

Regional Council Meeting Summary

Meeting Summary of Thursday, March 26, 2026

Full Video Recording (YouTube): [Recorded Meeting \(YouTube\)](#)

"We encourage and uphold the importance of regional collaboration as the Regional Council addresses regional priorities and pursues regional solutions."

To view the full Regional Collaboration and Unity Pledge, visit: PAGregion.com/pledge

Regional Council Members Present: Mayor Jon Post
General Ted Maxwell
Mayor Tom Murphy
Supervisor Matt Heinz
Mayor Roxanna Valenzuela
Mayor Joe Winfield
Chairman Verlon Jose
Mayor Regina Romero

Regional Council Members Absent: Chairman Julian Hernandez

Staff Lead: Michael J. Ortega, P.E., Executive Director

The following is an audio-to-text transcription of the **Regional Council Meeting held on Thursday, March 26, 2026**, and is being used as the written summary of the discussion. Minor changes were made to the transcription to include grammar or formatting for clarity, YouTube links/time stamps, spelling corrections and the addition of the agenda number or items based on the posted agenda.

Agenda

1. Call to Order (12:07 p.m.)

[Item #1 Video Link](#)

MEMBERS PRESENT AT ROLL CALL:

- Mayor Joe Winfield
- Mayor Tom Murphy
- Mayor Roxanna Valenzuela
- General Ted Maxwell
- Mayor Jon Post
- Mayor Regina Romero
- Supervisor Matt Heinz
- Chairman Verlon Jose

Mayor Post: Thank you very much. Please stand for the pledge of allegiance.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

[Item #2 Video Link](#)

All: I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

Mayor Post: Thank you very much. Call to the audience.

3. Call to the Audience (Remote Access Option)

[Item #3 Video Link](#)

Mr. Brown: Thank you, Mr. Chair. We have no speakers today.

Mayor Post: No speakers. Then moving right along. Item 4. We're just looking for a motion on this item.

4. Meeting Summary Approval

[Item #4 Video Link](#)

Mayor Winfield: Motion

Mayor Murphy: Second

Mayor Post: We have a motion and a second. All those in favor.

All: Aye.

Mayor Post: Opposed? Motion passes. Item 5.

5. Consent Agenda Items

[Item #5 Video Link](#)

a. Program Highlights Report

b. Contracts and Agreements Report

Mayor Romero: Mr. Chair, I'd like to move the items on the consent agenda.

Chairman, I have a motion, do I have a second?

General Maxwell: Second.

Mayor Post: A motion and a second. All those in favor?

All: Aye.

Mayor Post: Opposed? Motion passes. Item 6. Mr. Ortega.

**6. FY 2025-FY 2029 PAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP)
Amendment #2025.040**

[Item #6 Video Link](#)

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, thank you, and I do have Jamie Brown available to answer questions. Basically, this is a TIP amendment. As you might recall, probably three meetings ago, there was a discussion about 22nd Street

bridge and a shortfall there. We identified funding, our HURF 26 funding amount, which could be used for this project. That money is earmarked specifically for state highways, and so we were able to utilize some of that funding for the on-ramp and off-ramp at the 22nd Street bridge, to make up a portion of the construction cost. We also identified that the State Route 86 wildlife crossing, which is part of RTA 1, had some RTA monies available, and so we were able to use HURF 26 money to swap that. So in essence, taking advantage of that, this is the TIP amendment that does all of that.

I'm happy to answer questions and get into more detail if you'd like.

Mayor Post: Do we have any questions for staff?

Mayor Murphy: Move to approve.

Mayor Winfield: Second.

Mayor Post: We have a motion and a second, all those in favor?

All: Aye.

Mayor Post: Opposed. Motion passes. Item 7. Mr. Ortega.

7. (Federal) Surface Transportation Reauthorization Bill Update

[Item #7 Video Link](#)

Michael J. Ortega: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So we have invited Mr. Michael Racy from Racy Associates Inc. to come and give a quick overview of the surface transportation reauthorization bill. This is an item that we've been watching closely. Obviously, it impacts a lot of our funding, and I thought that Mr. Racy could provide us with at least up to date information on that. Thank you.

