jennifer Eckstrom**, Member; Mayor of South Tucson
- **S.L. Schorr**, Member; Arizona State Transportation Board Representative
- **Gary G. Hayes**, Executive Director; Pima Association of Governments

Road upgrade projects continue throughout Pima County

Improvements expected to be completed this fall

Ruthrauff Road-Wetmore Road, La Cholla Boulevard to Fairview Avenue Roadway:

The project extends from the Ruthrauff Road/La Cholla Boulevard intersection to the Fairview Avenue/Wetmore Road intersection, a distance of approximately 1.7 miles.

The improvement consists of five lanes: two travel lanes in each direction and a middle left turn lane, masonry screen walls, sound walls, landscaping, artwork, sidewalks along both sides of the roadway, curbing, storm drainage system and traffic signals at La Cholla Boulevard, Flowing Wells, Romero Road and Ruthrauff/Wetmore. The dedication will be held on Sept. 9.

Catalina Highway from Tanque Verde Road to Houghton Road:

The Catalina Highway roadway and drainage improvements project will widen approximately two miles of Catalina Highway, from Tanque Verde Road to Houghton Road, to a three-lane roadway with paved shoulders, a center two-way left turn lane, retaining walls, cross drainage culverts and striping.

The new roadway section will consist of one through-travel lane in each direction, and improvements include two miles of new pavement,

scheduled for completion in August, with rubberized asphaltic concrete.

A series of sculptural monuments will be displayed along the side of the roadway, images of mountain ridges that get progressively taller as the road moves toward the base of the Catalinas. The project is scheduled to be completed and dedicated this fall.

La Cholla Boulevard River Road to Omar Drive:

The La Cholla Road Improvement Project involves the widening of La Cholla Boulevard to a six-lane roadway with three travel lanes and one multi-use lane in each direction, raised median, curb and gutter, sidewalk, landscaping, storm drain and structures.

The project extends from Omar Drive to River Road, a distance of approximately 2.5 miles. Improvements also will extend approximately 1,000 feet east and west along Orange Grove Road to accommodate reconstruction at the intersection with La Cholla Boulevard. A dedication is scheduled for Sept. 30.



Vanpool Testimonial



(Editor's Note: Below is a testimonial from Rae Matlock, R.D., C.D.E., an ambulatory care dietitian for the Sells Service Unit, HIS, and the Sells Vanpool travel coordinator.)

Having the vanpool to work with has been a welcome addition to the benefits of working here in Sells. The commute is prohibitive over the long haul. I hear from new employees that have joined the vanpool that they made the decision to come to work here because we have a vanpool program.

It is helping with retention because the time spent on the road is now not as stressful and the word is getting out that the vanpools can save employees money. Every day I hear many conversations and laughing among my fellow riders, indicating that they are having a good time.

As the travel coordinator for the Sells vanpools, I am so pleased that in one year's time, we have grown to a group of 85 people with 6 vans. Each employee saves about \$3,000 per year in gas expenses (how's that for a raise?), not to mention wear and tear on the car.

Collectively, we are driving over 3 million miles less and saving our precious desert environment. We have removed over 44,000 car trips a year from the highway to Sells. As one rider put it, we just might have saved a few lives.



PAG Regional Council Member Profile

Name: Ramón O. Valadez

Title: Pima County Supervisor

Jurisdiction: Pima County, District 2

Served in this capacity since: September 2003

Professional background:

- Staff Assistant for Senator Dennis DeConcini (1989-1991)
- Staff Assistant for Congressman Ed Pastor (1991-1994)
- Special Staff Assistant for Supervisor Dan Eckstrom (1995-1996)
- Served in Arizona House of Representatives (1996-2000)
- Served in Arizona State Senate (2000-2003)
- Senior Staff Member in southern Arizona for Gov. Janet Napolitano (January 2003 to September 2003)
- Pima County Board of Supervisors (September 2003 to Present).

Civic Involvement:

- Serves as Vice Chair on the Regional Transportation Authority Board
- Treasurer for Pima Association of Governments Regional Council
- Serves as the Third Vice President for the County Supervisors Association
- Co-Chair for Governor Napolitano's Latino Advisory Task Force
- Served on Center for Policy Alternatives Southwest Community Policy and Leadership Forum
- Served as the southern Arizona campaign coordinator for the Pastor for Congress Campaign and for the Eddie Basha for Governor Campaign
- Served on State Advisory Task Force for Runaway and Homeless Youth
- Served on board of directors for Open Inn, Project YES and the University of Arizona Hispanic Alumni

Region's most pressing issue in your opinion: One of the most pressing regional issues is the need for infrastructure, where it is inclusive of both physical and human infrastructure. It is our responsibility as public stewards to ensure to the best of our ability that our community and all its members, young and old, have the resources necessary to have an opportunity to succeed.

Region's best opportunity for economic success: The best opportunity for economic success within our region lies in our ability to tap into our people. We have attracted, educated and have the ability to train our workforce to meet the needs of almost any employer. We can and need to do a better job of attracting opportunity and retaining our young people.

Eight employers join commuting program

Eight new employers joined the *Best Workplaces for Commuters*™ program. The following employers were awarded designations by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and Pima Association of Governments:

- *Federal Correctional Institution*
- *Holmes Tuttle Ford*
- *Honeywell Circuit Card Assembly Program Group*
- *Honeywell Engines, Systems & Services*
- *Intuit*
- *Marshall Foundation*
- *SCF of Arizona Southern Account*
- *U.S. Indian Health Service, Sells*

In addition, Tucson was the 4th region nationwide to recognize employers for meeting the national

standard of excellence in commuter benefits established by the EPA. The region now has 29 employers representing 45,094 employees who save miles, gasoline, dollars and pounds of pollution.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has identified the Greater Tucson area as the leader in the nation for percentage of employees at Best Workplaces for Commuters sites. At 10 percent, the Greater Tucson area edged out Atlanta, which totaled 9.6 percent.

Based on these and other factors, PAG will receive the highest "gold-level" award from the EPA on Sept. 21 in its Race to Excellence of Best Workplaces for Commuters.

For more information on qualifying for Best Workplaces for Commuters, contact MaryAnn Soto at (520) 792-1093 or log onto EPA's Web site, www.bwic.gov.



PAG vanpool coordinator recognized by Indian Health Service

Gayle Johnson, an employer representative in PAG's Travel Reduction Program (TRP), was recognized with a 2005 Merit Award from the U.S. Indian Health Service.

She was recognized for her outstanding support to the Tucson-Sells Indian Health Service unit for bringing their employees into the TRP, showing them how to use the federal government's Commuter Choice subsidy, developing their own vanpool program (they now have six vans making the 60-mile commute daily), and getting the unit recognition as one of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Best Workplaces for Commuters™.

For more information about the vanpool program, please visit www.pagnet.org.

PAG's updated fall Calendar of Events may be viewed at www.pagnet.org

For more information about the Regional Transportation Authority please visit www.RTAmobility.com

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Tucson, AZ 85701

177 N. Church Ave., Suite 405

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