

**Report of the  
94TH ARIZONA TOWN HALL  
“FROM HERE TO THERE:  
TRANSPORTATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR ARIZONA”  
Tucson, Arizona  
April 19-22, 2009**

Transportation in its most elemental form simply involves the movement of people and goods from one place to another. And while elemental, it is the means by which we overcome physical separation and is the mechanism by which we are held together. Throughout history, transportation has been the gateway to expansion: enhanced transportation allows for more trade of goods and the spread of people. Transportation is an essential component of American life that affects and is affected by almost every aspect of our modern society, including life, health, family, jobs, schools and education, housing, the community, infrastructure, fiscal and financial systems, the economy, and the environment. Because transportation is interwoven with the fundamental characteristics of our modern society, transportation morphs from its mere elemental form into something far more complex and multifaceted.

Participants of the 94th Arizona Town Hall traveled from throughout Arizona and convened in Tucson for four days to discuss the challenges and opportunities transportation presents to Arizona. The Town Hall addressed gasoline prices, alternative fuels and related environmental concerns, and metropolitan, rural, tribal and tourism issues. Participants examined the effects of available modes of transportation, including freight transportation, on Arizona’s participation in international trade. Participants analyzed highway travel and congestion, public transit, long-distance passenger rail, air transportation and forms of non-motorized transportation, public involvement in transportation decision making, and the complex topic of transportation finance, all while taking into consideration Arizona’s diverse population (including the aging). Participants debated the best approaches to seizing transportation opportunities in light of the current economic recession.

The results of these discussions are included in this report. While not all Town Hall participants agree with each of the conclusions and recommendations, this report reflects the overall consensus reached at the 94th Arizona Town Hall.

**TRANSPORTATION TODAY**

Transportation plays an integral role in the lives of Arizona residents. It affects every aspect of Arizonans’ lives by connecting Arizonans to their places of work and communities, providing life-sustaining goods and providing access to other parts of the country. Transportation serves as a major conduit for tourism and freight transport, two essential economic forces in Arizona. Additionally, transportation is the bond that allows for the formation and maintenance of strong community partnerships and relationships. Arizonans use one or more transportation methods on a daily basis, such as car, train, bus, light rail, air, bicycle, or walking.

Transportation in its various modes has played a significant role in the rapid expansion of many of Arizona's metropolitan areas. While other viable forms of transportation, such as trains, buses, bicycles and walking co-exist, the primary mode of transportation for Arizonans is motor vehicle transport.

As Arizona has seen rapid population growth in many of its communities, transportation has often been an afterthought, and sufficient modes of transportation have

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not been implemented to keep pace with the creation of new housing developments and business centers. Stable, consistent and predictable funding mechanisms are not in place to ensure the maintenance of existing infrastructure, or the development of innovative infrastructure and delivery of new transportation facilities that allow for the development of sustainable communities.

Often, people and businesses choose to locate based on availability of modes of transportation, including efficient public transportation, freeway access and airports. Other times, people choose to live where housing is most affordable. This can be outside of the metropolitan area, which can require a longer commute and a lack of efficient and effective public transportation.

The environmental concerns associated with transportation, specifically air pollution from fuel combustion, comprise a major challenge facing Arizona. Another challenge is how to provide affordable, effective means of transportation to the elderly, a growing percentage of Arizona's population, as well as Arizona's low-income, disabled, and student populations.

Although the state as a whole faces challenges, the concerns of urban and rural areas often vary. Key issues for urban areas include congestion and safety, as well as adequacy of street and highway systems, bus and light rail, commuter rail, and bicycle and pedestrian modes of transportation. Two key issues for rural areas are lack of funding for road improvement, maintenance and road safety, and the implementation of an effective public transit system. Arizona's tribal lands also have specific transportation concerns, many of which relate to safety improvements and greater interconnectivity to metropolitan areas.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF ARIZONA'S TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

Numerous factors have contributed to the development of Arizona's transportation system, including:

- Population growth
- Urban sprawl
- Affordability of homes
- Stability and diversity of Arizona's economy
- Availability of local, state and federal funding
- Availability of land for transportation infrastructure

- Location of railroads
- Water resources
- Low cost of fuel
- Existing airfields and air transport hubs
- Location of educational institutions

Future transportation systems will be impacted by these factors, as well as environmental concerns and the problems associated with petroleum dependency. Future transportation decisions will likely incorporate the use of alternative fuels, such as solar, biofuels, and electricity. Technological advancements such as web conferencing, intelligent vehicles and roadways, and alternative fuel vehicles will be factors to consider that will help address environmental concerns. Other considerations for future transportation decisions include changes in population demographics, land use issues including mixed-use developments and land splits, expanding the rail corridors, reducing the dependence on vehicles, the effect of transportation on job growth, and affordable housing.

### **DEVELOPING A SUSTAINABLE TRANSPORTATION SYSTEM**

Developing a sustainable transportation system is key. To achieve sustainability, Arizona needs to develop and fund an integrated, multimodal transportation system that reduces our dependence on petroleum and limits the production of greenhouse gases. Innovative and progressive transportation planning is also needed. Specifically, concepts such as parking fees, car sharing, zoning restrictions and incentives, intelligent traffic systems, developer-paid impact fees, toll roads, and expanding and incentivizing the use of public transit should be explored.

*Developing a sustainable transportation system is key.*

Developing a sustainable transportation system may require a shift in values for many Arizonans who are dependent on vehicles. If we inform the public about current issues and engage them in reaching solutions, we may find that many Arizonans are open to new and innovative forms of mass or public transit. An informed public will play a key role in passing voter initiatives and electing public officials who will create new transportation policy. Failure to engage the public may hamper efforts to implement new transportation systems and build transportation infrastructure.