Mayor Post: Welcome, Mr. Racy.

Mr. Racy: Thank you very much. Mr. Chairman, Mayors, everyone. Thank you very much for the invitation to be here. As I think you all know, I spend most of my time, this time of year up in Phoenix, Monday through Thursday, every year at the Legislature. Final week, except for appropriations, to hear bills this week, so an absolutely insane week. Yesterday I was thinking, I don't know if I'm going

to make it. Maybe I'm going to have to call. All of the bills that I'm deeply involved in were heard early yesterday, so it worked out very, very nicely, so I'm really glad I could be here and thank you.

Informal presentation, but feel free after, during to stop for questions at any point. As I think you're all aware ... 2021, the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act was adopted, more formally called the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. A \$1.2 trillion program with five hundred and fifty billion B's here in the federal government in new programs and new initiatives. It had the broadest scope of any surface transportation act in history and added a number of other types of infrastructure. Climate initiatives, alternative vehicles, housing, internet infrastructure, and that was both some of the benefits and some of the curses of the '21 plan, and as we start to talk about the plan, the current plan expires Sept. 30 of this year, 2026.

The new plan is supposed to be in place by that point in time. There's pretty good bipartisan agreement in doing a program of the same size, inflation adjusted. Now, we've had some pretty serious inflation over the last five years, so in real numbers that's going to look like a much bigger number than the \$1.2 trillion number we were looking at in 2021. I'll talk a whole lot more about that because that's really central to what's going to be going on. Just to put some local Arizona political perspective on it, in past years, and I'm going back pretty far, Arizona's Senate and Congressional delegation has always had outsized influence for the size of our state, and we've had a lot of power. And even in the '21 Act, we had some key members up there that negotiated important parts of that. Senator Sinema and others played a big role. This year, we're probably as weak or weaker than we have ever been, but we still have some key members in key positions. Senator Kelly, very influential in the caucus. Maybe not the most liked of the administration and Rep. Stanton, although representing central Phoenix is very sensitive and receptive to southern Arizona issues and really calls down here, I think, to many of you and to me all the time, and then our own Rep. Ciscomani. And each of them sit on key committees and subcommittees. If anyone cares, I can give you the list of those committees, but we've got people that really care. So you may want to think as a region, are there some of these things that are developing in this act that you as a region may want to comment on. And we have so much more influence on them when we talk to them as a region, and I'll point out a couple items as we go on.

Six months left to get to a new program. They are in the agenda-setting phase. There are no actual bill drafts out, so I have no exhibits to show you no paper on

it. The relevant committees have all been meeting for a number of months, and they have had a number of public hearings to talk about a number of elements and directions, and what members would like to see in this plan, and there has been a fair amount of bipartisan cooperation, but we're still at the very superficial level. Hopefully, within a couple months, we'll start to see some paper on this, but you're all students of the political process, and you see how functional or dysfunctional things are these days. A new plan is supposed to be in place by Sept. 30. If not, there will need to be an extension adopted. There's currently, there's still a lot of hope to get there, but there are some really big issues, so I'm going to hit on four of those.

How much money? I've already suggested, but how big is the program going to be? Where does the money come from? That's going to be the single biggest problem in this authorization. What is the money going to be spent on, and how is it going to be spent? Tons of parallels between the feds and the state, so we're talking about the fed today, but I can't help but mention the parallels. We've got a fixed gas tax at the federal and the state levels. It's not indexed for inflation, and just like the HURF, it doesn't keep pace with our state highway needs or our local needs. There is not enough money in the Federal Transportation Trust Fund to fund the program at the current level, much less at a new level. What are the alternatives? Raising the gas tax. The gas price was \$4.50 when I was driving down here for unleaded, and \$5.70 for diesel. There is zero appetite for raising the gas tax.

