



mejorando group

STRATEGIC
PLAN

July 2008

*Central Arizona
Association of
Governments
(CAAG)*

Submitted By:

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July 24, 2008

Maxine Leather
Executive Director
Central Arizona Association of Governments
1075 South Idaho Road, Suite 300
Apache Junction, AZ 85219-6496

Re: Strategic Plan

Dear Maxine,

I am pleased to provide you with the Strategic Plan that is the final culmination of much time, positive energy and thoughtful ideas contributed by a large number of interested stakeholders. Based on our discussion at the inception of this endeavor and subsequent ones, as well, I believe the intent was achieved: to provide a thorough, transparent process in which to engage and enlist members and staff about the future of CAAG.

The Strategic Plan provides a sharper focus on several subjects, permitting your staff the discretion to move forward with current practices as well as make refinements on others. Anytime an agency pursues strategic planning, it is an excellent opportunity to validate the existing set of priorities. Where alignment is needed, the strategic planning process provides for that, as well.

The Strategic Plan that you, your staff and members of the jurisdictions from each County created accurately reflects the concerns and desires expressed by the group. The Management Committee and Regional Council should seriously consider the Plan as a tool to optimize. Some members may disagree about this item or that item, but the goal was not to create a plan that was either perfect or received full unanimity by all members. Much was accomplished with the creation of this Plan as a means to clarify and focus those issues confronting members in CAAG and the role of CAAG in addressing them satisfactorily.

I am extremely pleased with the collaboration we experienced on this project. I recognize that a project of this magnitude can be disruptive for internal staff that is focused on their

primary roles and responsibilities. I appreciate the sharing of yours and their time, thoughts and expertise.

I welcome the opportunity to continue our partnership. If you have any questions or need more information, please feel welcome to contact me at 925-518-0187 or via e-mail at patrick@gettingbetterallthetime.com.

Sincerely,



Patrick Ibarra
Co-Founder and Partner

BACKGROUND

The mission of the **Central Arizona Association of Governments** is to provide effective regional planning and model programs which offer creative solutions to the unique needs within Region V. The Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG) was formed in 1970 and incorporated in 1975. CAAG is one of six regional planning districts, or Councils of Governments (COGs), established by the Governor of Arizona.

The goal was to create regional groupings that could provide more effective regional planning than various small towns, individual counties, or rural areas could on their own. The idea was to promote a community of interest, to preserve county boundaries, and to have a population base adequate to support planning activities, while complying with federal planning requirements and addressing the concerns of local government officials. The COGs, especially in rural areas, produced an economy of scale that allowed governments within a region to pool limited resources for maximum effect.

The CAAG Region is comprised of Gila and Pinal Counties, which includes sixteen incorporated communities, and over 10,000 square miles of area. The region is very diverse in terms of socioeconomic characteristics as well as geography and climate.

Community	County	Incorporated	Population*
Apache Junction	Pinal	1978	36,805
Casa Grande	Pinal	1915	41,869
Coolidge	Pinal	1945	11,590
Eloy	Pinal	1949	12,419
Florence	Pinal	1900	24,476
Globe	Gila	1907	7,958
Hayden	Gila	1956	865
Kearny	Pinal	1959	2,280
Mammoth	Pinal	1958	1,782
Maricopa	Pinal	2003	33,923
Miami	Gila	1918	1,955
Payson	Gila	1973	17,167
Queen Creek	Pinal	1989	366
Superior	Pinal	1976	3,367
Star Valley	Gila	2006	2,212
Winkelman	Gila & Pinal	1949	441
Gila County	Gila	1881	58,163
Pinal County	Pinal	1875	325,329

* Population estimates provided by CAAG's Planning Department

The primary areas of focus for CAAG are Community and Economic Development, Planning, and Job Training, including Social Services. Approximately twenty-five staff members comprise the organization's workforce.