To further support sustainability, there should be a statewide integrated decision-making process that would allow Arizona to be less reactive in its decision making and more focused on collaborative transportation planning. Another important aspect that must be considered is Arizona's stature in the global economy. Arizona must ensure communication with industries on a global scale. Arizona also must address its freight and trucking capacities, highway capacities, the capacity of the ports of Tucson and Phoenix as well as the border cities of Yuma, Douglas and Nogales, railroad transport, and, as Arizona significantly relies on its tourism industry to generate revenue, Arizona must invest in greater air transportation opportunities.

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Arizona must also take into account safety-related measures in its transportation planning. We must ensure that pedestrians, those who use mobility devices, cyclists, wildlife and equestrians, in both rural and urban areas, have safe routes on which to travel. As an example, the Complete Streets concept is a model that can be adopted. Safety issues should be brought to the forefront at the transportation design level and should be addressed well before implementation.

## **TRANSPORTATION DECISIONS**

Individual transportation decisions are often driven by social and cultural issues, convenience, a sense of personal choice, and environmental and economic concerns. There can often be a disconnect between environmental and economic factors. For example, when gasoline prices significantly increased, Arizona saw a small but unprecedented decrease in vehicle miles traveled and a related increase in transit use. However, the lack of a more significant drop in vehicle travel, even when fuel costs doubled, may arise from the fact that the public transit and non-motorized transportation options are limited for most Arizonans, especially in more rural areas. The lack of travel choices could negatively impact household finances and put the state's economy at a disadvantage. In planning for the future, Arizona must keep in mind that petroleum supply is limited and the global demand for petroleum has dramatically increased, which ultimately will result in a higher cost for petroleum fuel. Reliance on petroleum is not only an economic concern but one of national security and the environment.

*Market forces, along with the government regulation of transportation, should play an important role in Arizona's transportation planning because transportation is integral to Arizona's economy.*

Market forces, along with the government regulation of transportation, should play an important role in Arizona's transportation planning because transportation is integral to Arizona's economy. Public and private sectors will need to collaborate and utilize both incentives and disincentives to modify the decision making of individuals. Transportation failures restrict the conduct of business and make business operations more complex and expensive. Thus, it is important that private industry be involved in the transportation planning process.

As one area of involvement, private industry could provide incentives and disincentives to influence individuals' transportation decision making. For example, private employers could subsidize employees' utilization of public transit, carpooling, living close to work, and telecommuting. Alternatively, as a disincentive, private employers could charge parking fees to those individuals who choose to drive a private vehicle to work. Arizona should seek out new ways to privatize transportation infrastructure and create incentives to increase private sector involvement in transportation development and maintenance. This may require Arizona to clarify and refine the application of state and local statutes and regulations as they relate to

transportation projects. It may also require exemptions and incentives to private companies that agree to share the costs associated with transportation infrastructure.

The Government's role in affecting individual transportation decisions is to anticipate transportation needs, ensure that transportation systems provide basic services, and develop and maintain dedicated funding sources for transportation maintenance and development. In order to offset increased costs associated with building and maintaining transportation infrastructure, the government may want to increase existing and new transportation-based taxes. A gasoline tax is an insufficient long term funding source; we must transition to a more comprehensive funding model that imposes usage-based fees

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that take into consideration the actual cost of operating and maintaining Arizona's transportation system. Toll fees are another option for generating revenue for the maintenance and construction of transportation infrastructure. Governments may also provide incentives to individuals who reduce their petroleum use by providing tax rebates to individuals who purchase and drive alternative-fuel or electric vehicles.

Another possible role for government is the imposition of mandates or laws, similar to those required for water sources, which require that a certain level of funding and infrastructure programming be in place before significant land development can occur. This would require developers to ensure that adequate transportation methods are in place. However, it is not always feasible to simply impose costs on the private sector, specifically private land developers, because this may discourage doing business in Arizona. There is a delicate balance to be maintained between encouraging development and paying for the transportation costs of those developments.

Government also can play a role in educating the public about the environmental impacts of urban sprawl and the unintended consequences of an individual's transportation decisions. Finally, government can promote more effective collaboration between transportation and land use planning and facilitate the interconnectivity of the private and public sectors in transportation decision making.

## **EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT OF TRANSPORTATION STAKEHOLDERS**

Arizona needs a shared vision for transportation planning that is transparent, promotes statewide and interstate collaboration, is multi-modal and sets forth clear priorities. While some advancements have been made, Arizona does not currently have an effective transportation planning mechanism by which all of its stakeholders come together to address Arizona's transportation needs. Arizona's transportation planning mechanisms must involve all stakeholders in the planning process. These stakeholders' roles and responsibilities must be specifically defined.

The existing MPOs and COGs are an effective tool to coordinate stakeholders and provide the ground level work necessary to facilitate coordinated planning with the state. However, many rural areas of Arizona experience greater difficulty in collaborating on

regional transportation solutions because the distances between population centers and the disparity of needs and financing make it difficult to create a unified vision for transportation planning. ADOT should continue to work closely with the existing MPOs and COGs to ensure implementation of the initiatives set forth in the BQAZ *Statewide Framework Studies*.

Arizona must do a better job at setting transportation priorities. We must focus on collaboration between multi-county and regional levels, taking into account regional economic interdependency. To the extent that monies are not available to finance transportation projects or maintain already existing infrastructure, Arizona needs to continue to develop a statewide voice for prioritizing the allocation of existing funds.