State and federal. I don't have to run for office, I'll say it ... we have to double both. If we doubled our state gas tax, it would not fully cover inflation. We have 30% of the buying power today that we had the last time the gas tax was changed in 1990, and the federal isn't much better. But I don't see any appetite back there right now to change the federal gas tax. Indexing for inflation really ought to be done in both jurisdictions. Again, I don't see a lot of appetite. That helps down the road, but unless you adjust the base, it doesn't do much of anything for the immediate program. Now, these programs are five-year programs. It would be more than nothing, but not a lot.

Addressing alternative fuel vehicles, being discussed at the federal level as well as the state. Generally, we don't have registration fees for vehicles at the federal level, but there is cost or discussion of a registration fee, an in-lieu fee imputing on electric vehicles what they would otherwise be paying in gas tax, or some other sort of fee structure to get them to start to contribute. It's interesting, among the Republican caucus now in Washington. There's almost a backlash against

electric and alternative fuel vehicles. I've been here where the Republicans in the state and in the federal government were supportive of alternative fuel vehicles, to reduce our reliance on foreign oil and foreign entanglements. Then we came to sort of a neutral place a few years ago. Now, at state and federal, there's a backlash. So there's going to be some interest within some sectors to create some sort of fee that supplements the trust fund. Truth is, while the growth of alternative fuel vehicles is materially impacting collections, that alone is not going to solve the transportation funding problem, but it might be a little piece of it. Indexing might be a little piece of it. For the last five years, state and federal, we've seen backfilling of transportation with general fund dollars. This has blunted the underfunding of the system and reduced the political emphasis for it. For me, someone that's worked in this airspace longer than I want to admit, we don't even have Republican members of the legislative caucus that are talking about increasing transportation funding. And last year in the state Senate, we didn't even have a transportation committee. And the same sort of problems are happening at the federal level, but there isn't going to be general fund money, significant federal general fund money to backfill this Transportation Act. We're running record deficits in the federal government before factoring in any of the impacts of the war in Iran, so how we are going to fund, what's going to be closer to a \$1.3 trillion, \$1.5 trillion project? I don't have an answer, and that's going to be the most vexing part of this.

Then, what's it going to be spent on? There is no doubt the program is going to contract. The scope as I mentioned earlier was wider than it's ever been. It's going to narrow back to roads, bridges, rail, trucking, what the traditionalists see as core infrastructure, but it's not going to eliminate the new things. There are people out there that would simply like to solve the funding problem by eliminating all of the broader scope and believe the rest can be done with efficiencies. That's going to contribute, but it's not going to get us, and I see the gestures among some of you. That's not going to get us there, but there's going to be, after where the money comes from, a very spirited debate on what the money is spent on, and I think you'll definitely see a narrowing, a contraction of what's funded and a heavier emphasis on the traditional transportation infrastructure projects.

And then the last part of it, how is it going to be spent? And the '21 program came in for a lot of criticism because it was so broad and funded so many different things. Albeit at pretty high levels, it didn't complete anything really, really well, and it funded the old style program that wasn't reformed or updated at all, so the final really big picture of this year's Surface Transportation Act, will be

trying to reform that system, and there is bipartisan support in reforming that system. There was enormous frustration across party lines at delays in project delivery in the '21 Act, and I would suggest without going into it, there were in fact severe political consequences for folks because the project delivery was so slow, so we're going to see streamlining of the federal permitting approval. Modification in environmental regulations but with some pushback from folks that'll think that's going too far, and prediction, who knows, but I think you'll see some trade-off with agreements to streamline and modify regulations in exchange for keeping in the program some of the sustainability, resiliency components that we saw in the '21 Act. After that, there are dozens of other things that'll still be considered. Much of it we don't deal with on a day-to-day basis, but the entire rail system and rail automotive automation and new technologies.