In mid-2007 concerns began to emerge about the role representatives from both Gila and Pinal Counties have as an interdependent working body. While issues particular to each County were to be addressed within each County through action by County Supervisors and governing bodies from municipalities, other issues have an impact beyond boundaries and that is where cooperation and a common/shared vision is crucial. While unprecedented growth continues and generates many positive dividends, the need for regional cooperation is vital to mitigate any potential negative consequences.

A Strategic Plan was adopted in 2004 as a means to establish focus, create goals, select strategies and implement action and while some progress has been achieved opportunities remain in strengthening cooperation among elected and appointed officials from both the Regional Council and the Management Committee.

Based on experience of addressing similar issues in other government agency situations, Patrick Ibarra of the Mejorando Group suggested the following questions should be addressed:

- Determining which topics/subjects each County believes are issues in particular to their own jurisdiction?
- Determining what are the highest priority areas that require cooperation and a shared vision among CAAG members? Once determined, creating an Action Plan to address the areas.

The desired outcome was for both Gila and Pinal Counties to identify issues specific to their jurisdictions, as well as issues that have natural overlap and require cooperation.

PURPOSE AND VALUE OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Organizations like CAAG, are continually presented with unexpected opportunities and unanticipated problems. Hard choices must be made, sometimes quickly, often under conditions in which little is certain. It can be easy to become distracted by these challenges expending time, money, and energy on activities that divert people's attention from the organization's principal goals. To avoid these distractions, organization members – including staff from top to bottom – need to understand clearly what the organization's goals are and what it will take to achieve them. This is where strategic planning plays a pivotal role. Strategic planning allows organizations to make fundamental decisions that guide them to a developed vision of the future. The result of this effort, the CAAG Strategic Plan, serves as the basis for action – a road map that directs all resources toward the desired future.

As compared to the previous Strategic Plan which focused primarily on operational/service activities, the intent this time was to pursue more of a policy oriented Strategic Plan. Policies that would serve to crystallize and help the Regional Council and Management Committee partner on those areas most critical in the present and future.

APPROACH/METHODOLOGY

As a means of obtaining information about the relevant issues confronting CAAG a series of interviews were held with key stakeholders. These meetings were intended to identify and attempt to clarify those subjects/issues that would serve as the focus of the strategic planning work sessions. Meetings were held with the following individuals:

CAAG Directors:

1. Maxine Leather, Executive Director
2. Craig Ringer, Deputy Director and Director of Economic Development
3. Jack Tomasik, Planning Director (Consultant)
4. J. Peter Armenta, Director of Community Development
5. Bill Leister, Transportation Director
6. Cathy Melvin, Social Services Director

CAAG members

7. Steve Besich, Gila County Manager
8. Joe Sanchez, Gila County Supervisor
9. Terry Doolittle, Pinal County Manager
10. Ken Buchanan, Assistant County Manager, Pinal County
11. Lionel Ruiz, Pinal County Supervisor
12. Gary Eide, Town Manager, Kearny
13. Jim Thompson, City Manager, Casa Grande
14. Bob Jackson, Mayor, Casa Grande
15. Robert Mawson, Town Manager, Miami
16. George Hoffman, City Manager, Apache Junction
17. Bryant Powell, Assistant City Manager, Apache Junction
18. John Insalaco, Mayor, Apache Junction

Other stakeholders:

19. Dennis Smith, Executive Director, MAG
20. Andy Gunning, Transportation Director, PAG

Other activities to prepare for the work sessions per County included a review of the following documents:

- Existing Strategic Plan
- Minutes from Regional Council meetings
- CAAG Budget
- Goals and Objectives established for the various CAAG provided services

Persons interviewed were extremely candid about what they perceived as current and upcoming issues, how their respective agency was responding now and preparing for the future and what role CAAG might play in augmenting their own agency's efforts.

A review of the documents indicated that a majority of attention was being applied to CAAG's programs and services, more so in an operational manner, and less paid to the policy-making portion of CAAG, especially in the work by the Regional Council.

