

2040 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) ThinkTank Data Analysis - Vision and Goals

Between December 4, 2008 and January 15, 2009, PAG will have held 19 ThinkTank sessions for the 2040 RTP with 267 participants. PAG designed and used a ThinkTank workbook to direct the ThinkTank process and educate participants about transportation planning issues. Participants were asked to respond to a variety of open-ended and rating questions. PAG received a total of 7,195 comments; a complete print-out of the comments is available upon request. The information below provides a summary analysis of all of the comments received from the public during these 19 sessions regarding three specific questions/activities about the 2040 RTP vision and goals.

PAG asked participants to provide their responses to and suggested improvements for the vision and goals from the 2030 RTP, which was completed in 2006. There were three activities surrounding the vision and goals:

- A. An open-ended question on what else should be included in the vision,
- B. A rating activity where participants rated their support for the ten goals,
- C. An opportunity to comment on the existing goals that were rated and an open-ended question on what other goals should be considered for the plan

To help task force members understand the analysis and responses provided below, we have included some of the text from the ThinkTank workbook.

A. Open-ended Question about the 2040 Vision

From the ThinkTank workbook:

2a. Vision

The following two questions are intended to reaffirm and build upon the broad vision and ten more specific goals that were agreed upon, by community consensus, during the 2030 RTP effort which concluded in 2006.

The broad vision for the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan was to develop “an inclusive, people-focused plan to create an efficiently linked variety of transportation choices in a regional system that serves all people.”

- **What else should be included in the broad vision for the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan? What changes would you make to the vision statement?**

The vision for the RTP defines the overall hope of what we want the plan to accomplish; it's the big picture. After explaining the vision from the 2030 RTP, PAG asked participants what else should be included in the vision. PAG received 520 responses; through our analysis we found the greatest number of comments fell into three broad categories: environment and sustainability (118 comments), land use (58), and transit (52).

Environment and Sustainability

When asked what else should be included in the vision for the 2040 RTP, the first most commented on subject was the environment and sustainability. There were 118 comments (23%) on the topic, evoking support for the environment and/or sustainability in the long range plan. The comments ranged from simple requests to include sensitivity to environmental issues in the vision statement to well thought-out statements on how the region should ensure the availability of environmentally responsible, sustainable and efficiently linked transportation options. Some participants recommended new language that could be used in the vision statement.

Representative comments include:

- "Include in the vision statement: an energy efficient transportation system that honors (blends, is in harmony, integrity) with the human structures already in place."
- The vision "Should include protecting the natural environment through efficiency and integration with regional conservation planning"
- The vision should include "More energy efficient modes of transportation."
- The RTP should be "a carbon neutral, regional plan that provides a variety of efficiently linked transportation options for all people."

Land use

Land use was the second most commented on subject in the vision section with 58 comments (11%) received. Participants recognized the link between transportation, population growth and land use, and talked about the need to make land use a part of the long range transportation plan. Some participant mentioned the need for "transit-oriented development" and creating more employment centers to allow for transit and alternative modes of transportation.

Representative comments on land use include:

- "Transportation planning needs to be designed to support community decisions on where and how we grow. To date, transportation has driven our growth choices. We need to reverse the paradigm."
- "The vision must include a direct tie to land use planning."
- "The vision should be linked to the vision for development and density"
- "Transportation needs to be linked to development. Urban sprawl is a problem. Maybe address the idea of more centered development, people living close to where they work."

Transit

The third most commented on subject in the vision section was transit, where participants expressed their general support for expanded transportation choices, including light rail and bus services. PAG received 52 transit-related comments (10%) in the vision section.

Respondents also highlighted the importance of linking transit to the local and statewide transportation networks as well as ensuring access to transit to people of all income levels.

Representative comments on transit include:

- "I would like to see more emphasis on transit oriented solutions."
- "What are plans for making mass transit more usable? links to trains or buses to allow flexible scheduling"
- "More focus on public transportation to reach all citizens regardless of socio-economic situation"
- I "would add and that it connects the a state wide transportation network...including transit, roadway, intercity commuter rail, national rail service, and airports"
- "We should realistically look at who will actually ride buses and not spend money or resources on areas of town that will not be maximally utilized"

Other Vision Comments Received

PAG received 23 comments that said the vision was fine and didn't need to be changed. In addition there were a variety of comments that were supportive of the idea of a "people-focused plan" but reminded PAG that the plan should also focus on moving goods (i.e. freight and cargo). Some participants also noted that "safety" was not mentioned in the vision and recommended including it. Finally, one participant provided the following recommendation to strengthen the overall vision: The "vision statement should be more action oriented - to identify and fund transportation infrastructure and systems by which all persons can have full mobility throughout the region."

B. Goals Rating Activity

The goals of the 2040 RTP are intended to guide the Task Force members and regional transportation planners as they select projects and policies for the long range plan. The 2030 RTP, which was completed in 2006, included ten goals, which PAG decided to use as the basis of conversation on goals for the 2040 RTP. In order to assess the public's opinion of the ten goals from the 2030 RTP, PAG asked participants to rate each of the goals from 1 to 10 to indicate the importance of each goal to them. The results of the rating activity are provided below.

The table below shows the average scores from all participants and a ranking of the goals from 1 to 10 based on the results of the rating activity. The goal that received the highest rating was "Safety" with an overall average rating of 8.84. "Efficiency, Mobility and Accessibility" ranked second with an average rating of 8.52.