Grant versus formula funding, and that's one you folks may well want to think about, and with the federal level it's a little trickier an analysis, but Mr. Ortega and his staff certainly have the ability to look at that. At the state level, this region is always the loser when they deviate from formula funding and go to earmarking, cherry-picking projects, funding with general fund dollars, and that's what they've been doing a lot of the last few years. It's a little different at the federal level, but that's something you should analyze in more detail, and consider as a region talking to our delegation about, along with what sort of project priorities do we have as a region, and I know we've got a lot of differences, but we've got an awful lot of similarities also, and when those three key people, but the entire Arizona hears from this area as a region, it really makes a difference to them.

I'll stop there. I could go into way more detail on any of those, and I'm happy to answer any questions. I know you've got a lot on your agenda today.

Mayor Post: Mayor Romero.

Mayor Romero: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Thank you, Mr. Racy. I really appreciate it. I started to hear your advice in terms of what this Council should do to make sure that we are lobbying as much as possible and getting on the map. The squeaky wheel usually gets the grease, and so what do you recommend that our strategy be to get in front, as opposed to coming at the end asking for what we need?

Mr. Racy: I think, Mr. Chairman, Madam Mayor, I think there are a couple of things you can do based on what we know right now, coming up with a list as a

body, on preferences versus formula funding and grants. Second thing, general regional priorities. Hopefully over the next month or so, I'll start to get some drafts of what they're looking at, and what I discussed a little with the PAG staff is I will start to give that to them on a regular basis, every couple of weeks, whatever it is, and then based on some of those details as we're hearing them, you may well want to weigh in. There are some that are tricky and even for this body is tricky. Streamlining versus modifying environmental rules, so I know that's not easy but not to be too long, but there are environmental rules that have also been very, very burdensome at times for this region. I was actively involved, and now longer ago than I can remember, but in the extension of River Road, and we had the money, but it was delayed for two years because it clipped 50 feet of a parking lot of a county park, and that 50 feet didn't eliminate any parking spaces that weren't available, didn't impact on any of the playing fields. We took two years, and I'm talking a corner as big as this corner of the room. Two years trying to get that modified and, in the end, we just redesigned the road and moved it, which was tricky. There was a well involved and other things. That wasn't serving any worthwhile purpose for anyone. There was no opposition to it, and there was no way to waive it, so there is room to do a whole lot better, so commenting on some of those things with a little more detail.

Mayor Romero: Then you said it would be better for us, for southern Arizona, for formula funding versus grant funding. Can you explain a little more?

Mr. Racy: Mr. Chairman, Madam Mayor, I know that's true for state funding. I have not ever really looked at how we balance formula versus grant funding, but I think you've got some folks that have and can analyze that, but in years past, I know we did better under formula funding. I used to work with Sen. McCain and every time we had a surface transportation authorization, there'd tend to be a lot of earmarked projects. He refused to let any earmarked projects come to the state of Arizona, and I had enormous respect for the man, but he would not entertain it at all, and it's not as if that money went into the broader pot to be distributed to us. They genuinely took those dollars and distributed it to other states, and I suspect some of those numbers may be the same way now.

Mayor Post: Board Member Maxwell? Board Member Heinz?

Supervisor Heinz: Thank you, and it's good to see you. Thanks for being here. So, at the end of January, we heard from our Mexican friends about some rail projects, passenger rail projects, port improvements and enhancements that they're going to be doing, and I think as a region we need to be advocating for

that as much as we possibly can, because it makes a lot of sense for, frankly, the state, the country, on both sides of the border. During a National Association of Counties conference in D.C toward the end of February, I did sit down with staff from Mark Kelly's office, as well as briefly Sen. Kelly himself, Ruben Gallego's office, representatives, Congressman Stanton's staff. He is on foreign affairs as well as transportation, I think. So that puts him in a place where that makes a lot of sense, and actually Congressman Ciscomani, his staff, but he actually came out of a meeting to spend some time chatting with me as well, and he's our only appropriator. Is that right? He's on appropriations and on the transportation subcommittee. Right, and of course I sat down with Congresswoman Grijalva as well, and all of the meetings were very positive. I know it's pretty early but it seems a good time to make sure that looking at the corridor, that's already kind of approved for rail from Tucson down to Nogales and gets included in something from a, like, funding standpoint and like, just to move that along to the best of our ability. I'm curious, what would your recommendations be in terms of this entity or us individually, or in terms of helping to move those kinds of projects along, because they are multi-year projects, and the goal for Mexico is to have passenger rail connecting Mexico City to Nogales, Sonora, by 2030.

