



COMMUNITY DISCUSSION SUMMARY STATEMENTS From Community Outreach Programs following the 106th Arizona Town Hall

In programs held around the state to follow up on the spring 2015 Town Hall titled “Transportation and Arizona,” audience members were asked to participate in a Town Hall-style discussion on priorities and action items. Statements prepared from the discussions at the Outreach Programs are set forth below.

EAST VALLEY PARTNERSHIP (August 26, 2015)

Arizona’s future—especially its economy—is dependent on its transportation systems. Key commerce corridors, including I-11, aviation, and public transit are intricately related to the success of local and state businesses.

While we are fortunate to have a relatively good road infrastructure in some parts of Arizona compared to older states, we need to better address the maintenance of the existing systems and plan for the revolution in transportation that is coming. We need to explore a more multi-model system that is less reliant on cars that could include alternative methods of transportation between Phoenix and Tucson. Financing principles should take into account these changes possibly including a system of financing based on vehicle miles traveled. We should also explore incentives and education that encourage employers and users to travel at off-peak hours.

The biggest challenge is funding. The Arizona Legislature has underfunded state transportation efforts and swept money intended for the Highway Trust Fund for use in the General Fund. We need long-term sustainable funding mechanisms that include tax increment financing. We should also seek financial support from the private sector—whether through land donation, toll roads or other mechanisms that are “outside the box” of public financing.

Whether or not we are successful in getting the much needed funding to expand, sustain and evolve our transportation systems will depend in large part on whether each of us can educate Arizonans on the importance of investing in transportation for ALL of Arizona (not just the urban areas) and to emphasize that supporting transportation is critical so that Arizona’s future economy can grow and thrive.

FLAGSTAFF (September 8, 2015)

State and Federal Government Action

Over the past two decades transportation funding has not kept up with costs. A key challenge for Arizona’s transportation future is how best to balance the revenue and expenditure equation, particularly given Arizona’s current political climate, in which tax increases are strongly disfavored.

Transportation funding should be governed by the principle that if we use it, we must pay for it. Currently funding depends heavily on Highway User Revenue Funds (HURF), which should be increased to address increased costs, indexed for inflation, and adjusted to assure that drivers of fuel efficient vehicles pay their fair share of road costs. The Arizona Legislature should stop sweeping HURF to pay for other priorities. A voter initiative may be needed to prevent HURF sweeps; however, such initiatives can themselves have unwanted consequences, as they deprive legislators of flexibility to meet changing needs.

Arizona also should consider ways to capture revenue from part time visitors who do not register their vehicles in Arizona and therefore do not pay vehicle license taxes.

ADOT’s Key Commerce Corridors Plan addresses Arizona’s most critical transportation needs, and should be supported and funded.

Local Action

Local communities can do much to improve Arizona’s transportation systems. Cities are involved in transportation and land use plans and traffic control; city taxes support public transit and roadway construction; and cities can and should coordinate with other agencies at the federal, state, regional and local level.

Local communities should engage residents in town hall style discussions about transportation issues, to inform them about the issues and encourage residents to consider the needs and interests of the community as a whole, rather than purely selfish concerns.

Individuals

Individual actions are needed to generate the political will that is an essential precursor to fully funding needed transportation improvements. Citizens can and should:

- Write, call and email elected officials to express support for transportation funding;
- Become individual marketing persons, informing others and advocating for needed funding;
- Understand the nexus between the electoral system and elected officials, and support reforms that would provide for broader participation in elections, so that a minority or extreme views will not control the legislative agenda.

WEST VALLEY – AVONDALE (September 15, 2015)

Transportation is intricately related to a successful economy. Yet, we have been unable to resolve funding issues relating to transportation and it is reaching a critical point. We need a comprehensive and focused effort to resolve our transportation funding issues. With the recent decrease in gas prices, we have an opportunity to make up for the lack of funding with an increased gas tax. However, Arizonans generally do not see the connection between transportation funding (especially taxes) and transportation needs.

We need to secure additional funding for transportation and we will need public support to make it happen. To obtain the needed public support, we should explore a funding mechanism that clearly delineates where the funding will go and that does so using a compelling campaign that educates the public on the need for funding—a campaign that not only uses traditional methods of communication such as programs with expert panels but that also utilizes social media and the internet and that includes young adults and community colleges. Given the connection between transportation and a successful economy, we should also partner with chambers of commerce and other business groups to help educate the public about the need to support an investment in transportation.