Land use decisions and transportation planning need to be better coordinated. The failure to do this in the past has led to transportation decisions being made in reaction to land use decisions. To prevent this in the future, stakeholders from both areas need to meet on a regular basis to create and follow up on integrated land use and transportation plans. This needs to occur in both urban and rural areas. It is at these meetings that issues related to zoning restrictions and funding sources can be fleshed out and thoughtfully analyzed.

*Land use decisions and transportation planning need to be better coordinated.*

Further, in order to provide smart growth, Arizona must actively seek competitive funding from federal government funding sources. Statutory and constitutional changes are needed to address limitations on the use of state trust land. Arizona must also ensure that it collaborates with tribal authorities to ensure comprehensive transportation planning.

In addition to state, regional and local transportation planning groups, Arizona needs to consider the following stakeholders when addressing transportation planning: the financial sector, schools and education facilities, the nonprofit sector, private sector employers and businesses, the health care industry, and the housing and real estate industry. All of the above are critical stakeholders who are often left out of transportation discussions. It is also important to include members of the public, particularly the citizens who utilize our transportation systems on a daily basis. The public also needs a voice in evaluating existing modes of transportation. Stakeholder meetings and collaboration should be made more effective by limiting their time and scope. However, it can be difficult to engage the public in discourse regarding long-range transportation planning, as it has no immediate rewards. One potential solution is to educate the public about the importance of transportation planning and use targeted marketing to ensure that certain demographics such as the elderly, disabled, students and low income individuals are engaged in the planning process. Ultimately, all transportation projects need public support.

## AVAILABLE RESOURCES

Currently, Arizona's highway and roadway transportation system is funded primarily by five sources: (1) The State Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) which is made up of the Vehicle License Tax (VLT), gas taxes and fuel use taxes; (2) the federal highway program, which is primarily made up of fuel taxes, and which will need to be renewed in 2009 if such funding is to continue; (3) state lottery funds which may fund

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public transit; (4) local and county sales taxes; and (5) local general fund dollars. Aviation is funded primarily through federal dollars, with some portion of the funding coming from user fees and other sources. Arizona must take additional actions to increase, stabilize and diversify transportation funding. With the

global economy in serious disarray and Arizona's poor fiscal condition, Arizona must look to alternative funding mechanisms and ensure that existing funding mechanisms remain solid, despite the economic downturn.

First, Arizona must pass legislation to constitutionally protect the Highway User Revenue Fund, aviation trust funds, and lottery funds so that the Legislature may not divert monies from these funds to use for other state purposes. Such monies should be used strictly to pay for transportation-related costs. Second, Arizona should pass legislation to expand its ability to use monies from the Highway User Revenue Fund for public transit. Further, Arizona must enact a constitutional amendment to protect the VLT to ensure that such monies cannot be raided and used for non-transportation related expenditures.

Some believe it would be in Arizona's best interest to opt out of receiving federal funding for transportation, as the federal government places limitations and restrictions on the way monies can be collected and used. However, federal opt-out provisions would have to be enacted by Congress.

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As to other potential funding sources, Arizona should consider modernizing its toll road legislation and implementing toll roads. Another potential funding source is a transponder program which would require non-residents to pay a fee for driving on Arizona's roadways and highways.

Additionally, Arizona should increase its gas tax and adjust it to keep up with inflation as a traditional funding source. However, raising gas taxes may disproportionately affect low income individuals and hinder their ability to attain employment if affordable and efficient public transit is not available. In the long term, Arizona should consider alternative funding sources such as modifying the vehicle license tax or imposing a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) tax. A usage-based fee would decrease the number of miles driven, which could result in less congestion and traffic-related safety incidents. Similarly, congestion pricing could be used for travel during peak hours. Another potential funding source is increasing local sales tax to pay for

transportation infrastructure and public transit needs. However, like gas taxes, sales taxes often disproportionately burden lower income individuals. Consideration should also be given to imposing a tax on non-essential consumer products, such as bottled water or cigarettes.

However, increasing taxes or imposing new taxes can often be a political death knell for those persons seeking elected office, and widespread public support will be required. Arizona must educate the public about the costs associated with transportation and the need for diverse revenue sources. Arizona should form a Citizen Transportation Review Commission to evaluate Arizona's transportation needs and its current funding sources. This Commission could engage in outreach with Arizona's elected officials and the public to suggest legislation to increase or impose new taxes to fund transportation initiatives.

To further diversify funding, Arizona should explore public-private partnerships as a way to fund transportation. For example, in Chandler, a private company builds and maintains bus stop shelters in exchange for securing advertising spots. Certain facets of transportation could be privatized.

Because of the severity of this country's economic recession, the state will receive federal stimulus monies, some of which have been allocated for transportation purposes. Arizona hopes not only to use the funding for existing maintenance, but also to increase system capacity and specifically widen lanes on its highways. However, Arizonans must remember that the stimulus monies are not a continuing source of revenue and will not meet Arizona's long-term transportation needs.

## **OPTIMIZING TRANSPORTATION FUNDING**

There are a number of barriers to optimal development and implementation of transportation. These barriers include:

- Legal and political constraints on the ability to impose new taxes.
- Legal and practical limitations on the ability of state, regional, and local governments to work with the private sector to develop and maintain infrastructure.
- The general public's lack of understanding of the importance and dire state of Arizona's transportation systems.
- Arizona's current economic crisis.
- The lack of consistent, reliable funding sources.
- A general anti-tax sentiment among Arizona's citizens.

Local, regional, and state interests often diverge, which can hinder collaborative transportation planning and financing. Legal restrictions on jurisdictions' abilities to impose transportation taxes should be removed.

