

# PINAL COUNTY TRANSIT GOVERNANCE STUDY

## Technical Working Group Meeting #5

Thursday, July 22, 2020 1:00 pm

Held as a Zoom Call

### Introduction

Travis Ashbaugh introduced the project and read the Title VI announcement. The meeting began with introductions.

Bethany Whitaker from Nelson\Nygaard provided an overview of the meeting agenda, noting that the focus would be on the findings from the workshops held on July 8<sup>th</sup> and next steps for the project.

Bethany also said the team is planning for a presentation to the Casa Grande City Council on August 17<sup>th</sup>. Right now, Amy Moran from Wilson & Company is scheduled to make the presentation.

### Stakeholder Workshops and Selection of Preferred Model

Bethany provided an overview of the stakeholder workshops, including the workshop logistics and attendance. She also presented the findings of the workshop, including findings from the polling questions. She asked the TWG if a preferred model emerged in the TWG's mind. Discussion included:

- Audra from MAG noted that while the trade off questions were important, she expressed concern if people fully understand the consequences of some of those trade-offs. Next step would be to clearly show what the consequences are if some of these options are put in place, since some are mutually exclusive.
- Jill from ADOT supported Audra, saying that ADOT funded the study so they could see what the community wanted. ADOT is going to stay out of decision, since they want to see what has the strongest support from agencies and the community.
- Travis noted that if PRTA is the governing body, essentially every community in Pinal County would be represented. He asked if it would be good to send a post survey to workshop attendees to get more of the consequences better fleshed out?

Bethany suggested eliminating independent model, since it is status quo and if this group does nothing, the region will have the independent model. There is no need to keep studying it. She recommended choosing between the hybrid and consolidated models, noting some of the differences between the hybrid and consolidated models. TWG members noted:

- Jason Hafner suggested moving forward with hybrid model, since it offered the most flexibility. He also said for the study team to craft the hybrid model in a way that best fits Pinal County and suggested the team take components of consolidated model that the communities like best and bring it in to the hybrid approach.

- Judy Ramos from the City of Maricopa expressed her perspective given the city's unusual situation (between Phoenix and Tucson). She suggested the independent model is attractive since we do not actually know how the hybrid model would function.
- Travis said that Maricopa could still function independently in hybrid model.
- Duane from Casa Grande agreed with Jason H, especially because Pinal County could still move to consolidated in the future. Several stakeholders supported a consolidated model, but politically hybrid may be better.
- Jon from Eloy agreed, noting that a hybrid approach seems like a good place to start from. COVID means people might have less money to play with. Looking to get service up to Casa Grande and CAC. Bring transit to central section of the county. They will want to know what they get out of this if they need to put money in, and what kind of service will come out.
- Erik also agreed with the hybrid approach. He said it will be more acceptable to elected officials in Coolidge. It allows people to buy in to see how it works, rather than completely in or out. He pointed out the hybrid approach would work similar to current CART service.
- Robert also support the hybrid model. He said it politically and practically gives something that has an opportunity to make a difference. It can evolve too.
- Marsha voted for hybrid model noting it provides opportunities to expand transit to rural areas that need to get to medical services.

Based on this discussion, the TWG agreed that the consensus was to move forward with the hybrid model. The consensus was that the TWG and technical team should dive into the details of the hybrid model and figure out details for implementation.

### **Project Next Steps**

Bethany said that next steps would be to flesh out how a hybrid model might work. She explained that in her mind, the hybrid model might work differently depending who took the lead. There are a handful of different ways a hybrid model could work, potentially starting with CART or the PRTA or even a new group of cities/towns that wanted to work together.

Jason asked Bethany to clarify how the hybrid model would work and noting that it sounds like it might be different depending on who takes the lead with regional transit agency.

Jill asked two questions 1) how did the PRTA react when the team asked them about transit and 2) is CART interested in expanding.

Travis said the PRTA did not say no but expressed some caution about moving forward.

Erik said the priority for Coolidge is local service (Cotton Express) and they may be willing to try and expand CART. CART has tried to expand in the past.

Jill noted that the Cotton Express would be a smaller operation without CART. Because they operate both services, they are able to have more staff and resources dedicated to transit. Managing both services also lowers administrative costs for both services.

Audra reminded everyone that transit service is a commitment that requires a longer term perspective. Finding money for capital is one thing but investing in operating service is a long term investment.

Bethany suggested that it might be helpful to give tangible examples of what hybrid model might look like. She said she could sketch out what potential structures might look like, get some feedback from the PMT, and then potentially share them with Coolidge with Erik's help and the PRTA for feedback.

### **Immediate Next Steps**

- Nelson\Nygaard to sketch out some implementation models for review by the PMT
- Set up meetings with City of Coolidge and PRTA Board
- Presentation to Casa Grande City Council on August 17
- Next TWG meeting – mid-to-late August

### **Attendees:**

Travis Ashbaugh, CAG

Robert Mawson, CAG

Erik Heet, City of Coolidge

Judy Ramos, City of Maricopa

Jon Vlaming, City of Eloy

Marsha Ashcroft, Horizon Health and Wellness

Jill Dusenberry, ADOT

Jason Bottjen, Pinal County

Jason Hafner, SCMPO

Duane Eitel, City of Casa Grande

Audra Koester Thomas, MAG

Yanisa Techagumthorn, Nelson\Nygaard

Bethany Whitaker, Nelson\Nygaard