SHOW LOW (September 22, 2015)

People in the White Mountains say, “the Mountain is different.” When it comes to transportation the White Mountains region is different, but it also shares many of the concerns that affect Arizonans across the state.

The biggest challenge for transportation throughout Arizona is how to fund needed transportation infrastructure. Transportation is essential to Arizona’s economic well-being. Improving the quality of roads will improve the quality of life. In the White Mountains, as in the rest of Arizona, transportation is key to economic growth, since most business relies on efficient transportation systems. Public safety is also a concern. While the Arizona Department of Transportation is now partnering with local governments to study safety needs, funding is needed to make the needed improvements.

Large segments of Arizona’s highway system need improvements, but funding from the Highway User Revenue Fund is not indexed to inflation and has not been sufficient to pay for transportation needs.

Arizona has not fully recovered from the 2008 recession. Many cannot afford to pay increased taxes. Government spending should be reexamined and realigned with today’s priorities, including transportation. In addition, Arizona should find a way to generate increased funding from gas taxes.

PRESCOTT (September 23, 2015)

Transportation infrastructure is essential for Arizona’s growth and development. Unfortunately the dedicated sources of funding that should finance this infrastructure have not kept pace with inflation, and some funds have been pillaged by the Arizona Legislature to pay general fund expenses. As a result, ADOT’s 2018 budget for discretionary investments in new roads for thirteen Arizona counties is a meager \$13 million.

To address the need for additional funding for roads the gas tax should be increased, and Arizona should consider implementing new or revised user fees as well as tolls. To provide for needed airport improvements the cap on the passenger facilities charge, now at the maximum amount allowed by federal law, should be increased.

Arizona has not adequately addressed the need for intermodal transportation that would provide connections between communities and allow containers to be seamlessly shipped from point of origin to destination.

A statewide transportation plan that addresses intermodal interconnectivity is needed if Arizona is to remain competitive.

In addressing the funding of transportation infrastructure we should not lose sight of the human needs that must be served. Individuals must have transportation available to get to and from work, school, and medical appointments, but not everyone can afford to pay the full cost of that transportation. Subsidies should be considered to address some of these social needs. The large population of retirees and aging baby boomers presents another challenge: how to serve those who are physically unable to drive but who need to get from place to place.

Public private partnerships (P3) involve a public plan for transit or transportation improvements that are contracted to private or local providers. There is general community support for P3 initiatives, including the funding of an endowment that could be used to pay for management of such initiatives. In the Prescott area the transit task force is working to help plan and implement measures for public transit and other alternative transportation systems.

In Arizona's current political climate tax increases needed to finance transportation are unlikely to be enacted without strong voter direction. A ballot initiative is needed to prevent the sweeping of transportation funds and increase the revenues available to fund transportation.

In considering these issues we should consciously shift focus to Arizona's future needs, and consider trends that will affect future transportation needs, including millennials who may prefer not to drive and older Arizonans who are unable to drive. Instead of considering transportation to be exclusively within the province of government Arizonans should look for ways, such as P3, to involve the private sector in solving transportation issues.

Finally, Prescott area residents should support the Transit Plus initiative.

PHOENIX – SOROPTIMIST (September 24, 2015)

The Arizona Town Hall Central Phoenix Outreach Program attendees identified the following transportation actions that should be prioritized:

- Establish a stable stream of long term transportation funding, including state and federal funds
- Retool statewide transportation funding sources to reflect current and future trends such as increased use of fuel efficient vehicles, biking, walking and public transit, which result in shrinking gas tax revenues due to reductions in gasoline use
- Consider developing additional revenue streams for transportation, which now depends exclusively on gas tax and vehicle license fees, which are declining and have not been indexed for inflation
- Educate the public about the importance of good transportation systems and the real costs and benefits of building and maintaining Arizona's transportation systems
- Adequately fund the state's transportation priorities as stated in its long term strategic plan
- Address transportation needs on a statewide basis, including rural areas, which have many unfunded needs including additional lanes for rural highways, and which support Arizona's important tourism economy

Local initiatives, such as the recent Phoenix transportation bond initiative, have been effective in raising funds for large urban areas but generally do not address statewide needs. To meet those needs we should ask our Congressional delegation to bring home more federal transportation funding.

As individuals we can support measures to provide more funding for transportation. This begins with recognition that voters need to change their message to elected officials from "no more taxes" to "establish adequate revenue streams for transportation."