Arizonans do not trust that funding allocated to transportation will be spent properly and that highways, roads, and other transportation modes will be properly operated and maintained. Therefore, Arizonans need to see enhanced fiscal responsibility

when it comes to spending public monies for transportation. This includes reducing the administrative costs of transportation.

Transportation decision-making bodies must also better engage the public and raise awareness of the costs associated with transportation. Public discourse and participation must be encouraged in the transportation planning process, as transportation

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issues affect all Arizonans. All Arizonans have a vested interest in the funding of transportation and have a social responsibility to ensure that transportation is adequately funded. Restoring public confidence in the use of transportation funds may assist in the passing of additional taxes to fund transportation projects.

Arizona has yet to diversify its funding sources and lacks a strong leadership contingent to spearhead the diversification process. Changes are also needed for existing funding sources. For instance, impact and development fees are often collected too late in the development process to keep up with the need for transportation infrastructure. Often, by the time the fees are collected, the development is in its final stages and transportation financing needs have yet to be fully addressed.

Although Arizona faces many barriers to optimal transportation funding, there are also several factors working in its favor. These include:

- Collaboration between ADOT and the MPOs and COGs.
- A recent emphasis on public transit in the urban areas.
- Partnerships between land developers and county and local governments to fund local and regional transportation improvements.
- Arizona’s ability to focus on transportation planning at a relatively early stage in its development.
- Arizona’s growing commitment to improving environmental conditions.
- The confidence that Arizona citizens have in ADOT to effectively deliver and manage Arizona’s transportation system.

## **PUBLIC TRANSIT**

Public transit must be a priority for Arizona’s transportation system. Many of Arizona’s highways are clogged with congestion and alternative modes of transportation are sorely needed. The availability of public transit is critical to Arizona’s economic future. It will affect Arizona’s ability to create and maintain business centers and attract industries and residents who are accustomed to sophisticated public transit systems and desire an urban living environment. Increased use of public transit also will provide many environmental benefits, such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution.

*The availability of public transit is critical to Arizona’s economic future.*

Many of our transportation needs, both urban and rural, can be met through effective public transit. We need to think creatively to design and implement modes of public transit that are tailored to a specific area or population. Key methods of public transit include subsidized taxis, paratransit, rail, buses, and shared vehicles. In metropolitan areas, it is particularly important that each element of the public transit system be fully integrated with the rest of the system. Arizona must adopt multi-modal public transportation systems, recognizing that particular modes of transit are better suited to particular communities.

Arizona's public transit system must also provide connectivity between airports and urban and rural areas. It should provide transportation between major metropolitan areas and from outlying rural areas to urban areas and population centers. It should do so at low cost to the end-user.

Public transit is essential to serving specific populations, such as the growing elderly population, youth, the disabled, and the economically disadvantaged, who are often entirely dependent on public transit as their sole method of getting from one place to another. Ensuring adequate public transit for these populations can be particularly difficult in rural areas where the basic infrastructure has not yet been developed. Alternatively, the use of public transit is a quality of life issue for many riders. Many metropolitan public transit riders are "choice riders" rather than "dependent riders." Some feel that issues associated with choice riders should only be addressed after the

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needs of dependent riders are met. Others think that attracting choice riders is key to the survival and growth of a sustainable public transit system.

Arizona needs dedicated funding sources for public transit, with funds coming from the federal, state, and local levels. Funding for transportation should be prioritized in accordance with a set of criteria that takes into account the mode of transportation, its cost-

effectiveness, and the population and area being served. Public transit is often underfunded in rural areas, preventing rural communities from operating effective public transit systems. The non-user benefits of public transportation, such as improved air quality and decreased highway congestion, should also be considered when allocating funds for public transit. In the short term, Arizona should invest in rapid bus transit, as it is less costly than high speed rail or commuter trains and is an effective way to transport large numbers of people.

Public-private partnerships need to be created to sustain an effective public transit system. These partnerships, in turn, create jobs and can be used to induce employees to take advantage of the public transit system. Private companies can assist the government in providing funding and infrastructure for public transit to the rural areas. Collaboration with faith-based, non-profit, and other public agencies can also help meet the transportation needs of underserved areas. Land use planning should encourage transit-oriented development as well as the use of public transit. Public transit can also be improved through greater coordination among local and regional governments.

## **AVAILABLE LOW-COST STRATEGIES**

There are several available strategies that can help Arizona meet its transportation needs without utilizing additional funding. These strategies include the following:

### **Public and Private Employment-Related Strategies**

- Encourage telecommuting.
- Promote alternative work schedules with flexible start and end times to allow for a reduction in traffic congestion during peak hours.
- Encourage extended work days with shorter work weeks.
- Take advantage of technological advancements, including teleconferencing and web conferencing.
- Provide incentives for carpooling, such as reduced-cost parking
- Encourage and provide incentives to employees to live near their workplaces.

### **Public-Private Partnership Strategies**

- Coordinate with private industry for the provision of van pools, car sharing, short-term vehicle rentals, passenger trains that can also accommodate cars, and shuttle services.
- Privatize the operation of public transit.
- Partner with private companies to implement intelligent transportation systems to reduce traffic congestion.
- Coordinate with non-profits and faith-based organizations to provide transportation opportunities to the elderly, youth, the disabled, the economically disadvantaged, and those who need transportation to health care facilities.

### **Land Use Strategies**

- Reform zoning laws to encourage high-density development and mixed-use projects, including infill, in both urban and suburban areas.
- Provide incentives for land use planning and design that include alternate modes of transportation.
- Encourage livable and sustainable land use guidelines.
- Reform laws to discourage lot splits without appropriate transportation infrastructure.

### **Government Strategies**

- Use school buses and paratransit shuttles as alternative modes of transportation during times when they would otherwise be idle.
- Expand government owned and operated alternative fueling facilities for public use.

