

PIMA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

2030 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN



August 2004

Elderly Mobility

Public input from the 2030 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) identified priorities as safety, improved transit, better cross town mobility and traffic flow, and increased options for those who cannot drive. Adequate transportation is especially critical to ensure the health and well-being of our older residents.

PAG commissioned the Drachman Institute to study the transportation needs of the elderly in Pima County and to suggest some possible solutions. Questions addressed by the study were:

Who are the older residents of Pima County and where do they live?

Why is transportation important for older people?

What are the current and future travel needs of older people (65+) in the Tucson metropolitan area and what options are available to meet them?

Who are the older residents of Pima County and where do they live?

The elderly population of the Tucson metropolitan area is composed of:

- **Long term residents who are aging-in-place, often within the Tucson city limits.**
- **Retirees from other areas who move here, often to the suburbs.**

Unlike many other U. S. metropolitan areas, our region has substantial in-migration of retirees and those nearing retirement age. Elderly persons who move to Tucson and other Sunbelt communities are more likely to move to the suburbs than younger in-migrants.

Compared to other metropolitan areas, the Tucson metropolitan area (the 57th largest in the U.S.) has:

- The **2nd largest percentage** of suburban residents 55-64 years of age.
- The **2nd largest percentage** of seniors over 75 years of age.
- The **5th fastest growth** (between 1990 and 2000) of those over 65 in the suburbs.
- The **7th largest percentage** of seniors living alone.
- The **12th fastest suburban growth** of people 55-64 years of age and the **19th largest growth** of people 35-54 years of age, setting the stage for future aging in place.

Between 1990 and 2000, the number of older people declined in the City of Tucson but significantly increased outside the City limits. For example, the number of people over age 75 outside the City of Tucson limits nearly tripled.

Why is transportation important for older people?

- Lack of transportation resources often leads the elderly to forego needed services, to lose independence and be socially isolated.
- Older people in the U.S. are becoming almost totally dependent on the car, as a driver or passenger.
- Unsafe older drivers represent a safety risk to themselves, their passengers and the general public. Yet getting older drivers off the road results in a serious loss of mobility and independence for those who lack or are unwilling to use other options.
- Public transit options may be infrequently used by older people, often due to problems in boarding and disembarking from buses or to concerns about personal safety.

What are the current and future travel needs of older people in the Tucson metro area and what options are available to address them?

Need: Reliable and improved transit service.

Potential solutions:

- ✓ Improve conventional service and facilities.
- ✓ Provide additional services targeted to the elderly that run from elderly residential areas to destinations they frequent.
- ✓ Use smaller, low-floor buses and driver assistance for riders who need it.
- ✓ Increase system security and safety.
- ✓ Enhance community and information exchange.

Need: Improved highway and street systems with better signage, lane markings, lighting, protected left turns, etc.

Potential solutions:

- ✓ Adopt road and sign standards that are easier for older drivers to read and understand.
- ✓ Include retrofit programs in existing neighborhoods with concentrations of elderly residents.

Need: Improved pedestrian facilities and options.

Potential solutions:

- ✓ Improve pedestrian and transit sidewalks and paths.
- ✓ Improve crosswalk/intersection signals and pavement markings.
- ✓ Adopt and evaluate traffic calming devices.
- ✓ Strengthen enforcement of traffic violations, especially speed and parking infractions.

Need: Expanded alternative options.

Potential solutions:

- ✓ Facilitate the role of private individuals.
- ✓ Enhance the role of the private for-profit and the private not-for-profit sectors.
- ✓ Expand neighborhood-based volunteer systems.
- ✓ Provide insurance coverage for volunteer and caregiver drivers.

Need: Better community design.

Potential solutions:

- ✓ Develop policies that mix land uses and densities so housing options, stores and services are more closely located and accessible.

What is PAG?

Pima Association of Governments (PAG) is a non-profit association whose mission is to build consensus with its members and the public on regional planning issues such as transportation, air quality and water quality.

PAG is governed by a Regional Council comprised of elected officials from each member entity:

- City of South Tucson
- City of Tucson
- Pascua Yaqui Tribe
- Pima County
- Tohono O'odham Nation
- Town of Marana
- Town of Oro Valley
- Town of Sahuarita
- Arizona State Transportation Board

An open committee process is at the heart of PAG's mission to promote regional cooperation and informed decision making. PAG is not a government agency and the responsibility for implementation of plans and program remains with local, state and tribal governments.

NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Contact Lynne Potler at PAG 792-1093 or visit our website at www.pagnet.org/TPD/Section5310/Mobility.htm

Elderly Mobility forum held: November 14, 2003
Sandra Rosenbloom, recognized expert on the travel patterns of those with special needs, presented preliminary findings to the community.