Mr. Racy: Mr. Chair, Supervisor Heinz, just recently, there's been more news about the project and progress in Mexico. Long term, gigantic benefits for the state of Arizona. I think within this room, that's widely recognized. Politically, I'm going to be candid and honest. It's challenging at the federal government right now. Your actions, your meetings, I think are very valuable and continuing. I think for the association you need to prioritize that relative to other things, but it's certainly something that you could mention to them. It's not a favorable administration for trade and interaction with Mexico at this point. Again, I've done this a long time. I'm going to speak candidly, but I'll be flip. There are people in the administration that will fund a train that runs one direction to pick up the people they don't like and drop them in Gold Canyon.

Supervisor Heinz: Well, that's still rail ... Grandma taught me to say something nice about anyone. Yeah.

Mr. Racy: This is more than a single surface transportation act, these are what our country ought to be getting back to, generational projects are the interstate system and rebuilding the infrastructure of this country, and components. Our foreign trade with Mexico, with Canada is critically important for the U.S. economy, and we have to have infrastructure to do that, and rail has to be a part of that. We're a little editorializing there. I hope that's all right, members. I'm

sorry.

General Maxwell: Yeah, Michael, appreciate the update, especially on the federal one. The feds have always taken a long time to get a reauthorization. It's just not a priority. Infrastructure unfortunately, doesn't pull very sexy, and it's generally down until you need it, and then you demand it, so I appreciate you keeping us informed on that as well as it's something that I think we as a region, as a regional board can speak to, the federal side of it, on the things as we see them go through what we'd want. I'm going to take a little different stab at it with you on the state because there is an appetite at the state Legislature. Thus far this year, we've had several meetings with over 20 individual legislators in the room from both parties, from some of the more extremes in the parties.

There's a Republican member of the House who is a member of the Freedom Caucus, and he has stood up and said publicly that the HURF funding needs to be increased between \$600 million and \$1 billion, and it will still be short. What there isn't is a consensus on agreement of how we can get there, and I think the only chance we've got, and everybody knows it's not going to happen this year, so we've been pushing the collaboration in these meetings and trying to build a group of legislators because nobody's going to want to do it right before an election. So we're targeting next year to really get these conversations to a point of potentially introducing something at the Legislature.

The fact of the matter is, the gas tax you said 30%, we say 37% at the State Transportation Board of the buying power from 1991, so it has to be addressed, but it's also the efficiencies in the vehicles that are bringing in less money, and if you look at the percentage our VLT has easily become the largest percentage of funding we have into the HURF funds where it used to be the gas tax. The alternate for vehicles is a possibility. There are about five other processes that states in the United States use to collect funding for their infrastructure. Now, unfortunately, we're going to see one of them on the ballot this year that's going to eliminate or not allow us to consider vehicle miles traveled if it passes.

Well, every tax for infrastructure is a vehicle miles traveled. I could argue that a gas tax is a vehicle miles traveled tax, so it doesn't make any sense. Hopefully, there will be some support not to let that get through, but I do believe whatever the solution is going to be, it's going to be a group of alternatives. You may see something on the gas tax, something that the Legislature can stand. You may see something on the alternative vehicles, fuel vehicles that the Legislature can stand, but there's a ton of different ways, but we've got to get the trucking

industry and all the different industries that make their living on our roads.