- Modify city codes to provide for expanded sidewalks and shaded walkways to make walking more pleasant.
- Constitutionally protect HURF, trust funds and other public transportation funding sources so that they cannot be misappropriated for other purposes.
- Encourage universities and community colleges to coordinate with public transit systems and promote student use of public transit.
- Reform laws governing state trust land to allow for dedicated rights-of-way for transportation improvements.

## **RURAL AND TRIBAL COMMUNITIES**

Arizona’s transportation system suffers from a lack of funding and sufficient resources to effectively maintain and develop infrastructure in Arizona’s rural and tribal communities. Most agree that the transportation systems servicing Arizona’s rural and tribal communities are inadequate and that insufficient road maintenance and a lack of alternative modes of transportation are of particular concern.

### **Rural Communities**

Arizona’s rural communities face two primary transportation challenges: (1) lack of funding to provide for maintenance and development of roads; and (2) lack of an efficient public transit system. A substantial number of Arizona’s roads are located in rural areas. Because of a lack of funding, some of these roads are not properly maintained. Many of the existing rural roadways are in poor condition, are unpaved, and lack curbs, gutters, and sidewalks within town limits. Inclement weather causes further highway and roadway damage, exacerbating safety issues. Many rural roads function as highways for commuters and commercial traffic, including freight transport, but the roads were not initially designed and engineered to serve such functions. Air quality and safety issues caused by freight transportation through rural areas are problematic and need to be addressed. Several rural communities are served by only a single roadway, so access can be severely limited when that roadway is closed by an accident or roadway maintenance.

*Rural areas should focus on developing multi-modal forms of public transit that are customized to meet the needs of each community.*

Public transit and air transport in Arizona’s rural areas are limited. Some believe that there is no cost effective way to provide public transit to truly rural communities, so people who live in rural communities must adopt a vehicle-dependent

lifestyle. However, others believe that public transit can and should be made available to rural communities. In fact, some rural communities already benefit from bus service and rail transport. Air service to rural areas has dropped off with the economic downturn and the deregulation of the airline industry. Rural areas should focus on developing multi-modal forms of public transit that are customized to meet the needs of each community.

It is particularly difficult for rural areas to raise funds due to a lack of a large tax base. Other fees, such as impact fees, are not practical funding sources for rural areas. However, many of Arizona’s rural areas provide a steady source of income through

tourism, which benefits the state as a whole. Such rural contributions to the statewide economy should be taken into account when determining where monies should go for transportation maintenance and improvements.

Some suggestions for improvements to be undertaken in rural areas are:

- Improve roadway and highway maintenance.
- Implement all-weather roads across Arizona's highway system.
- Address safety issues.
- Provide multi-modal and inter-modal transit options.
- Develop a consistent transportation funding source specifically reserved for rural communities.
- Improve collaboration among counties, cities, towns, and the business communities.
- Create a regional air service facility.
- Impose freight and trucking user-fees.
- Encourage public involvement.

### **Tribal Communities**

Arizona's tribal communities are often located in rural areas and have similar concerns regarding transportation funding: (1) a lack of funding to develop new roads and maintain already existing roads; and (2) a lack of public transit. Transportation options, other than vehicle travel, are severely limited. Because tribal communities are often underrepresented in the transportation planning process, their needs frequently go unmet. The number of accidents and fatalities on tribal roads is disproportionate and must be addressed.

Some suggestions for transportation improvements in tribal areas are:

- Improve collaboration among Arizona's counties and cities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and the private sector to ensure increased funding for the Indian Reservation Roads (IRR) Program.
- Support tribal communities in seeking additional federal funding for transportation improvements.
- Ensure adequate tribal representation on the Arizona State Transportation Board to provide a voice for the tribal communities in statewide transportation planning.
- Support tribal member participation in the transportation decision-making process.
- Ensure that there is adequate public transportation available for tribal communities surrounding educational institutions built on the reservation, such as Scottsdale Community College.

## URBAN COMMUNITIES

The transportation needs of Arizona’s urban areas are currently being addressed by the construction of highways in Phoenix and Tucson and the expansion of public transit. However, sufficient funding is not available to expand and maintain existing highways, roadways, and public transit, and there is a disconnect between land use planning and transportation.

### Challenges

A significant challenge to the improvement of Arizona’s transportation in urban areas is the disconnect between land use planning and transportation. The challenge exists because developers and the individuals who live in “leap frog communities” are

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not fully covering the costs associated with transportation infrastructure and maintenance. The “drive until you qualify” mentality greatly impacts transportation costs and quality of life issues.

Another challenge is congestion on Arizona’s highways and freeways. I-10 is the primary arterial route through Arizona’s urban areas and congestion is of great concern.

Freight traffic on I-10 and other urban roadways not only adds to congestion; it also blocks major roadways, and creates environmental issues such as increased air pollution. Rail crossings that are “at grade” in urban areas also exacerbate congestion.

Insufficient public transit in urban areas is another challenge facing Arizona. The bus systems are inefficient and light rail is limited to specific areas. Arizona needs to ensure its public transit options provide improved connectivity.

Safety on Arizona’s freeways, highways, and roadways is a concern. Construction zones need to be better managed to provide for safe driving during maintenance projects.

### Opportunities

Arizona needs a comprehensive urban transportation plan with a sustainable funding source as its backbone. Cities, MPOs, and COGs have already established

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transportation planning bodies, and need to continue to take the lead in creating new transportation funding sources and coordinating the planning of urban transportation improvements. These entities should also look at other regional transportation models for guidance.

