

PIMA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

2030 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN



August 2003

This Fact Sheet focuses on **Transportation and the Environment**

What are the environmental implications for transportation?

Can transportation systems be sensitive to the environment?

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On July 31st, 2003, the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) sponsored, in cooperation with the Tucson Audubon Society, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection and the Pima County Department of Environmental Quality, a public forum on how environmental concerns and issues impact transportation planning choices, and, in particular, needs and potential solutions that have been identified within our Sonoran desert region.

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 initial phase of public involvement for this plan, known as the **2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP)**, was aimed at identifying the community's core values for a good quality of life. This public involvement effort specifically identified environmental stewardship as a key goal for the transportation plan *. To better understand needs and potential solutions in this area, PAG hosted a forum on Transportation and the Environment in July 2003.

WHAT ARE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSPORTATION?

The region's transportation infrastructure affects the region's environment in many ways, both directly and indirectly. Drainage, stormwater runoff, flood control and natural riparian contours impact water quality, safety and mobility. Air pollutants generated from vehicles and blowing particulate matter create health and visibility concerns. Wildlife and habitat are impacted through land consumption, habitat fragmentation and roadkill. Deterioration of natural environs leads eventually to a decline in quality of life and changes to the unique sense of place associated with the Sonoran Desert region.

CAN TRANSPORTATION SYSTEMS BE SENSITIVE TO THE ENVIRONMENT?

Increasing transportation choices, such as providing bicycle and pedestrian paths, along with increasing the infrastructure for alternative fuel sources are ways that the region has begun to respond to our changing needs. New standards have been developed for roadway design and Pima County has specifically created guidelines for environmentally sensitive roadways which includes standards for the use of native plant use, salvage and maintenance requirements. These guidelines include assessments of natural riparian contours in order to make better choices for roadway alignments that reduce impacts on riparian areas. Studies are underway to help the region better understand where and what type of wildlife crossings

would be helpful in reconnecting fragmented habitat. An Environmental Impact Analysis (EIA) is completed for all roadway projects that are constructed in environmentally sensitive areas. All of these activities help to improve the base of knowledge our region has to better plan for roadway design and transportation systems that are sensitive to our fragile and unique Sonoran Desert environment.

* 2030 RTP Environment Goal: Enhance environmental stewardship through protection of natural and human resources and creation or preservation of aesthetic amenities and the unique identities of the region's varied communities.

WHAT IS THE SONORAN DESERT CONSERVATION PLAN?

The Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan (SDCP) is a comprehensive planning initiative developed by Pima County to maintain or improve the region's critical ecosystems while accommodating future development and transportation needs. The SDCP will act as a regional Section 10 permit under the Endangered Species Act which requires permitting in order to develop lands within the critical habitat of an endangered species. Pima County is currently home to 18 species that are Federally listed as threatened or endangered with another five as candidates for listing.

HOW ARE ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS ADDRESSED IN THE REGION'S LONG RANGE TRANSPORTATION PLAN, THE 2030 RTP?

Environmentally sensitive transportation solutions have been specifically identified as one of ten goals of the 2030 RTP. The RTP Task Force is developing transportation policies and projects that respond to this goal by looking at roadway projects, alternate modes and fuels, ideas to reduce air pollution and suggesting ways our region might preserve and enhance the natural environment while meeting future mobility needs.

The performance assessment of the RTP also includes an air quality analysis of the impacts of emissions associated with on-road vehicles. The RTP strives to reduce congestion not only by increasing the efficiency of the transportation network but also by reducing the number of vehicles on the network. The 2030 RTP will include key programs related to travel reduction, alternate modes and alternative fuels such as the Travel Reduction Program, RideShare Program and the Clean Cities Program.

WHAT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE FROM PAG'S TRANSPORTATION AND ENVIRONMENT FORUM?

The PAG Forum on Transportation and the Environment included presentations from an array of distinguished speakers. The participants and the topics they discussed included:

- Sonja Macys, Executive Director for the **Tucson Audubon Society** – Perspectives on changes over the past century and how transportation systems effect our sense of place and impacts our community
- Frank Sousa, **City of Tucson Stormwater** – Environmental compatibility issues related to floodplains, riparian areas, topography and stormwater runoff
- Susan Shobe, **Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection** -- Status of the Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan and implications for long range transportation planning efforts
- Kurt Weinrich, P.E., Director **Pima County Department of Transportation and Flood Control** -- Pima County's Environmentally Sensitive Roadway Design Guidelines and status of implementation
- Scott Richardson, **U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service** -- Designing transportation systems that are sensitive to threatened and endangered species such as the Pygmy Owl as well as to Sonoran plants and wildlife
- Richard Wayne Byrd, Technical Operations Manager, **Pima County Department of Environmental Quality** – Air Pollutants of Concern (Ozone and PM10) and the relationship between air quality and transportation
- Lane Garrett, President **ETA Engineering, Inc.**—Sustainable transportation alternatives including the development of hydrogen as a viable fuel source within the next decade

PAG is developing a new long range transportation plan for eastern Pima County and the Tucson metropolitan area that will identify transportation needs, potential solutions, and funding requirements through the year 2030.

The **2030 RTP** program for public education and outreach includes a series of educational forums and/ or seminars. This is one of a series of informational Fact Sheets related to the 2030 RTP educational events.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

For more information contact:

- Pima County Environmentally Sensitive Roadway Design Guidelines: <http://www.dot.pima.gov/docreview/envsens/>
- Sonoran Desert Conservation Plan information: <http://www.co.pima.az.us/cmo/sdcp/index.html>
- Endangered species information from US Fish & Wildlife: <http://www.endangered.fws.gov/> and Arizona Game & Fish: <http://www.gf.state.az.us/>
- Alternate modes information: <http://www.pagnet.org/RS/> and <http://www.pagnet.org/TRP/>
- Alternative fuels from Clean Cities: <http://www.pagnet.org/CleanCities/> and <http://www.ETAEngineering.com>
- Defenders of Wildlife Report: Second Nature: <http://www.defenders.org/habitat/highways/secondnature.html>
- Pima County Department of Environmental Quality: www.deq.co.pima.az.us
- AirInfoNow: www.airinfonow.org

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