WORK SESSIONS

Themes which emerged from the information gathering meetings conducted served as the backdrop for the work sessions and were the following:

1. **Growth Pressures**: issues arising in those jurisdictions wherein impacts from growth were being experienced.
2. **Transportation**: need for coordinating planning with other COGs, ADOT and securing accompanying funding.
3. **Water**: availability short- and long-term.
4. **Economic Development**: specifically the focus and recruitment of outside investment for job creation.
5. **Service Demands**: in particular the services provided by CAAG and the belief that service demands will continue to increase.
6. **Funding**: stability of revenue sources.

These six issues became the focus of the work sessions and designated as the Key Result Areas (KRAs). The intent was for each County and the entire group to create an action-oriented work plan to positively impact each KRA and consequently, create the Strategic Plan.

Three work sessions were held – December 6 for Gila County, December 13 with Pinal County and January 29 with representatives from agencies within both counties.

December 6, Gila County

In addition to CAAG staff members, the following persons attended:



1. Joe Sanchez, Gila County Supervisor
2. Steve Besich, Gila County Manager
3. Mike Vogel, Councilmember Town of Payson
4. Debra Galbraith, Interim Town Manager, Town of Payson
5. Monica Badillo, Mayor, Town of Hayden
6. Dave Fletcher, Health Director, Gila County
7. Stan Gibson, Mayor, City of Globe
8. Robert Gould, Planning Director, Gila County
9. Gloria Ruiz, Deputy Town Clerk, Town of Winkelman
10. Tom Rankin, Mayor, Town of Florence, Regional Council Chair

December 13, Pinal County

In addition to CAAG staff members, the following persons attended:

1. Gail Barney, Vice Mayor, Town of Queen Creek
2. Tom Rankin, Mayor, Town of Florence, Regional Council Chair
3. John Insalaco, Mayor, City of Apache Junction
4. Lionel Ruiz, Pinal County Supervisor
5. Terry Doolittle, Pinal County Manager
6. Ken Buchanan, Pinal County Assist. Manager, Develop. Serv.
7. Manny Gonzalez, Pinal County Assist. Manager, Adm. Serv.
8. Gary Eide, Kearny Town Manager
9. Himanshu Patel, Florence Town Manager
10. Bryant Powell, A J Assist. Manager, Mgt. Com. Chair
11. Mark Young, Intergov. Liaison, Town of Queen Creek
12. Joe Blanton, Eloy City Manager
13. Richard Wilkie, City of Casa Grande staff
14. Jill Dusenberry, Coolidge Assist. To the City Manager

Highlights from the work sessions:

- Confirmed the idea of strategic planning as being a critical activity for CAAG to undertake as a means to clarify focus and coordinate efforts on issues of mutual concern, within each County and between the two, as well. Shared priorities and secure funding are two critical areas.
- Concern rose about funding formula for services and programs administered by CAAG not being equally distributed among member jurisdictions.
- Desire expressed by some members for CAAG to transition towards an organization similar to MAG and PAG.

- ☑ Impacts of unprecedented growth primarily in Pinal County continue to arise, some anticipated while others were not.
- ☑ It was noted that while CAAG meets its objectives, concerns were raised that some elected and appointed officials within jurisdictions may not be entirely aware of the range of services provided by CAAG. As a response, it was suggested that a “CAAG 101” presentation which would focus on the role and purpose of CAAG, an orientation of sorts, be prepared and delivered to the various jurisdictions.
- ☑ The rich history of success by CAAG is the result of strong partnerships between elected and appointed officials from the various jurisdictions. These partnerships were based on a “give and take” type of bartering. Concern raised is due to recent and upcoming turnover of the key individuals essential to these partnerships, the viability for this decision making practice may be in jeopardy.
- ☑ Key Result Areas were confirmed as those issues most critical to jurisdictions in Gila County and which need attention by both counties at the January 29 work session.