TUCSON (September 30, 2015)

Arizona needs to develop a 21st century model of transportation planning and funding. As the state has become more urbanized, and as new technologies are developed, Arizonans increasingly want and need transportation systems that are accessible, walkable, dependable, sustainable and efficient. We should be aware of emerging technologies and seek ways to encourage sharing of transportation resources and other efficiencies.

Transportation issues are more than a local concern—they are national and international in scope. Arizona should view transportation broadly. Given this scope, the federal government should provide a reliable stream of transportation funding, and should proceed with necessary legislation, including the designation of Interstate 11 from border to border within Arizona. Arizonans also should consider interconnectivity of different forms of transportation, including airports and railroads.

Arizona needs to provide adequate and secure sources of revenue for transportation. Arizonans should make elected officials aware of their support for necessary funding, including increases in the gas tax.

Public private partnerships offer certain efficiencies in designing and building transportation infrastructure, but must be supported by future revenue streams that will repay the costs of construction.

We need to develop sustainable, secure funding sources to provide revenues for all forms of transportation, including roads, airports, transit and multimodal. One source is the gas tax, which should be increased and protected against being swept for other purposes.

Planning of communities and transportation infrastructure is needed to take advantage of efficiencies that might reduce the need for additional transportation facilities, for example, by locating communities closer to places where people work. This would have the added benefit of making housing more affordable. Good planning also should take into account safety concerns, and transportation infrastructure should be designed with safety in mind.

AZ FORWARD (October 1, 2015)

What recommendations(s) should receive priority and how can we help make the recommendation(s) a reality?

Within the recommendations from the Transportation Town Hall, there are recommendations that are short term and long term. It's important to handle lower hanging fruit, such as I-11 designation, which is part of transportation re-authorization bill. Longer term items will require coalition building.

Overall, within the summary of recommendations, "Number 1 is number 1" – that is, funding needs to be stabilized to provide some certainty, including maintaining the HURF. "Hand in hand" with maintaining the HURF, additional revenue-generating options need to be considered; user fees need to be in the "toolbox" of options, including indexing/increasing gas taxes, but the revenues must go to transportation. The message to the Legislature and Governor needs to include that Phoenix recently approved a tax on themselves to fund infrastructure/transportation. However, the Legislature sees transportation funding as a cost, not investment. Some people perceive that infrastructure only benefits urban areas, so these tools would help allocate the costs to the users. For example, in Nevada the counties have authority to ask voters for county-level fees or taxes to fund infrastructure, which has passed in Washoe and Clark counties.

It would be useful for priorities and messages to build public support to be coordinated through a centralized group to get information from various coalitions together (including AZ Forward, AZTH, ACEC, Chambers of Commerce). A "mini town hall" would be useful among these various groups, and perhaps some polling of individuals, to develop the strategy for implementation.

SIERRA VISTA (October 1, 2015)

Rural counties have a particularly difficult time funding needed transportation improvements, because they include large territories to be served and low population densities. For example, Cochise County has an area larger than the States of Connecticut and Rhode Island combined, but has only 130,000 residents. As a result, rural areas cannot afford to fund all transportation improvements needed in those areas.

There is a particular need to provide transportation options for older Arizonans, but due to low population densities private sector providers have not yet begun to meet that need. Bus service should be improved, both within local communities and between rural and urban areas. To better meet rural needs Arizona should establish separate pots of funding for rural and urban transportation projects.

The gas tax should be increased to better fund needed transportation improvements, and we should establish voter protections to prevent sweeping of these funds. At the same time, we should find ways to increase efficiency and decrease the cost of construction. Establishing waivers or exceptions to compliance with federal regulations could reduce costs to help stretch funding.

Ultimately we need to elect officials who are informed, capable and motivated to make the necessary hard decisions. Individuals should register to vote, become educated about the issues, and vote in the primary and general elections for candidates who will act in accordance with their best interests.

The State of Arizona does not have a statewide strategic plan, such as the plans that are prepared by local communities. Development of such a plan, with input from local communities, would help to identify transportation needs and make it easier to set funding priorities.

Local communities should collaborate with nonprofits and other communities to coordinate and communicate about transportation needs and circumstances. This could result in better planning, greater efficiencies, and grant funding for local projects.

Finally, Arizona should take action to make driver's licenses comply with federal requirements, so that residents can travel more freely.

