Regional pedestrian plan helps identify demands to address safety needs

Whether pedestrians are crossing at crosswalks or walking to destinations along sidewalks or other routes, providing a safe route is a regional priority.

During its Dec. 11 meeting, Pima Association of Governments’ Regional Council approved the PAG Regional Pedestrian Plan.

The overall intent of the plan is to develop strategies for making this a more pedestrian-friendly region where people will choose to walk. The plan will provide guidance on pedestrian needs in PAG’s update to its long-range transportation plan.

The pedestrian plan explores issues such as pedestrian safety, comfort and accessibility. Receiving its first update in 14 years, the plan used a data-driven approach to identify pedestrian needs and opportunities in the region.

PAG developed a pedestrian-demand model that incorporates factors such as population density, locations of schools and essential services, existing walk-to-work rates, and other items for predicting where pedestrian demand is high and using this as a means of prioritizing candidate locations for pedestrian improvements. In this way, the region can better understand pedestrian needs and make the strategic investments in pedestrian improvements where they will have the biggest impact.

RTA Board OKs city recommendation to widen Broadway to six lanes

The City of Tucson will proceed to final design on the Broadway Boulevard, Euclid Avenue to Country Club Road, project, following a Dec. 11 Regional Transportation Authority Board approval of $1.5 million in design funding.

The estimated cost to complete the design and final alignment of the corridor, including right-of-way research/estimating, is $2.5 million. The City of Tucson is providing the additional $1 million.

The regional corridor project will be widened to six lanes with bus pullouts, bike lanes and sidewalks. Under the original RTA plan, the Broadway Boulevard project was described as “widen the roadway to a 6-lane arterial, plus 2 dedicated bus lanes, bike lanes and sidewalks”.

In a recent detailed modeling analysis, the City’s project team concluded that the 6-lane option would not diminish project functionality.

See “Broadway,” page 4
PAG’s legislative priorities highlighted during reception

Southern Arizona legislative representatives interacted with local elected officials Dec. 4 at Pima Association of Governments’ Legislative Reception to discuss issues relating to transportation infrastructure, financing, and environmental and economic impacts.

Steve Christy, chairman of the Arizona State Transportation Board and a member of PAG’s Regional Council and Regional Transportation Authority Board, gave an overview of PAG’s legislative principles and priorities and an update on RTA plan results. Legislators providing brief remarks included Rep.-elect Chris Ackerly, District 2, Rep. Victoria Steele, District 9, Sen. David Bradley, District 10, and Sen. Steve Farley, District 9. Each expressed their beliefs about the importance of transportation and the significance of its role to the state’s economy.

Ricardo Pineda, Mexican Consul in Tucson, provided remarks as well and highlighted the importance of transportation infrastructure on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border for enhanced economic development in both Arizona and Sonora.


Pima Association of Governments’ Sun Rideshare program will continue its Rewards Program in 2015.

Sun Rideshare provides services that make alternative transportation, such as carpooling, vanpooling, mass transit, biking, and walking more affordable, accessible and convenient.

Rewards program participants who log their commute or personal trips in the Sun Rideshare Travel Calendar, www.SunRideshare.org/rewards, are eligible to earn monthly rewards by earning points for each alternative mode trip. All trips must start and finish within Pima County.

Congratulations to all the 2014 winners.
Light the Night events promote bike safety

PAG Regional Council Member and Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild and Pima Association of Governments’ Executive Director Farhad Moghimi assisted with distributing bike lights during a “Light the Night” event on Dec. 2. The Living Streets Alliance event is supported by PAG and the City of Tucson to promote bicycle safety education. Since October, more than 400 light sets and 65 free helmets for youth have been distributed.

For more information, visit http://www.livingstreetsalliance.org/event/light-the-night-campbell-ave-e-3rd-street/ or call (520) 261-8777.
Broadway to be widened to 6 lanes

An analysis of the technical data supports that six lanes of multimodal traffic will meet the capacity, safety and mobility intent approved in the RTA plan.

“The City of Tucson, working with the RTA, formed the Broadway Citizens Task Force following the RTA Administrative Code and has been engaged over the last 29 months to create a balanced, livable and multimodal corridor recommendation while maintaining the functionality of the improvements as adopted in the RTA plan,” according to Tucson Mayor and RTA Board Member Jonathan Rothschild.