Joint Session on January 29, Gila and Pinal Counties

In addition to CAAG staff members, the following persons attended:

1. Tom Rankin, Mayor, Town of Florence; Regional Council Chair
2. Lionel Ruiz, Pinal County Supervisor
3. Terry Doolittle, Pinal County Manager
4. Manny Gonzalez, Assist. Pinal Co. Manager (Adm. Services)
5. Himanshu Patel, Manager, Town of Florence
6. Byron Jackson, Mayor, City of Eloy
7. Joe Blanton, Manager, City of Eloy
8. Angel Medina, Mayor, Town of Miami
9. Robert Mawson, Manager, Town of Miami
10. Gary Eide, Manager, Town of Kearny
11. Stan Gibson, Mayor, City of Globe
12. Chuck Heron, Mayor, Town of Star Valley
13. Gail Barney, Vice Mayor, Town of Queen Creek
14. Mark Young, Intergovernmental Liaison, Town of Queen Creek
15. Bob Flatley, Manager, City of Coolidge
16. Bob Jackson, Mayor, City of Casa Grande
17. Richard Wilkie, City of Casa Grande
18. John Insalaco, Mayor, City of Apache Junction
19. Bryant Powell, Assist. City Manager, City of Apache Junction; Management Committee Chair
20. Ruth Giese, Assist. City Manager, City of Apache Junction

21. Dave Flecher, Health Director, Gila County
22. Mike Vogel, Councilmember, Town of Payson
23. Debra Galbraith, Manager, Town of Payson
24. Robert Gould, Planning Director, Gila County
25. Gloria D. Ruiz, Deputy Clerk, Town of Winkelman

The areas of focus for the joint session were the following:

- As each County's representatives met separately in previous sessions, intent was to share results of each county's work with those members from the other county. Purpose was to acquaint everyone with the focus, content and tone of sessions already held. The themes identified and listed on page 8 of this Report were discussed and confirmed as the most urgent issues of which there is strong, mutual concern.
- Members to participate in meaningful and candid discussions around the issues confronting CAAG, confirm the most pressing issues and agree on a set of priorities. These priorities would then be addressed by separate sub-committees that would consist of CAAG staff and members from jurisdictions who would self-select to participate. These sub-committees would prepare action plans on their respective topic, that when blended with all topics, would constitute the Strategic Plan. The Plan would then be presented for consideration by the Management Committee and subsequently the Regional Council for adoption.

PRIORITIES

As a result of a voting process by those persons who attended the joint meeting/work session on January 29 the following four topics were selected as the primary focus of the Strategic Plan:

- 1. Planning**
- 2. Environmental**
- 3. Transportation**
- 4. Governmental Relations**

Those attending the January 29 work session self-selected to serve in one of the four sub-committees. Staff members from CAAG joined the sub-committee most closely related to the subject matter each works on. Each sub-committee then discussed their respective topic as a means of clarifying the most relevant issues they should address. At the conclusion of the work session, a representative from each sub-committee provided an update to all those members attending the session. The objective, going forward, was for each sub-committee to meet again and craft a coherent strategic focus for their particular area and review with the Management Committee and subsequently gain approval by the Regional Council.

ACTION PLANS

Subsequent to the January 29 joint session, each sub-committee was to meet and craft a more detailed Action Plan, delineating specific steps to support the focus areas:

1. Planning

Members included

Joe Blanton, Manager, City of Eloy
Terry Doolittle, Pinal County Manager
Robert Gould, Planning Director, Gila County
Ruth Giese, Assistant to City Manager, City of Apache Junction
Mike Vogel, Councilmember, Town of Payson
Richard Wilkie, City of Casa Grande

The last member-generated discussion on the Planning Department action plans occurred in the joint county meeting in late January 2008. Following are conclusions of that discussion:

- *Support the 2010 Census effort.*
- *Move from databases to more analytical work*
- *Develop a Municipal Planning Area (MPA) expansion process, more systematic, to be done through CAAG*
- *Develop economic information for CAAG members and for the ED marketing organizations in Gila and Pinal Counties*

CAAG staff added one additional point - to find funding sources for the planning department that will minimize special assessments by member agencies. This process is currently underway.