ThinkTank analysis – Goals Rating Activity			
Quantitative Summary for all individual participants (not broken down by session)			
GOAL	Full Text	Average	Ranking
A	Multi-Modal Choices: Develop a comprehensive transportation system that supports a balanced mix of travel choices, including alternatives to driving alone, throughout the region.	8.24	4
B	Efficiency, Mobility And Accessibility: Promote an efficient, linked system of rail lines, interstate freeways, major streets, public transit, bikeways and pedestrian paths that enhances accessibility and the movement of people and goods and maximizes use of technological innovations.	8.52	2
C	Land Use And Transportation: Coordinate future land use patterns and transportation systems to foster economic prosperity, environmental protection and mitigation, trip reduction and the creation of efficient, integrated mixed-use communities.	8.00	7 (tied)
D	Transit: Increase the availability of affordable, effective public transit.	8.15	5
E	Cross Town Mobility: Improve cross-town mobility and reduce congestion-related delay.	8.00	7 (tied)
F	Safety: Enhance safety for bicyclists, pedestrians, transit riders, wheelchair users, children and the driving public.	8.84	1
G	Funding: Identify and allocate funding and resources for building, operating and maintaining the existing and future regional transportation system.	7.59	10
H	Economic and Community Compatibility: Recognize and respond to disparities in economic circumstances, accessibility and mobility among the region's diverse population and communities.	7.60	9
I	Environment: Enhance environmental stewardship through protection of natural and human resources and creation or preservation of aesthetic amenities and the unique identities of our varied communities.	8.09	6
J	Accountability: Provide early and on-going opportunities for public participation and education and foster improved intergovernmental coordination, responsiveness to community interests and effective leadership.	8.35	3

C. Open-ended suggestions to improve goals

The participants had an opportunity to provide open-ended comments about the goals during the rating exercise and with the following open-ended question:

- C** • **What other goals should be considered for the 2040 Regional Transportation Plan?**

In addition to asking about other goals, the participants were encouraged to continue commenting on the 2030 goals if they had more to say from the prior exercise, the rating and commenting of the goals. PAG received 716 responses; through our analysis we found that the greatest number of comments fell into three of the existing goal categories: Environment (95 comments), Multi-Modal Choices (90), and Transit (71). There were also many comments that specifically asked for more clarity with the wording of the goals and some offered suggestions on improvements.

Environment

As was the case for the vision, the highest number of comments (75) to the open-ended goal question fell into the environment category (which includes aesthetics and landscaping). Nearly all of the comments were very pro-environment.

A few representative quotes include:

- "human health, built environment and urban ecology also need to be integrated into the RTP"
- "Consider using greener construction products"
- "Beautify roadways with landscaped medians and include landscaped safe pedestrian trails in parkway area"

Multi-modal Choices

The existing goal category that had the third highest number of comments in the open-ended goal section was multi-modal choices. Included in the category are comments related to providing better infrastructure for bicyclists and pedestrians and increasing multi-modal options to include light rail. A few comments also expressed participants' concerns with a focus on multi-modal transportation choices, as shown below.

Representative comments include:

- "Safe pedestrian and trail connectivity between schools, parks and shopping centers"
- "more bike only roads"
- "Plans for Park and ride should be in the plan"
- "must include rail"
- "Need to prioritize and elevate alternate mode travel"

Concerned comments include:

"Light rail is a great option. However, it requires a certain density to be effective. Will Tucsonans be ok with multistory buildings to achieve this?"

"Other modes are a consideration but traffic is the main focus."

Transit

As was the case for the vision statement, there were many comments that favor expanding our transit network in the region. Of the 71 transit comments, 15 specifically support a high-speed passenger rail between Tucson and Phoenix. Light rail and improved bus services were also frequently commented on.

Specific examples include:

- "Create a vision and assist in bringing to fruition inter-regional elements including high speed rail linkages between tucson and phoenix"
- "A goal specific to provision of light rail"
- "An effective light rail/modern streetcar system that attracts economic development and affordable housing development"

New Themes

Considering it is much easier to comment on existing goals, it is not surprising participants did not contribute a large number of comments specifically requesting new goals. However, there were a couple new themes that can be discerned from the data. There were several comments concerning two broad categories that are not directly included in the 2030 goals. The greatest number of comments concerning new ideas fell into the following broad categories: sustainability (26) and promoting alternative modes/reducing vehicle miles traveled (26).

Sustainability

There are two main types of comments that fall within this category. The first refers to pro-environment comments. The second are comments that do not specifically have the word sustainability in it, but rather discuss energy efficiency and other sustainability topics.

Representative comments include:

- "Add sustainability to the goals"
- "Make transportation sustainable"
- "stress environmental sustainability and recreational aspects"
- "Reduce regional energy budget for all transportation modes"
- "Other goals may include energy efficiency."

Encouraging the use of alternative modes of transportation / Reducing Vehicle Miles Traveled

There were many comments that have to do with education and promotion of alternative modes of travel. In addition there were comments supporting reducing vehicle miles. While there were 26 comments encouraging these ideas, there were a few comments (5) that specifically oppose these ideas.

Representative Comments supporting encouragement of alternative modes include:

- "Develop educational programs and incentives to promote public transportation over personal vehicles."
- "Higher emphasis on getting people to use transit - not just providing more that remains poorly utilized."

- "Reduce vehicle miles traveled (VMT) and average daily (auto) trips (ADT)"
- "provide incentives for people to use multimodal methods of travel"
- "Develop educational programs and incentives to promote public transportation over personal vehicles."

Non-supportive comments include:

- "Cars are the reality now. Individual transportation options are long-term. Each person will always want to go where they want, when they want. That should be OK."
- "We will always have cars - it is what people want"