The RTA Technical Management Committee considered the “functionality” of the recommended cross-section and voted unanimously to endorse the analysis.

In a review of the RTA statute (portions of A.R.S. 48-5304, 48-5309 and 48-5314), Thomas Benavidez of the Benavidez Law Group provided a legal opinion that the city’s proposed implementation of the project as recommended by the project Citizens’ Task Force and the RTA’s Technical Management Committee “1) would not constitute a substantial change of the RTA’s 20-year regional transportation plan; 2) would not diminish project functionality; and 3) it would be consistent with the RTA’s fiduciary duty to the public to spend RTA funds in the most economical and feasible manner possible.”

The Board considered a 6-lane recommendation from the project’s Citizen Task Force to the Tucson City Council, which approved the recommendation on Oct. 9. The citizens group, which included representatives from businesses, area neighborhoods and the region, made the recommendation following an extensive public participation process that included 34 committee meetings and four public open houses.

The RTA plan allocates $42,120,000 to the Broadway project and another $29,222,000 in regional funds, including $25 million from 1997 Pima County Transportation Bonds.
A Corridor Concept Report for the Interstate 11 and Intermountain West Corridor Study concludes that, if constructed, these transportation corridors would help improve the state and region’s global competitiveness.

The study was conducted by the Arizona Department of Transportation and the Nevada Department of Transportation.

On Oct. 11, the Arizona State Transportation Board, led by Pima County's representative, Chairman Steve Christy, unanimously accepted the report that shows the corridor connecting manufacturers, assembly plants, distribution hubs and large consumption markets and linking to the state’s broader goal to diversify Arizona’s economy by enhancing trade.

The report ties together all three phases of the study, laying out the justification and business case for the corridor, providing results of the corridor alternatives analysis, and describing steps toward implementation.

For this region, results of the alternatives screening analysis recommended that the I-11 and Intermountain West Corridor connect the Phoenix metro area to the border with Mexico via eastern Pima County and Nogales.

Transportation modes (e.g., highway, intercity passenger rail) and potential alignments will need to be determined through additional study, which was supported by the Pima Association of Governments’ Regional Council earlier this year.

The study was conducted with extensive stakeholder and public involvement, resulting in approximately 3,000 comments received and over 60 meetings and events held. All study documents and comments can be found at www.i11study.com.
In late October, Pima Association of Governments’ staff and nearly 150 volunteers helped count cyclists and pedestrians over three days at over 100 locations across the region.

The data collected for the 2014 Bicycle and Pedestrian Count is used in a variety of ways: planning and evaluation; prioritization of locations to improve; safety analysis and raising community awareness about bicycling and pedestrian characteristics and trends. The count data will be entered into a database and a summary report is expected during the first quarter of 2015.

This year’s counters logged over 500 hours of observation time as they tallied walkers and bikers during peak morning and afternoon commute times and at a few locations during weekend mornings.

Drought impacts riparian areas and wells in urban periphery

Pima Association of Governments’ long-term hydrologic analysis of Cienega Creek in 2014 documented several record-breaking low water levels, indicating localized vulnerability for the region’s riparian areas. This, along with PAG’s 2012 shallow groundwater report showing a steady increase of wells drilled, is raising concern among land managers.

The concern for the long-term health of the region’s rare aquatic and shallow groundwater-dependent ecosystems, especially during the driest seasons of the year, calls for increased coordination of water and land use planners with well owners.

PAG provided drought analyses and conservation recommendations to the Local Drought Impact Group (LDIG). The recommendations were incorporated into the LIDG annual report to the Arizona Department of Water Resources. Water monitoring is also recommended for these areas especially where stormwater infiltration earthworks are used to increase infiltration into the local aquifer.

Implementing conservation strategies near shallow groundwater areas will help the residents’ water supply as well as sustain the area’s habitat.

Birds-eye view of surface flows and riparian vegetation in Davidson Canyon shallow groundwater area, looking north to Cienega Creek at the foothills of the Rincon Mountains in the distance.
Buffelgrass event set for Jan. 24

Mark your calendar for Saturday, Jan. 24, to join hundreds of volunteers who will participate in the annual Beat Back Buffelgrass Day.