The reason the RTA was so important for us is the money that we've got available at the state Legislature in the state system to fund investment and expansion or improvements is almost nothing. Everything, every dollar is going to the maintenance and preservation of the roads, 83% of our state highway funds go toward preservation of those roads. Thus, the Legislature and Rep. Biasucci, who's been at all these conversations and realizes we need to fix it, was one of the first ones to figure it out. They're doing it by direct budget apportionment, and I think there's roughly 28 bills for roads and improvements, all in rural, because the Casa Grande Accords, define how we signed this up, all in rural counties because we think we were going to be in trouble. They're in worse shape than we are. So they're learning that they're fighting with each other on who gets to fund their projects and not, and that's only if you're in the majority party. If you're in the minority party you're not going to get any road projects, so I think everybody realized that it has to be done, and as we roll those ideas out, if we could come to consensus among ourselves, diverse views on this stuff, and then make those statements, I think would help in the state Legislature as well, but to me that's way more important than the federal one. The feds will fund it to some level, not as much, but the state one we have to solve because it's in a bad place.

Any thoughts on that?

Mr. Racy: Mr. Chairman, General Maxwell, when I was asked to come down, it sort of varied between state, combined state and federal, and federal, and I in fact had exhibits for state, but the final agenda item, it was federal. But, everything you're saying is exactly right, and even a few more details. We have not sold any additional gas in the state of Arizona since 2017. Our population has grown 13 %, but alternate fuel vehicles and increased efficiencies is keeping the fuel sales level of a fixed gas tax, so it continues to erode, and I have an amazing chart put together with the County Supervisors Association that I'll send over, or if you invite me back to talk about that, we'll talk about that.

We have two or three bills that are tinkering at the fringes to add a little to HURF, but at the same time and why I'm a little more frustrated, we've got the majority leader running a bill for a gas tax holiday in the Pinal and Maricopa region for the summer. She's running another bill saying they should repeal the federal gas tax, so we do not have the kind of legislative leaders we used to on this. Maybe we get there. Sadly, in the Legislature, it requires a two-thirds majority. Whatever

happens in November, no one's going to have a two-thirds majority, and a proposition from a couple of years ago now requires that any increase in the gas tax passes by 60%, not 50%.

What you all did on the RTA was critically, critically important, and down the road, you may need to review doing even more there. We're one of the only counties that has that ability and flexibility, but, yeah, there's a train wreck that was a slow-motion train wreck that is really accelerating at the state because of inflation, because of adoption of alternate fuel vehicles. Maybe it slowed for a year or two. It's going to pick back up. We're going to have to do something. We can't fund maintenance of our system with the existing funding, much less growth, expansion, safety improvements. I could go on and on. I know we're limited on time. Have me back any time, and we'll talk a lot about the state.

Mayor Post: Board Member Romero and then Board Member Heinz.

Mayor Romero: Yeah, definitely we should invite Mr. Racy back for updates for both federal and state. He did mention for PAG to start putting together a list of priorities for funding, and I think I differ a little bit with Board Member Maxwell. I think formula funds in this day and age are going to be better for southern Arizona. The City of Tucson and Pima County, I know, have been successful with winning several grants in a different administration, so I think in this day and age, formula funds will be more secure, so if we can, Mr. Chair, move towards a direction, I don't want to give a motion or anything like that, but move towards a direction of creating those lists and putting together our preferences as a Regional Council, so that Mr. Racy and ourselves have some paperwork to show our congressional delegation.

That these are the priorities of southern Arizona, or at least Pima County as a region, when we do meet with them. I'm lucky to be able to visit with our senators and our congressional delegation members, and so when that happens, I think we should be ready in terms of priorities. Are there timelines, like do we have to have it like next month or are there any timelines that we...?

Mr. Racy: Mr. Chairman, Mayor Romero, I think you're fine over the next month to month and a half, but if you can start to get some things that we can send to at least our delegation, these key people but probably the whole delegation, that timing would be good. It is anybody's guess if they stay on track or not. Again, you all see what's going on at the federal government these days, but there is a deadline, Sept. 30, the hearing process will be coming up, and the more you can

give our members, they really appreciate that kind of input, and there are some of these things that go even beyond our boundaries.