DOUGLAS (October 1, 2015)

Political will is required for Arizona to address its transportation funding needs. Voters must become educated about transportation issues before they will be willing to pay more for transportation. Community and business leaders at all levels, from Rotary Clubs to Chambers of Commerce and City Councils, should become knowledgeable about these issues and help educate others about transportation needs, costs and funding. These educational campaigns should employ marketing materials that would clearly explain costs and benefits to voters, to help them understand why funding is needed and why and why it will benefit them.

Communities also should find ways to leverage scarce resources. This may involve actions that don't require the expenditure of money. For example, relaxing rules and policies may facilitate the sharing of resources.

Arizonans need to recognize that each of us benefit from our interconnected transportation systems, which are used to deliver freight and passengers and are key to economic activity. As a border city and port of entry Douglas has a unique opportunity to benefit from trade with Mexico. Arizona should become more strategic in its thinking and make strategic investments in transportation infrastructure that are designed to produce specific projected economic benefits. In addition, the Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) exchange program should be reinstated to permit local communities to use scarce transportation funds more efficiently.

ARIZONA AIRPORT ASSOCIATION (October 8, 2015)

We need to protect the state's aviation funds and educate Arizona's legislators on the importance of the airport industry to our state. Specifically with respect to funding, we need to raise the Passenger Facility Charge (PFC) and maintain the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) funding.

Special attention should also be placed on planning around airports to prevent encroachment on other airports. We need to be proactive in taking action to influence the land planning process so that we can better protect the state's investment in our airports.

We should partner with other organizations to have a greater impact on educating our elected officials and others about the importance and impact of aviation. Examples of organizations that we should collaborate with include the League of Cities and Towns, and the Association of Counties. We should also utilize our rural and health services communities to demonstrate how critical aviation is to local economies as well as to the health and safety of community residents.

By collaborating, telling the story of aviation's essential role in Arizona (both to leaders and our youth), and engaging personally with others we each can have an impact on aviation's future.

YUMA (October 15, 2015)

Rural economies are dramatically impacted by transportation systems. For Yuma, it is especially critical that we have accessible highways and rail as well as a more efficient commercial port of entry with Mexico. We also need to ensure that our air transportation systems are supported and we should support the concept of "complete streets."

To ensure adequate transportation for rural economies, we need to reinstate the HURF exchange for local governments and stop the sweeping of HURF and other transportation funds. Rural communities and their economies have been especially impacted by the reduction in these funds. Quite simply, the legislature needs to balance the budget without sweeping funds that have been designated for transportation.

Stabilizing a sustainable funding source for our statewide transportation systems is critical. While many are reluctant to consider an increase in the sales tax or gas tax, we must find additional and sustainable funding sources. We should therefore consider these and other sources of funding. We also should explore local and regional funding that leverages existing resources as well as how to obtain additional funding from the federal government.

To accomplish these goals, we need to educate Arizonans, especially our state leaders, about the impact of transportation on our state's economy. We also need to educate our neighbors and state leaders about the funding that is needed to build and maintain these much-needed transportation systems.

VERDE VALLEY (October 22, 2015)

To help fund needed transportation, we need to educate Arizonans about the need to pay for those things that we want—specifically transportation infrastructure.

To help fund our transportation needs, we need to change the law to allow for TIF (Tax Increment Financing), which would allow us to raise funds for transportation without a tax increase. This is critical for transportation but it is also important for all infrastructure needs.

We should also look at other sources for revenue such as toll roads or a rental car tax and, if feasible, consider changes to existing laws that create challenges for utilizing these types of revenue sources. It's also important to allow communities to receive funding for local transportation needs. One method to explore could be a local gas tax that could support local transportation needs—although it would not capture all users who buy gas in other areas.

To improve efficiency and safety, we should look at existing transportation structures to see how we can enhance them for additional communal transportation uses—for example, utilizing existing highways to support passenger rail.

While telecommuting works for some communities as a tool for reducing the need for use of the roads, it is not an effective tool for managing transportation issues in those communities with high tourism economies. Instead,

carpooling, ridesharing and private shuttles can often have a greater impact. We should encourage more use of these tools by working with local chambers of commerce and providing incentives for businesses, including those businesses that serve tourists. For example, chambers and businesses could work together to create tourist shuttles.

Education is essential for accomplishing all of these goals. We all can play a role in educating the public about the best ways to meet our transportation needs, whether it is by contacting elected leaders or by simply having a conversation with our neighbors and friends.