COG's in Arizona were formed by executive order in 1970. At that time there were federal requirements and associated federal funding that no longer exist. MAG and PAG have been able to overcome the lost federal funding with their designation as Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) in the mid 1990's. The other, "rural" COGs in Arizona expanded into social services programs, for which federal and state grants are available. Operationally, the rural COGs have much more staff in social services programs than for regional planning functions. CAAG is breaking from the minimalist approach to regional planning with the formation of the Planning Department.

The CAAG Planning Department has tried various other sources for funding. There are three viable options:

- *Contracts for additional projects.* These can be obtained, though not in great quantity. The best potential lies with contracts with neighboring COGs to validate Pinal County data, and with other quasi-government entities such as Central Arizona Project. Planning Department staff could also contract for plans in the CAAG Region, with the cooperation of members. The problem with this source is that the scope of work for additional projects will affect staff resources needed to maintain the schedule for database updates.
- *Database sales.* CAAG has prepared a pricing policy for each database, and Regional Council has adopted a policy requiring that State agencies which do not support the Planning Department either through grants or database trades shall pay for requested databases. It is likely that this source will result in minor funding.
- The key will be whether CAAG can obtain sufficient *support from the State*, which has the capability for the largest grant funding for the databases themselves. This may require a change in the way the State funds rural COGs, and may take some years to accomplish.

The Action Plan for the Planning Department:

- Continue to update planning databases for most current information, on an annual basis.
- Expand the database program to Gila County, once funding for that function is secured.
- Expand to evolve from building databases to preparing descriptive reports-maps and regional analyses for planning purposes.
- Provide Census 2010 support to ensure accurate counts for our members.
- Expand to create more economic development information, and work closely with CAAG Region economic development agencies by providing information that will improve their implementation efforts.
- More effectively distribute database/projections information to member agencies, both those with GIS staffs and those without.
- Continue to participate in plans and events that are important to our members, with the highest priority to those that have the greatest regional effect.
- Develop a more systematic MPA expansion process, and other similar regional policies as needed.

2. Environmental Planning Group

Members include

Gail Barney, Vice Mayor, Town of Queen Creek
Gary Eide, Manager, Town of Kearny
Manny Gonzalez, Asst. County Manager, Pinal County
John Insalaco, Mayor, City of Apache Junction
Jose Angel Medina, Mayor, Town of Miami

A sub-committee meeting was held in March. The items raised at the January 29th meeting by the sub-committee were reviewed for purposes of clarification and agreement by members. These items were:

- ❖ CAAG is to create and maintain a resource center for various environmental issues (water, water quality, air quality, etc.).
- ❖ Pinal County, through the Air Quality Control District will be responsible for the PM10, and they are working on this issue now.
- ❖ Through water quality and the 208 process, the reuse and recharge issue is pushed forward.
- ❖ Drinking water quality and water availability was not discussed in any detail.
- ❖ Dust control and PM10 mean funding to the region and CAAG can assist the communities by gathering information and attending meetings on behalf of its members.

As a means of providing direction beyond the current level of services provided by CAAG staff, two questions were posed to members of the sub-committee:

- What could CAAG be successful at regarding Environmental Planning in the next 3 to 5 years?
- What can CAAG do to assist their communities in this area in the next 3 to 5 years to address their needs?

These types of questions can prove extremely helpful in illuminating those issues that are important but not necessarily being addressed at the present time. Each member of the group received cards that they wrote suggestions on and then these cards were grouped on the wall and then evaluated.

The attached chart is the outcome of the Environmental Planning Groups priorities.