I formally represented Santa Cruz County. I do work with the others. They all, I think, benefit more from formula funding. I just hadn't gone through it, then the earmarks. Even under this last program we did very well in some areas, broadband and a variety, not as well in others.

Supervisor Heinz: Awesome, thank you. This is going to deviate a little bit, but I was a legislator for four years from 2009 to 2013, as you know, and as I said to the acting chair, actually it was Andy Biggs, of the Appropriations Committee in a particularly contentious meeting, you get what you pay for. And I guess, is there any hope that we will be able to professionalize the Legislature? They get \$24,000 a year plus a per diem. I know this doesn't sound very transportation or infrastructure, but this is incredibly, incredibly important that we have a professional group of people doing this work for us, and I'm just curious, will we see on the ballot this year a way to do what frankly the Tucson City Council did, which was to align with county supervisor pay compensation as opposed to \$20,000, \$50,000 more, whatever. It was just, hey, we already paid this group of elected officials one thing, let's have it aligned for this municipality. The people passed it by like 200 votes or something or 300, but that seems like a fair way to approach things to professionalize our Legislature at the state level. I'm just curious if there's going to be an opportunity for us to do that this fall.

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, I'm going to suggest that Mr. Racy can certainly answer the question, but we need to stay to the federal level at this point. What I will do and commit to you is I'll bring back a state and fed item for you and for discussion on where we can talk about the state and the federal, and I apologize that it didn't occur to me to do that because I know this is really hot on everybody's mind right now, but Mr. Racy, if you don't mind, you can answer the question, but then after that I think we should stay focused on the federal side, at least the way it was agendized. Thank you.

Mr. Racy: Mr. Chairman and Supervisor Heinz, and even my schedule after next week gets more flexible, so I'm happy to come back whenever you'd like. There is a House or a Senate concurrent resolution to put a significant salary increase on the ballot brought forward by Sen. Kavanaugh. There is some polling out there that shows our Legislature is polling incredibly poorly these days, and when this question was asked by good polling companies, there was about a 28% receptiveness to a legislative salary increase. Now, the approach of the mayor

and the City of Tucson was brilliant, and when they polled, indexing it to another office like the supervisors, it went way up. It still didn't get a majority but it went way up, so an extremely fascinating approach, and just because I'm creative, I will tie it back to our theme of transportation, maybe not federal. Sen. Kavanaugh has pushed his initiative because he said there has been no increase in legislative salaries since 1990. We have to do this, and I've met with him repeatedly and said, "Sen. Kavanaugh, there has been no increase in the gas tax since 1990, refer them both." Zero.

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, for future meetings, I will bring back an item on state and federal legislation and how we all can chat through it. In the meantime, what I'll do is send out a note to all the jurisdictions asking them for their regional thoughts or regional priorities, just based on having to get that back to Mr. Racy and his team within the next 30 days. Unlikely that I'll be able to bring this back to you in time for you to weigh in on it, so I'll suggest to the staff that they run that through you. I will just compile all of it and then just send the whole list up and I'll copy you with that when that's transmitted, so I just wanted to give you a heads up that we can do that. Thank you.

Mayor Post: That sounds good. Thank you very much, Mr. Ortega. Any other questions for Mr. Racy? Thank you very much.

Mr. Racy: Chairman, members, thank you very much. It was a pleasure appearing before you today.

Mayor Post: Thank you. Item 8, Mr. Ortega.

