

Case Study: Pima Association of Governments (PAG) Complete Streets Planning Initiatives

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The Pima Association of Governments (PAG) and its members are taking a community-focused approach to weaving Complete Streets concepts into their transportation planning efforts. Starting with a Complete Streets Resolution adopted in 2015, PAG designed policy and plans to encourage and support member jurisdictions to promote intentional project design, planning, and policymaking that centers on safety, accessibility, and connectivity for all types of travel. This case study highlights Complete Streets planning initiatives carried out by PAG and the City of Tucson, Arizona.

Background and Demographics

The PAG consists of nine members: Pima County, Tucson, South Tucson, Marana, Oro Valley, Sahuarita, the Pascua Yaqui Tribe, the Tohono O'odham Nation, and the Arizona State Transportation Board. The geographic jurisdiction of the PAG consists of approximately 9,200 square miles, though most residents live in the more urbanized areas. The PAG supports transportation planning efforts through interagency coordination and data provisions in the region, as well as overseeing the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA)—the Pima County taxing district—to facilitate revenue collection and funds distribution for transportation projects. The agency's primary transportation planning guidance document, the [2045 Regional Mobility and Accessibility Plans](#) (2045 RMAP), sets the vision and goals for the region's next 30 years.

The region is undergoing significant population growth, which will strain existing transportation operations and infrastructure. Data analysis in the 2045 RMAP predicts the area could see as much as a 45% percent growth in population in the next 30 years.

The Tucson area is known for its flat terrain and desert climate, which create favorable conditions for cyclists.

PROJECT SNAPSHOT

- The PAG passed a Complete Streets resolution in 2015.
- In 2006, Pima County voters approved a half-cent tax to fund regional transportation projects.
- In 2021, the City of Tucson developed a set of [Complete Streets design guidelines](#) to inform transportation improvement projects.
- The PAG is developing its next Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) [2055 Regional Mobility and Accessibility Plan](#).

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION HIGHLIGHTS

- The PAG established a web-based platform, called [Engage 2045](#), for providing updates and gaining public input throughout the development of transportation plans.
- The PAG utilizes citizen committees to maintain public input and oversight throughout project development.
- The PAG will distribute a survey to the public to obtain input on regional planning priorities for the [2055 RMAP](#).

Bicycling is a popular travel choice for residents, as demonstrated by Tucson and the Pima County Region's status as a [League of American Bicyclists'](#) gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community since 2006. Communities can be designated bronze, silver, gold, or platinum based on several metrics including bicycle friendly laws, total bicycle network mileage, active bicycle advocacy groups, and share of transportation budget spent on bicycling. The PAG often sees high volumes of visiting cyclists using the local trails to train for competitions. Accordingly, the PAG emphasizes the needs of cyclists—both to leverage the economic benefit and to boost recreation amenities—through project prioritization, funding, and education dedicated to bicycle infrastructure in the region.

Agency Challenges

In 2020, in response to feedback from public participation, PAG created a 2045 RMAP Update that included examination of the region's roadways. This revealed that 37% of the metropolitan area roadways were in "poor condition." Additionally, the PAG travel demand model indicated that many roads see only 47% of their intended traffic. The roadway network includes segments displaying both under- and over-utilization, which may result in unanticipated operations and maintenance costs. As the member jurisdictions contend with growing populations and changing transportation needs, the PAG anticipates a need for increasing focus on safety, Transportation Performance Management (TPM), and multi-modal performance measures.

Pima County, one of the member jurisdictions, is larger in land mass than some States in the country. Given the large geographic footprint of the PAG region, connectivity and accessibility to multiple modal options is challenging. During the public input process for the development of the 2045 RMAP, residents expressed concerns over roadway conditions, road congestion, multi-modal option availability and reliability, and the capacity for the PAG and partners to fund the needed transportation improvement projects adequately.

The final version of the 2045 RMAP determined that the arterial roadways are the most used and will require additional oversight and maintenance to accommodate the movement of people and freight throughout the region.

Public Participation and Stakeholder Outreach

The PAG leverages innovative and multi-faceted strategies to engage the community in the transportation planning processes. During the development of the 2045 RMAP, the PAG held public meetings to talk about the plan, conducted surveys, gave presentations, and engaged in one-on-one interactions with critical stakeholders, such as governing bodies and Tribal governments in the area. The PAG also posted all relevant 2045 RMAP development materials—such as detailed project plans, growth forecasts, and modeling results—on a web platform to maintain transparency throughout the process. To allow residents to add local context and perspective to the plan, the PAG staff established an interactive tool called the RMAP [Engage 2045](#). This tool allows users to compare different land use scenarios and transportation investment approaches to see how changes to one or both affect future transportation performance. Over 1,900 residents engaged in at least one form of public participation offered.

To maintain accountability and open communication throughout project development and implementation, PAG requires each project to establish a citizen's committee appointed by the agency

leading the planning process. Typically, these committees remain in place for two to three years, during planning and design phases.