Volunteer events will occur throughout the day in and around Tucson and participants may register at www.buffelgrass.org.

The Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center has organized Beat Back Buffelgrass Day since 2010. This year, SABCC is the lead organizer with collaboration from Pima Association of Governments, www.PAGRegion.com, Tucson Electric Power, www.tep.com and other partners.

Buffelgrass, an invasive weed, is threatening to transform the mostly fireproof and diverse Sonoron Desert into a flammable and impoverished savanna, affecting both natural and urban areas.

“This year we will again have the support of Coach Mike Candrea and the University of Arizona’s Women’s Softball Team,” said Lindy Brigham, executive director of the Southern Arizona Buffelgrass Coordination Center. “We cannot let this invasive grass destroy our unique Sonoran Desert environment and quality of life.”

PAG’s greenhouse gas inventory report shows increasing emissions

Electricity use is a major source of regional greenhouse gas emissions, according to Pima Association of Governments’ Regional Greenhouse Gas Inventory: 1990-2012.

The greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory can be accessed on PAG’s website: http://www.pagnet.org/documents/Air/GreenHouseGas-2014-Inventory.pdf.

Other major findings of the report include:

- From 1990 to 2012, regional emissions increased by 32 percent
- Private and commercial vehicle travel is the second largest contributor to regional emissions
- Regional emissions declined 3 percent from 2010 to 2012 due to reductions in vehicle travel and residential and industrial energy use

Tracking greenhouse gas emissions is gaining importance as federal, state and local government agencies seek to reduce emissions to mitigate the impacts of climate change. As a result, GHG reduction goals are being integrated into long-range transportation and resource planning.

PAG tracks GHG emissions generated by regional electricity and natural gas consumption, vehicle travel, waste disposal and other sources and provides this information to our member jurisdictions. Pima County and the City of Tucson use the inventory information and trends to shape and evaluate their GHG mitigation strategies to meet their GHG reduction goals.
Nearly 4,000 pounds of grease collected for biodiesel conversion

The annual Day After Thanksgiving Grease Recycle event collected 3,863 pounds of grease to bring the 10-year grease collection total up to 28,863 pounds.

Pima County’s Wastewater Reclamation Department partnered with Pima Association of Governments, the Town of Sahuarita and EDGE to collect used cooking oil from five locations throughout the community.

The grease that is collected is converted into biodiesel, a cleaner-burning fuel created from vegetable oils that can be used to operate diesel engine vehicles.

The next grease collection and recycling event will move to January 2016 due to a number of factors, including requests to recycle used grease from both Thanksgiving and Christmas meals.

Pima County residents can still drop off used cooking oil year-round at the following locations:

**EDGE**
8939 S. Eisenhower Road  
(520) 790-3341  
7 a.m. – 4 p.m. (Mon.-Fri.)

**Mary’s Market**
1555 S. Tenth Ave.  
(520) 884-8720  
6 a.m. – 1 p.m. (Mon.-Fri.)

**Originate Natural Building Materials**
526 N. Ninth Ave.  
Outside Parking Lot  
24 hours / 7 days a week  
(520) 792-4207

Thank you Don Freeman

Don Freeman, Pima Association of Governments’ Technical Services Coordinator, retired at the end of October after 14 years of service.

Freeman was hired at PAG on Feb. 8, 2000, as the Transportation Programming Manager and was promoted to PAG Transportation Engineer in 2004. In 2009, he became Technical Services Coordinator.

Prior to coming to PAG, Freeman was employed with Toledo Metropolitan Area Council of Governments as the Director of Transportation.

PAG earns 2 PRSA awards for Sun Rideshare campaign

In October, Pima Association of Governments received two 2014 Impact Awards for Excellence in Public Relations from the Southern Arizona Chapter of the Public Relations Society of America. PAG’s Sun Rideshare “Drive Less. Save More.” campaign earned an award under the Image or Brand Identity Campaign and a second award as the Best in Show for the campaign.

The campaign helped to increase awareness of the Sun Rideshare program and alternate mode transportation choices. As a result, more people visited the Sun Rideshare website and signed up in the Sun Rideshare travel database in order to be eligible for the Sun Rideshare Rewards Program.

PAG was recognized for a well-planned campaign, including informal research at the onset, as well as campaign results.