It is important that the cities, MPOs, and COGs encourage public participation throughout all stages of the transportation planning process. Transportation authorities, such as MPOs, Pima County RTA, and Valley Metro, could be consolidated to avoid a fragmented urban transportation system.

A number of transportation planning studies have already been performed. Arizona should utilize these studies, which include Reality Check, MAG Regional Transit Framework Study, and BQAZ. At the state level, ADOT should take a more holistic approach to urban transportation planning and facilitate coordination between the cities and regional planning organizations.

Arizona needs to expand its major highway corridors if it is going to continue to effectively carry freight as part of the global economy. “Offloading” I-10 before it arrives in Phoenix and Tucson would reduce congestion. Such offloading may be accomplished by creating a bypass or a raised section or tunnel. Some of the highway

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recommendations include: (1) development of an east-west highway through Tucson; (2) development of alternatives to I-10; and (3) development of a north-south throughway between Apache Junction and Eloy.

With the rise in gasoline prices and a potential petroleum shortfall, Arizona also must improve its public transit system in urban areas and invest more in high-occupancy travel modes, such as light rail and high speed transit between Phoenix and Tucson. Further, Arizona must integrate its public transit options into its freeways by running high-speed, high-capacity rail and express bus service along the freeways.

Opportunities exist to encourage infilling Arizona’s urban areas. We must have a predictable process for developers who participate in infill projects. Coordinated efforts should be made between cities to investigate future expansion and redevelopment along the light rail and other public transit sites, and to ensure that new housing developments and residential growth occur near public transit routes. Arizona also needs to integrate new technological advancements into urban transportation planning and invest in intelligent transportation systems.

To secure a more stable and diversified funding source for urban transit planning, Arizona could collect statewide development impact fees and require that such fees be assessed on all developments, whether commercial or residential. Such fees would require developments to pay a fair share of the costs associated with urban transit maintenance and planning. Arizona must develop innovative financing sources to subsidize the costs associated with operating public transit.

Arizona needs to continue to ensure that it takes the environment into account when planning transportation in urban areas, and that it seizes opportunities to use current infrastructure for green initiatives.

## **CONNECTING ARIZONA’S SYSTEMS OF TRANSPORTATION**

The systems that connect Arizona’s rural, urban, and tribal communities were adequate at the time of development, but Arizona’s transportation infrastructure has not kept pace with its rapid population growth. While various areas of the state may require differing transportation systems, all Arizonans have an interest in an adequate transportation system throughout the state. Significant improvements need to be made.

Connectivity between urban areas seems to work relatively well, but connectivity to rural and tribal areas remains problematic. Effective connectivity should be measured by the following factors: cost, economics, safety, speed of travel, convenience, and frequency of service.

### **Challenges**

Arizona's roadways, highways, and freeways are congested. Methods to relieve peak congestion on major highways for passenger travel must be developed and implemented. Arizona has not maintained smaller airports in rural areas and those that do exist provide very limited air connectivity. Highways and freeways are insufficient to handle current levels of freight traffic. Rail infrastructure, including both tracks and rail yards, also needs significant improvement to provide optimal freight transport and passenger travel. Arizona's participation in the global economy will suffer unless major improvements are made to its transportation infrastructure.

### **Opportunities**

Arizona could benefit from an ADOT-led effort, coordinated with the COGs and MPOs, for implementing the results of the BQAZ Framework Study and other already-existing studies. This effort should include a system of planning consisting of the following components: (1) a mega-region including all urban areas and major arterials of Arizona; (2) high speed, high capacity north-south transit for the mega-region; (3) a

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statewide plan based on BQAZ for the remaining areas of the state; and (4) a comprehensive statewide aviation plan.

In addition, Arizona must make changes to state law to authorize public-private partnerships and permit private development and operation of transportation systems. For example, private entities could use tax incentive financing to develop and operate new

transportation infrastructure. Further, Arizona needs more than just a tax-based funding source for transportation development; privatization and public-private partnerships may allow for a diversity of funding sources. With the recent economic downturn, sales tax revenues have been lower than expected, and while urban areas such as Maricopa and Pima counties have the population density to pass new taxes, some of the rural counties do not have the population to do so. Arizona should consider other new funding mechanisms, such as toll roads. Integrating transportation with the tourism industry could also provide a valuable source of funding.

In addition to developing new funding sources, Arizona must ensure that its existing transportation dollars are legally protected, that HURF funds are constitutionally protected for their original intended use, and that funds for aviation improvements are not diverted for use by other government agencies.

Arizona should add fee lanes that allow users who are willing to pay to have a less congested method of transport. HOV lanes should be added to accommodate buses and other high-capacity vehicles. The northbound and southbound lanes of I-17 should be

connected so that traffic can be diverted to a reversible lane, allowing it to keep moving even when an accident is being cleared. U.S. 93 should be converted into a full-access, controlled highway. I-10 needs to be expanded and Arizona should build north-south corridors on the east and west sides of the mega-region.

Arizona should support the use of buses by introducing bus pull-outs, bus bulbs, and “yield to bus” laws, where appropriate.

Arizona must also make improvements to its rail system to provide increased freight transport and better connectivity to rural areas. Rail systems could be built to link rural and urban areas. However, such systems are expensive. Arizona should also consider subsidizing air travel to rural areas to ensure effective multi-modal transportation systems. Subsidizing air travel would be a short term solution to provide for connectivity between rural and urban areas, and a rail system would be the long-term solution.