These committees ensure project solutions are context-specific and sensitive to the populations served. During each project phase, the PAG engages residents about the project's impact on usage, ridership, or coverage for the different modes. This methodology allows for the PAG to show the benefits of its Complete Streets planning approach to decisionmakers and the public while projects are still underway.

Like many regional planning organizations, the PAG has transitioned much of their public participation to a hybrid environment (in person and online) to accommodate all types of people and needs. The PAG disseminates project and plan information through announcements in newspapers, social media posts, and in-person connections at community meetings. Additionally, it provides surveys in multiple languages, especially when distributing surveys in neighborhoods with a high density of non-English speakers.

Regional Complete Streets Initiatives

The PAG incorporates the needs and desires of many different types of residents and travelers into the transportation planning process. The PAG oversees the RTA, which manages revenue from the half-cent excise tax to help fund regional transportation projects. In 2015, the PAG codified this initiative through a Complete Streets resolution that was passed by all regional council members. The resolution established a unified approach for member jurisdictions to incorporate Complete Streets priorities in any transportation project.

Complete Streets Policy and Guide

One of the PAG member jurisdictions, the City of Tucson, has completed several Complete Streets initiatives in partnership with the PAG. [Move Tucson](#), the City of Tucson's long-range transportation plan, outlines a high-level vision to improve the city's existing transportation networks and ways to leverage transportation to boost the local economy. In coordination with the Move Tucson plan and the city adoption of the [Tucson Complete Streets Policy](#) in 2019, the City of Tucson's Department of Transportation and Mobility created a [Complete Streets Design Guide](#) as a framework for multi-modal and experiential transportation planning. The Tucson Department of Transportation, and the [Complete Streets Task Force](#), made up of representatives from academic, public, private, and non-profit organizations in the region, led to the creation of the Complete Streets Design Guide. This tool, utilizing data sets provided by the PAG, demonstrates how Complete Streets concepts can be incorporated into city transportation projects. Compared to the Complete Streets Policy, the Guide provides actionable information about street types, multi-modal solutions, and alternative design strategies.

With the City of Tucson's Complete Streets policy in place, the [Complete Streets Coordinating Council](#) (CSCC) was established to oversee project prioritization and provide public oversight to project design and implementation. Members of the public may listen in on meetings and access meeting agendas and records at any time. CSCC members serve without compensation and each member is appointed by one of several committees and commissions involved in Complete Streets, such as the Pedestrian Advisory Committee, the Transit Task Force, the Commission on Disability, and the Transportation Director.

Walking, Biking, and Transit Projects

The PAG [Regional Pedestrian Plan](#) and [Regional Bicycle Plan](#) tailor innovative practices and planning strategies for the region's bicycle and foot traffic. To inform the plans, the PAG performs an in-person count of bicycle and pedestrian travelers at 100 locations throughout the region using dozens of volunteers to determine a count of travelers and evaluate safety measures like helmet wearing, bicycling in the proper direction, and within a bicycle lane. This type of on-the-ground data collection provides location-specific information for the development and enhancement of pedestrian, bicycle, and transit corridors. The plan highlights the region's history of car-centric planning and outlines how creating connectivity between the growing suburbs and the revitalizing downtown can create opportunities to build out both bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure with an emphasis on safety moving forward. Completed, in progress, and upcoming bicycle and pedestrian projects can be explored in an [online interactive map](#).

Like many mid-size, sprawling cities, Tucson experiences low transit ridership rates: 3.5% in 2018¹. Using in-person counts along with data from the American Community Survey and the National Household Travel Survey, the 2045 RMAP sets goals to increase transit ridership, reduce transit travel times, and increase the share of pedestrian facilities on major urban roadways.

Next Steps

The PAG is developing its next long-range transportation plan: 2055 Regional Mobility and Accessibility Plan to be adopted in 2024. A mixture of quantitative and qualitative strategies will provide insights regarding the transportation needs, benefits, and burdens across the region. The PAG will continue to explore innovative funding sources to facilitate Complete Streets-focused project implementation. The current RTA transportation tax will expire in 2026, so the PAG will be developing a plan to return to voters to ask if they will invest in their communities even further to supplement the State and Federal funding streams.

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Resources

[PIMA Association of Governments](#)

[PAG Regional Pedestrian Plan](#)

[PAG Regional Bicycle Plan](#)

¹ [Five-Year Strategic Transit Plan Fiscal Years 2020-2024](#), City of Tucson, 2018

[PAG Long-Range Regional Transit Plan](#)

[PAG 2045 Regional Mobility and Accessibility Plan](#)

[PAG 2045 Engage](#)

[PAG Transportation Improvement Program](#)

[PAG Regional Transportation Funding](#)

[Move Tucson Plan](#)

[City of Tucson Transportation Projects](#)

[City of Tucson Complete Streets Design Guide](#)

[City of Tucson Bicycle & Pedestrian Projects Map](#)