Gathering and Dispersing Information	Review & Recommend Action on Environmental Issues	Promote Environmental Quality of Life Issues
CAAG 101 (ASAP)	Water Quality Issues	Environmental affect on Tourism
Applying for state/federal grants	Solid Waste Issues	Find out true water issues
Interpreting federal/state mandates	Continued 208 program	Job centers
Focus on Youth Education		Realistic transportation
More Internal/External Networking		Aviation opportunities
Dust control		Multi-modal transportation
Tax fuel info		
Coordinating efforts among		

cities/towns		
Provide educational resources for youth		
Facilitate meetings		
New PM ₁₀ laws		
Dust control info		
Museum-style resource center		

Environmental Planning Action Plan

Based on discussion from the Subcommittee, and staff recommendations, the following actions should be pursued within the next three to five years:

1. CAAG will continue to maintain and improve the CWA Section 208 program to ensure the water quality protection and access to information.
2. Within the next three to five years, CAAG will completely revise the CAAG Section 208 Areawide Water Quality Management Plan.
3. CAAG should remain available to its member agencies for technical assistance regarding environmental issues, particularly water quality planning.
4. CAAG will continue to be a repository of information on environmental issues throughout the Region, and be knowledgeable on statewide environmental issues, or have the ability to access resources to inform CAAG members.
5. CAAG will continue to provide liaison to the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), Arizona Department of Water Resources (ADWR), US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA), and/or other environmental administrations.
6. The Environmental Planning Department will work with other CAAG departments, including Economic Development and its Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) Committee to champion environmental stewardship and promotion of environmental issues, as well as encourage environmental consciousness as a means to promote economic development.

Challenges

CAAG’s Environmental Planning Department is funded from two sources: a small contract from the ADEQ (approximately \$3,500, which has decreased every year for the past 13 years), and fees for service. Technical assistance, such as assisting in the negotiation of consensus between communities, meetings on technology, planning or other similar issues, etc., has been provided at no cost to our members. This practice, however, has put a financial strain upon the department. Today’s environmental issues have become more complex, and require more time, further putting a strain on the department’s finances. Part of CAAG’s charge is to provide this assistance, however, there must be funding sources dedicated to the department to maintain this high-level of service.

CAAG must also update its Areawide Water Quality Management Plan. This document, mandated by the State, was last updated in 1994, prior to the housing boom of the late 1990s and early 21st century. Since the last revision, there have been approximately 40 amendments to the plan, far more than seen by most other COGs in the country. This revision will be costly, approximately \$125,000, and time intensive. CAAG will need to explore options to update this critical document to best serve our communities.

As a result of the Subcommittee's meeting, the group indicated they would like to see additional programming come out of the department, including outreach to the community. Whereas Environmental Planning is willing to take on these additional actions, there must be funding sources available to initiate a program. To implement these programs, CAAG will have to explore not only funding options, but partnership opportunities to be able to fund and implement the program within the community.

3. Transportation

Members include

Bryant Powell, Assist. City Manager, City of Apache Junction
Stan Gibson, Mayor, City of Globe
Himanshu Patel, Manager, Town of Florence
Tom Rankin, Mayor, Town of Florence
Mark Young, Intergovernmental Liaison, Town of Queen Creek

Attendance by members at meetings of the sub-committee was less than anticipated and similarly, the volume of input regarding direction and feedback on proposed focus, as well. However, at the joint planning-transportation department meeting in March, it was suggested by the members in attendance that staff change the approach for the departmental action plans. Rather than rely on member guidance, it was suggested that CAAG staff develop a draft action plan for members to review and finalize.

Transportation Department

The following highlights are from the inaugural sub-committee meeting on January 29.

- Satisfaction with current efforts by CAAG with respect to the various areas related to transportation including research, policy guidance and intergovernmental coordination.
- Desire for CAAG to craft a transportation model that will assist with securing funding sources. The model should be integrated with the population model underway by the Planning Department. Mr. Tomasik reported that, based on other COGs which have created similar models, the financial resources necessary for creation are quite large. The group requested a master map be

provided to communities to start discussions with neighbors to see if it would be worthwhile to see what options CAAG would have for modeling opportunities in-house.