Lastly, Arizona must integrate new technologies into the transportation system. Such technologies can improve incident management. Arizona should encourage greater use of the 511 system to provide drivers with updates regarding congestion and blocked traffic routes. Arizona should also use real-time traffic management technology to coordinate traffic signals and highway traffic flows. Further, technological advancements can be used to encourage individuals to take public transit, such as providing WiFi on public bus and rail transport. In addition, Arizona should encourage development of alternative-fuel stations on intercity highways so that intercity trips can be made with alternative fuel vehicles.

## **INTERSTATE AND INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIVITY**

Arizona’s existing transportation systems are inadequate to meet the projected demand for pass-through interstate and international commercial and passenger transport.

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To meet the projected demand and enable Arizona to compete in the global economy, Arizona must integrate economic development and transportation planning.

Effective international airports are critical to Arizona’s economic development. Within the next five years, the state will take action to dedicate revenues to enhance and strengthen Arizona’s airports in order to ensure Arizona’s vitality in an expanding global economy.

The statewide reconnaissance study completed by MAG and the COGs and MPOs, which was followed up by four additional framework studies, examines the impact of travel from other states and Mexico through Arizona. Arizona should also utilize the information contained in these studies to implement a broad master plan for interstate and international transportation.

Arizona needs a centralized authority that coordinates efforts aimed at the development of interstate and international transportation opportunities. Arizona should support the free flow of commerce between the United States and Mexico in compliance

with NAFTA. ADOT should coordinate its work with Mexico’s transportation authority and other state departments of transportation to develop a more cohesive interstate and international transportation system. It is also important to identify and develop an appropriate authority to coordinate private sector interests and trade opportunities, both locally and abroad.

Mexican ports of entry are an important part of Arizona’s economy, particularly with regard to the transport of freight. A significant opportunity exists for Arizona to partner with Sonora to create a multi-modal transportation corridor from Mexican ports of entry through Arizona to Las Vegas. Arizona needs to determine who is responsible for the connectivity of traffic from ports of entry into Arizona and ensure necessary funding. Arizona should support efforts to upgrade and expand border crossing facilities between Arizona and Mexico, and encourage a more efficient and effective customs process. The transportation corridor connecting Canada, the United States and Mexico (the CANAMEX corridor) should be integrated into Arizona’s transportation vision and utilized to meet Arizona’s needs.

Planning and regulatory efforts should aim to expand the use of railroads to move commercial freight off Arizona’s highways. Increased use of the railroad that travels through Nogales into Arizona should be encouraged. There may be limitations to the expansion of railroad use, as Arizona lacks sufficient product-oriented business to make

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rail infrastructure improvements pay for themselves. However, this does not mean that Arizona should not seek to expand rail service. For example, Arizona should support Union Pacific in its proposed rail yard, which is to be constructed near Picacho Peak/Red Rock and will relieve rail congestion.

Mechanisms for funding interstate highways include toll roads and selling interstate highways to private companies. Arizona would need to ensure that any funds raised by selling transportation assets and infrastructure would be protected and dedicated to transportation purposes.

Tourism needs to be part of Arizona’s overall transportation plan. Arizona should engage in a statewide, coordinated approach to developing tourism that is deliberate and by design. Currently, Arizona fails to capture a large share of tourism dollars because there are few direct flights into the state from other parts of the world. Further, travel to and from the Grand Canyon is not done primarily through Arizona. Expanded rail and air service would help Arizona capitalize on tourism opportunities. In addition, including tourism in transportation planning might help to increase the involvement of tribal communities in the transportation planning process.

## **TAKING ACTION**

This Town Hall recommends that the following actions be taken to address Arizona's current and future transportation needs.

### **Establish a Citizen Transportation Review Commission**

- Establish through appropriate legislation a Citizens Transportation Review Commission, coordinated by ADOT and composed of representatives of the governor's office, legislature, and stakeholders representing cities, towns, counties, MPOs and COGs, tribal communities, RTAs, NGOs, nonprofits, private sector leaders, and members of the public. The Commission should coordinate and assist in the execution of a comprehensive, multi-modal state transportation plan to resolve the problems stemming from previously fragmented planning efforts. It is suggested that this body do the following:
  1. Educate the public about the value of transportation improvements and effective and efficient transportation systems, as well as short-term and long-term transportation goals.
  2. Encourage public discourse to identify and prioritize the public's wants and desires and to obtain input on long-range transportation planning.
  3. Develop a "values based vision" to inform transportation and land use planning experts and decision makers.
  4. Identify funding levels and sources for transportation projects.
  5. Build support for a comprehensive legislative package seeking authorization to implement the action steps described above, and advocate for the enactment of such legislation.
  6. Work with ADOT and other transportation-related groups to discuss a realistic timeframe for the implementation of BQAZ and the recommendations of the 94th Arizona Town Hall.

### **Incorporate Existing Resources, Studies and Reports**

- Urge Arizona's Congressional delegation to become familiar with the Transportation for America platform and consider incorporating these principles in the reauthorization of federal transportation legislation.
- By 2010, coordinate and interpret the various BQAZ framework studies in a comprehensive way, including the following elements.
  1. Clarify the roles, objectives, authority, and missions of ADOT, the MPOs, COGs, and transit agencies relative to all forms of transportation planning, development, operations and maintenance.
  2. Use the BQAZ reports and findings, in addition to the 94th Arizona Town Hall report, to develop alternative funding sources and implement a statewide transportation initiative.

3. Build on existing ADOT, regional and local transportation and infrastructure studies to prioritize which projects are appropriate for the diverse communities of Arizona.

