

PIMA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

2030 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN



July 2003

In late 2002, the **Pima Association of Governments (PAG)** initiated an extensive 3-year planning effort to develop a new long range transportation plan for eastern Pima County and the Tucson metropolitan area. The plan will identify transportation needs, potential solutions, and funding requirements through the year 2030.

The **2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)** involves continuous public education and outreach, including a series of educational forums and/ or seminars. This is one of a series of informational Fact Sheets related to the educational events conducted as part of the 2030 RTP planning process.

What is Required for Transportation Improvement Projects That Use Federal Funds? Why Does Project Implementation Take So Much Time?

All of us pay a federal tax on our gasoline purchases. The revenues from that tax go into the **Federal Highway Trust Fund**, from which funding is then distributed back to the States for use on state, regional, or local transportation projects. The planning, design and construction of all projects that use these federal funds must follow a specific, federally approved process that is typically administered by the State Department of Transportation.

On April 29, 2003 **Pima Association of Governments (PAG)** sponsored a workshop for local transportation project managers to assist them in meeting the requirements associated with the federal aid process. This fact sheet describes some of the information learned from that workshop.

It is hoped that a better understanding of the steps and approvals required will help move more projects more effectively through the process and ultimately speed project implementation throughout the region.

HOW CAN PROJECTS OBTAIN FEDERAL FUNDING?

All of the jurisdictions within in the PAG region (Pima County, the cities of Tucson and South Tucson, the towns of Oro Valley, Marana and Sahuarita, the Tohono O'odham Nation and the Pascua Yaqui Tribe) are eligible to receive federal funding for transportation projects.

For a specific project to be eligible for federal funding, however, it must be located on the **designated "federal aid system"**. Additionally, the project must be consistent with PAG's most current long-range Regional Transportation Plan and it must be incorporated within PAG's current, five-year capital improvement project list, known as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP).

The **Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)** is not only a good idea for long-range planning; it is also required by federal regulations. The RTP must have a minimum 20-year planning horizon and must be updated at least every 3 years. The RTP considers project scenarios that address the region's estimated future population and travel needs, while also considering the impact of potential transportation improvements on congestion, air quality and the environment. Those needs are balanced with an estimate of the transportation funding that will be available to the region.

The **Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)** programs funding for specific projects. PAG's TIP is adopted annually by the PAG Regional Council and approved by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Projects shown in the TIP must be consistent with the RTP.

WHAT IS THE FEDERAL PROJECT APPROVAL PROCESS?

The **Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT)** administers the federal aid process for projects located within the State of Arizona unless a jurisdiction has been certified by the **Federal Highway Administration (FHWA)** to process their own projects. ADOT's **Local Government Section** assists local governments through the federal aid process. ADOT estimates that the entire process for project approvals, including review time, will require a minimum of 18 to 24 months, and may be much longer for large or complex projects. Within our region, Pima County and the City of Tucson have been federally certified.

Specific issues that may adversely impact the project review process schedule often relate to utility or right-of-way clearances, and/or to environmental issues. Identifying potential issues and involving key stakeholders early in the process is often the key to obtaining these approvals in a timely manner.

WHAT ARE KEY STEPS IN THE PROCESS?

The initial step in the federal aid process is to determine the following:

PROJECT SCOPE: What is the nature of improvements proposed, what specific features are included in those improvements and precisely where will those improvements be constructed?

PROJECT SCHEDULE: When will work on the project be initiated, how long will it take to construct and when will work be completed? Is any phased construction involved?

PROJECT BUDGET: Has a reliable cost estimate been developed that covers all the elements and features of the project and considers any special impacts related to physical location or impacts, phasing and construction timing?

Key steps in the federal-aid process include identification, development, processing and approval of:

- Design Concept Report (DCR)
- Environmental Clearance
- Preliminary Plans (30% Stage) and Preliminary Cost Estimate
- Design Exceptions? (Get approved up front, avoid if possible)
- Design Memorandum
- Avoid Changes in the SCOPE after Environmental Clearance
- Adhere to SCOPE, SCHEDULE and BUDGET
- 60% Stage Plans, Specs, and Estimate
- Materials Memo, Geotech Report, Pavement Design Summary
- Drainage Report, Structure Selection Report If Applicable
- Field Review Meeting
- Utility Clearance
- Right of Way Clearance
- 404 or 401 permits from US Army corps If Applicable
- Execute Intergovernmental Agreement & Provide Local Match
- Submit 95% PS&E (Plans Specs and Estimate)
- Submit Final Plans (100% Complete)
- Advertise Job Once All Clearances Are On File and Current

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

For additional information on the Federal Aid Process:

- Visit the ADOT website at www.dot.state.az.us/ROADS/localgov/index.htm

To stay informed or get involved in PAG planning activities:

- Visit the PAG website at www.pagnet.org
- Add your name to PAG's 2030 RTP mailing list by calling PAG at 792-1093, Extension 502
- Schedule a speaker for your next meeting

What is PAG?

Pima Association of Governments (PAG) is a non-profit association whose mission is to build consensus with its members and the public on regional planning issues such as transportation, air quality and water quality. PAG is also the federally recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for Pima County.

PAG is governed by a Regional Council comprised of elected officials from each member entity:

- **City of South Tucson**
- **City of Tucson**
- **Pascua Yaqui Tribe**
- **Pima County**
- **Tohono O'odham Nation**
- **Town of Marana**
- **Town of Oro Valley**
- **Town of Sahuarita**
- **Arizona State Transportation Board**

PAG's staff gathers and analyzes data, provides information, and coordinates an open and cooperative planning process.

An open committee process is at the heart of PAG's mission to promote regional cooperation and informed decision making.

PAG is not a government agency and the responsibility for implementation of plans and program remains with local, state and tribal governments.