Subsequent to the meeting, as a means of obtaining input from agencies that are most active in regional transportation planning, interviews were conducted with representatives from Pinal County, MAG, and PAG. The representatives were asked to state, from each their own perspectives, what kind of role and responsibilities in regional transportation CAAG should have, given the transition of Pinal County from rural to urbanizing. Following are the results of those discussions:

Pinal County – The County believes there is a need for an agency in Pinal County to take responsibility for long range regional transportation planning. The County prefers to limit its role in transportation to engineering, not planning. However, the County wants to remain as the responsible agency for long-range regional transportation planning in Pinal until such time as a higher authority takes responsibility for it. The County also believes there is a need for a single Municipal Planning Organization (MPO) to cover all of Pinal County, and is concerned about the possibility of multiple small MPOs at the city-town scale.

PAG - PAG is the MPO for Pima County. In that role, it has responsibility for long-range regional transportation planning, the transportation improvements program, annual enhancements, travel modeling, and special transportation studies. PAG suggested that CAAG Transportation should have the following responsibilities:

- Long range transportation planning
- Special transportation studies, such as congestion management, household travel survey for travel modeling
- Input data collection for modeling
- Travel modeling (contracted, not done in-house because of high cost)
- Funding priorities (TIP, annual enhancements, financial forecasting to show transportation funding gaps)

MAG – MAG is the MPO for Maricopa County. In their most recent MPO certification by Federal Highways Administration, FHWA recommended that the MAG planning area should include contiguous urbanized development beyond Maricopa County borders. Presently, this includes Apache Junction and Queen Creek. FHWA based their certification comments in large part due to travel patterns, which show considerable commuting from Pinal County into Maricopa County.

MAG believes there is a need for a single strong regional transportation planning entity in Pinal County, though MAG does not have a position on a Pinal County MPO. Based on MAG's experience, however, if there were multiple MPOs in Maricopa County, for example, effective long range regional transportation planning for the entire urban area

would be considerably more difficult. A single MPO covering the entirety of Pinal County is preferable to multiple small MPOs.

Transportation Department Draft Action Plan

Staff recommendations include:

Formation of a Pinal County Transportation Policy Committee to discuss at least the following two recommendations.

1. Investigate, and if desired, initiate the process for CAAG to prepare a single Regional Transportation Plan for Pinal County, to be adopted by CAAG Regional Council as the official long-range regional transportation plan for the county.
2. Investigate, and if desired, initiate the process to form a single Pinal County MPO, covering all areas within the county's boundaries.

Transportation Advisory Committee

To investigate both the process of creating an MPO and the requirements for preparing an RTP, a working policy committee should be formed. As regional transportation planning is a coordinated effort among various levels of government, the working committee should include, besides Pinal County member agencies, the neighboring Councils of Government, ADOT, and FHWA. Only Pinal County member agencies would be voting members on this Committee.

Pinal County Regional Transportation Plan

In addition to the need for an MPO, there is also a need for a Pinal County Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). An officially-adopted RTP can be prepared by a Council of Governments, as well as an MPO.

There is a plethora of transportation plans and studies for many parts of Pinal County, but none for the entire county. These include the Small Area Transportation Studies that have been, and continue to be, developed for municipalities, as well as the several freeway studies, rail corridor studies, and Pinal County RSRM.

The advantage of an RTP for Pinal County is to consolidate all the various transportation plans and studies that have been, and continue to be, prepared by various municipalities, the County, and the State into a single official document. If prepared under federal guidelines, all transportation corridors identified in the plan would be eligible for federal funding that may become available in the future, and the plan would be updated annually.

CAAG should more thoroughly investigate the requirements and funding sources for preparing an RTP, checking with FHWA, ADOT and the neighboring MPO's. This

investigation should be presented to Management Committee for their decision to forward to Regional Council for adoption.