### **Protect and Secure Needed Funding**

- Protect current funding sources and ensure that funds dedicated to transportation cannot be diverted by the legislature for non-transportation related projects or expenses. Establish new, innovative, diverse, and reliable funding sources for transportation infrastructure and maintenance. These funding efforts should specifically include the following elements:
  1. Update the fuel tax to reflect inflation that has occurred since 1991, indexing the gas tax to account for inflation in the future, and possibly further increasing the fuel tax.
  2. Encourage Arizona's Congressional delegation to aggressively pursue all available new transportation funding.
  3. Remove statutory limitations (such as the current one-half cent cap) on counties' authority to allow sales tax referenda to go to the voters to provide additional transportation funding.
  4. Encourage tribal governments to procure funding from the Indian Reservation Roads Program (IRR).
  5. Allow HURF monies to be used to fund public transit.
  6. Encourage the regional use of available grant funds for mobility management programs designed to enhance collaboration and optimize the effectiveness of alternative transportation services and funds.
  7. Implement a statewide development impact fee to pay for transportation infrastructure and capacity improvements.
  8. Authorize and encourage private investment in Arizona's transportation system.
  9. Implement a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT) tax.
  10. Implement tax increment financing (TIF).
  11. Enable toll roads to be implemented.
  12. By 2012, the Arizona State Legislature should refer a ballot measure to the voters that: (1) protects the use of HURF and other transportation trust funds for transportation only; and (2) provides a stable and sufficient statewide dedicated revenue stream for public transportation.

### **Land Use and Transportation**

- Create sustainable communities by encouraging connectivity between land use planning, economic development, and transportation. Arizona must be more thoughtful in its land use planning. Permits for new developments

should ensure that they are linked to an existing transportation corridor or that increased transportation capacity is part of the land use plan.

- Enact state trust land reform to allow for more efficient growth patterns, infrastructure, siting, and land conservation.

### **Integration with National Transportation Networks**

- Develop and invest in local public transit and intercity rail, including high speed rail, to ensure Arizona's integration into the proposed nationwide passenger rail network.
- Collaborate with federal agencies and engage in detailed dialogue regarding interstate and national strategies to enable Arizona to benefit from a diverse national and global economy.

### **Outreach and Education**

- Create a comprehensive transportation outreach and education initiative that would:
  1. Utilize multiple communications disciplines and vehicles appropriate to informing the general public and specific transportation organizations on needs, initiatives and work going on in the Arizona transportation sector.
  2. Incorporate information on short and long term needs—framed in ways that help average citizens understand why this matters to them and the urgency of ongoing support.
  3. Create public education programs about the link between land use planning, housing, the creation of sustainable communities and transportation.
  4. Tap all transportation organizations and groups to play a role in this education and outreach.

### **Additional Action Items**

- Enact legislation at the state and federal level to allow for formation of public-private partnerships for transportation.
- Update and improve ADOT's role, scope, and mission in transportation planning and development to assure a comprehensive and statewide approach to transportation planning and development—including multi-modal, inter-modal, and regional considerations.
- Utilize new technologies, including broadband and intelligent transportation planning, to provide for the use of intelligent transportation planning and systems.
- Expand state incentive programs for alternative-fuel production vehicles and refueling stations.

- Enact legislation at the state level to allow for the formation of the private forms of “design, build and operate” for various elements of transportation.

### **Individual Actions**

- Individual 94th Town Hall participants have a responsibility to ensure that the recommendations contained in the 94th Town Hall report are implemented. Some suggestions for accomplishing this are:
  1. Participants must contact their elected officials to encourage them to support the changes proposed in this 94th Town Hall Report.
  2. Send the 94th Town Hall Report to relevant stakeholders with cover letters that address specific items and recommendations of importance to these specific stakeholders.
  3. Participants should take a PowerPoint presentation with the talking points of the recommendations of the 94th Town Hall and present these ideas in person to the business, civic, non-profit, and social organizations in which they are involved.
  4. Create a steering committee of Arizona leaders to begin building support throughout Arizona for improved transportation planning and establishment of the Citizen Transportation Review Commission. The steering committee should work to create the foundation for the Commission and the supporting coalition.

### **TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION**

The participants of the 94th Arizona Town Hall recommend the following items for immediate action:

- Develop comprehensive education plans and outreach programs individualized for different target groups.
- Develop and employ the Citizens Transportation Review Commission as described above.
- Prioritize the maintenance and protection of current transportation funding and take immediate action to ensure that the Arizona Legislature does not sweep transportation funding for non-transportation-related purposes.
- Enact legislation to modify and expand private-public partnerships and private investment opportunities in transportation planning, development, and operation.
- Establish a coalition to engage the Congressional delegation to ensure that Arizona receives its “fair share” of federal funding.
- Better coordinate economic development and tourism with transportation planning.

- Preserve, in constant dollars, and establish new long term dedicated funding sources for both capital and operation and maintenance expenses related to transportation.
- To build public confidence in the management of Arizona’s transportation funds, ADOT and other organizations that spend transportation funds should publish an annual report that summarizes projects that were planned, projects that were delivered, the bid price, the final cuts and the percentage of projects delivered on time.

Regarding actions that should be taken over a longer period of time, 94th Town Hall participants recommend the following:

- Prioritize the obtaining of funding sources referred to in the “Taking Action” section of this report.
- Require cities, towns, and other governmental entities involved in transportation planning to update transportation plans and ensure that such plans take into account transportation recommendations from statewide framework studies and BQAZ.
- Transition to a Vehicle Mile Traveled (VMT) tax.
- Ensure integration with national and international transportation plans, with an emphasis on the CANAMEX corridor and megapolitan connectivity.
- Align regional transportation priorities and planning with local land use planning and development services, to present a unified direction for transportation planning. Work with MPOs and the statewide transportation body or Citizens Transportation Review Commission to eliminate overlap and more clearly define the roles of the various government agencies involved in the transportation planning process.