

# PINAL COUNTY TRANSIT GOVERNANCE STUDY

## Technical Working Group Meeting #4

Thursday, May 28, 2020, 1:00 pm

Video Conference

### Introduction

Travis Ashbaugh from CAG and Bethany Whitaker from Nelson\Nygaard started the meeting, and participants introduced themselves. Travis reminded working group members to let him know the details needed to fill out in-kind forms. Travis also read the Title XI notice and notified participants that the meeting is being recorded.

### Project Status

Bethany Whitaker updated the working group on the project status. Since the last TWG meeting in February 2020, the project team has completed stakeholder interviews, refined Working Paper #1, refined governance models, and drafted an approach for upcoming stakeholder workshops.

### Working Paper #1

Working Paper #1 consists of a review of peer agencies and stakeholder interviews. The draft has been circulated among TWG members, and the project team has finished incorporating feedback. One of the comments pointed out that the document did not explicitly answer the following three questions outlined in the study purpose section of the paper: 1) How can individual cities, towns and partners collaborate to guide transit service development?; 2) What are the different governance and organizational models that could be used to guide future collaboration?; and 3) What are the costs and benefits of individual models? Bethany informed the TWG that a new section has been added to the working paper to answer these questions and discussed what we learned from peers and stakeholders regarding these questions. The TWG had no further comments on Working paper #1.

### Governance Models

Prior to this TWG meeting, the project team had sent out an updated overview of the three governance models: Consolidated Regional Transit System, Independent Transit Agencies, and a hybrid model. Bethany explained how these models were refined after the last TWG meeting, including estimated costs based existing funding in Pinal County and information from peers and stakeholder input. The project team consciously did not consider PRTA funds with the latest round of these models since the sharing and allocation strategy for these funds have not yet been determined. These three models are intended to be compared to each other, and for each model Bethany described the general governance structure, funding sources and allocation, participation required, and flexibility to support transit growth. Jill Dusenberry from ADOT also reiterated that the independent model is the current status quo, but a lot of agencies are likely not showing their true administration and maintenance costs. Many staff in smaller agencies are employed by the municipality or county, and their time may not be reported as transit agency costs.

The TWG then shared comments and feedback on these models. Their comments included:

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- To build support for whichever model that comes out of this study, TWG members will need quite a bit of information to bring to elected officials to prove the viability of the model.
- Pitching these models may look different for areas that already have transit versus areas that want transit. Admin and startup costs may also look different. However, even for Maricopa, which is transitioning from 5311 to 5307 funding, there will be a lot of active work and development costs.
- TWG members asked if the project management team is confident that all the models will work in Pinal County. Travis responded that they could work but will depend on what the stakeholders and PRTA are willing to commit. For example, the consolidated model could be made possible if the PRTA is willing to run a consolidated agency or if a new entity is created. These options are intended to be overarching models, and there is a subset of options within each model with more details to be determined.
- Jill also mentioned that ADOT thinks the consolidated model is the most efficient. However, the people who want to keep local control are likely communities already with transit. For communities currently without transit, there may be an avenue in which they can work together to get transit.
- Flexibility to grow transit is an important factor for this study, and the consolidated model is easy to grow while hybrid is moderate. Bethany noted that the biggest hurdle to growing transit is local funding and start up infrastructure, since new communities will have to bring money to the table and participate actively to build initial infrastructure.
- TWG members noted that there is generally positive energy among elected officials to increase transit overall, in both cities with and without transit currently. They are willing to continue exploring ways to add transit, though budgets are tight due to Covid-19, and they would need more details on what they may be buying into.
- Lastly, Jill noted that CART was created with the concept of growing into a regional model, but perspectives changed with political change. They got their funding when another agency became 5307, leaving ADOT more statewide 5311 funds to distribute. However, ADOT cannot guarantee that money will stay in Pinal County when Maricopa becomes a 5307 agency. ADOT does prefer funding places with regional entities since it is seen as a more efficient way to spend transit funds.

Bethany asked the TWG if the group is comfortable with the project team bringing these governance models to the PRTA and stakeholders. The group generally agreed that there is enough high-level information to do so and will allow room for input from the stakeholders to continue refining the models.

### **Next Steps**

The next steps for the study are to:

1. Present the governance models to the PRTA Board: confirm draft governance models and assess the Board's interest in leading transit development
2. Present the governance models to stakeholders to collect input and gauge model preference. For the stakeholder presentation, Bethany suggested two options: holding virtual focus groups in June or waiting until later in the summer to do an in-person

meeting. The TWG decided on virtual focus groups. The project team proposed offering two sessions and utilizing the “Breakout Group” function on Zoom to allow for smaller discussions within these focus groups. Polls can also be used to gauge interest throughout these meetings. The project team will work to schedule these meetings, keeping in mind the July 4<sup>th</sup> holiday.

**Attendees:**

- Travis Ashbaugh, CAG
- Judy Ramos, City of Maricopa, Revitalization and Transit
- Kazi Haque, City of Maricopa, City Manager’s Office
- Duane Eitel, City of Casa Grande
- Jon Vlaming, City of Eloy
- Erik Heet, City of Coolidge, Transit Manager
- Amy Moran, Wilson & Company
- Audra Koester Thomas, MAG
- Beth Freeland, MAG
- CT Revere, Gordley Group
- Jason Hafner, Sun Corridor MPO
- Jason Bottjen, Pinal County, Transportation Supervisor of Public Works
- Jill Dusenberry, ADOT Transit
- Kathy Borquez, Pinal County
- Marsha Ashcroft, Horizon Health and Wellness
- Robert Mawson, Mobility Manager for CAG and Sun Corridor MPO
- Bethany Whitaker, Nelson\Nygaard
- Yanisa Techagumthorn, Nelson\Nygaard