Pinal County MPO

CAAG should initiate a process to become an MPO, the planning area of which would be the entire geography of Pinal County. MPO is a federal designation, and is based on the results of the most recent census. Gila County is not eligible to become an MPO, which is federally designated and requires a county population of at least 200,000 persons. By 2012, the 2010 Census results should mean federal designation of Pinal County as eligible to apply for MPO status.

CAAG has previously communicated with small MPOs in Arizona. MPO status does not automatically mean that enough federal funds would be available to actually construct new regional transportation routes. MPO status contains responsibilities for preparing long-range regional transportation plans under federal guidelines, and the feedback from small Arizona MPOs is that there is not enough funding to do much more than to prepare the transportation plans. The small MPOs are financially strapped, but this may be due to their status as independent organizations; it is possible that a Pinal MPO, folded into the larger CAAG infrastructure, would be financially feasible to hire transportation planning staff and to prepare the regional transportation plans under federal requirements.

The process to establish a Pinal MPO is a major effort that will take several years through 2012 and beyond. Staff recommends that the CAAG strategy be carried forward through a small Blue Ribbon Committee of members whose expertise is most relevant. This Blue Ribbon Committee could then continue to operate during the entire process of becoming an MPO. The MPO process will need to involve MAG, PAG and FHWA.

In an MPO structure, the CAAG Transportation Department would have the following functions:

- Continue the present functions of data collection for the transportation planning database as presently configured, and expand data collection to include all necessary data required for regional transportation modeling.
- Expand to include responsibility for long-range regional transportation planning in Pinal County, and integrate those plans with those by MAG, PAG and ADOT. This implies the expansion of CAAG staff to include reasonably experienced long-range transportation planning staff. It is not financially or operationally feasible for CAAG to incorporate travel modeling, which would probably be best to contract out.
- Continue the present functions of the Transportation Improvement Program and enhancements, which is to prioritize funding for transportation segments.
- Continue to represent the CAAG Region in multi-county transportation planning efforts, such as the Hidden Valley Framework Study.
- Continue to represent the CAAG Region in funding priorities approved by the State Transportation Board.

- Expand to include greater effort in securing transportation funding for the CAAG Region.

CAAG should more thoroughly investigate all aspects of becoming the countywide MPO for Pinal County. This investigation should be presented to Management Committee for their decision to forward to Regional Council for adoption.

4. Governmental Relations

Members include

Dave Fletcher, Health Director, Gila County
Debra Galbraith, Manager, Town of Payson
Bob Jackson, Mayor, City of Casa Grande
Robert Mawson, Manager, Town of Miami
Gloria Ruiz, Deputy Clerk, Town of Winkelman

Members are pleased with the annual “Legislative Day” sponsored by CAAG. At this point, it appears the role of CAAG with respect to governmental relations is to continue in its present fashion. The topic of governmental relations often generates strong opinions by members some who favor an expanded role for CAAG while others advocate a limited role for CAAG. Consequently, this topic will continue to be monitored for future developments.

SUMMARY AND NEXT STEPS

This Strategic Plan was designed to be a “snapshot” in time; to identify strategies and tactics to address the issues pressing CAAG and its members. The process used for the creation of the Strategic Plan was thorough and transparent and enlisted the energy and ideas from a number of interested stakeholders. Serious, in-depth discussions were held about the issues member jurisdictions are facing and the role of CAAG has as a conduit to address them on a regional basis. The process served the members well in providing a forum for a healthy exchange of perspectives resulting in a sharper focus on several critical issues.

The recommendations for each of the four priorities emphasize the continuation of certain current practices by CAAG while advocating the pursuit of an expanded role on other areas. These recommendations should be reviewed by the Management Committee and ultimately considered for adoption by the Regional Council. Once adopted, the Strategic Plan should become a working document by staff, the Management Committee and

Regional Council to ensure goals set receive the necessary attention for progress to be made and sustained. It is recommended the entire Plan be reviewed annually for possible revisions.