8. Regional Safety Coordination

[Item #8 Video Link](#)

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, since we are a little over time now, I'll just give you an overview of this and, in essence, this is just a follow-up to put this and keep this on your radar. So if you recall, one of the elements was a safety, ADA and active transportation element within the RTA Next plan. We have tremendous amounts of data within the PAG organization that your organizations can use and can inform some of the conversations around safety. We will be the clearinghouse, and we can certainly assist and help with that. Ultimately, I will tell you that there's two components to that element. One of them is the data which we have available, and we'll share that with you, but the second is public

feedback or input. That's where you all come in, and so as we allocate those dollars and we start doling them out if you will, there's an opportunity for you to go through whatever process you'd like to within your jurisdictions to make sure that that component is in fact addressed as we go forward. Mr. Chairman, we do have folks here that can answer questions, if you have any questions. But basically it was a reminder and just an update that we are working with your jurisdictions to make sure that we are in a coordinated effort. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mayor Post: Do board members have any questions on this particular item? Hearing none. Who had one? Oh, I'm sorry. Board member Heinz.

Supervisor Heinz: I guess more about just a statement because I also happen to represent the supervisors on the Board of Health, and this has been an issue, specifically safety, so reducing car crash-related fatalities and serious injuries is now a focus of the Pima County Health Department's updated community health improvement plan, based on last year's community health needs assessment that was conducted. So I just hope that we definitely look at very seriously, as the staff memo says, corrective actions at the project level and appropriate improvements at the program level as they note to ensure that we apply evidence-based solutions to all of our projects surrounding us to increase safety and reduce harm for our residents.

That is definitely now a major priority for the health department and therefore for the county.

Mayor Post: Thank you for those comments. Any others? Hearing none, we'll move on. Item 9. Mr. Ortega.

9. **Pima Association of Governments' (PAG) and Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Committees**

[Item #9 Video Link](#)

Michael J. Ortega: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. So at the last meeting, you and all had asked that we look at the committees and the committee structures. We have provided that to you. It's in your packets. Just very simplistically, I think that there's an opportunity to really revisit most of those committees and really challenge ourselves to say, "Hey, are they doing what we need them to do?" And are they bringing value in terms of the delivery of the services? All inclusive, not

just RTA, but also the PAG services as well. So, a couple things ... I'll be sending you a note about the CART Committee that's under the RTA. Those members' terms expire on June 30. I'll need some reappointments there. Just to refresh your memory on that, it's now a 15-member committee, eight from the jurisdictions, seven at large; four need to reside in the city of Tucson, four of them will have specific expertise that is listed, and I'll get all that to you. So as an example, we need to reconvene that or reconstitute and make sure that we get that going.

There are other groups like the Wildlife Linkages Working Group, which has been dormant for quite a while. We need to refresh that. It's not even listed here, but we need to refresh that and say, "Hey, let's have a conversation around that," and so those are the kinds of things that I see us doing going forward.

I'm trying to gather you all for a retreat, and if we can find a date eventually maybe in the next year or so. This is one of the topics that I'd like to get into with you and go through and dissect and make sure that we are all on the same page in terms of what your expectations are of those committees so then we can convey to them what your thoughts are. I have had requests for review of bylaws of committees. Happy to do that, but I think the first order of business is for you all to identify and decide if the committee structure as we've got outlined are in fact the direction we want to go in. So we gave you a list of the committees. We also gave you a list of the members of all of the committees. They're all listed there for you.

Like I said, I'll be sending you a note. The CART Committee is the one that we need to really focus on because that is starting July 1, and we want to hit the ground running, so Mr. Chairman, Sheila and I are available to answer any questions if you have any, happy to do so.

Mayor Post: Are there any questions for this item? Board Member Romero?

Mayor Romero: Yeah, we have had conversations previously on the committees and their reporting structure and also us putting them to work. Right? A lot of the committees were dormant. They were not advising the Regional Council, and what we noticed some time ago, and I had mentioned that at this table here before, is that the committee fact sheet states that the PAG Management Committee makes recommendations to the PAG Executive Director, and previously the Management Committee made recommendations directly to the PAG Regional Council. I really want to make sure that we go back to the

previous language that we change the fact sheet to reflect that we would like the Management Committee to make recommendations to the Regional Council.

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, as you recall, Madam Mayor, as you recall, part of the RTA restructuring when we went through that we actually changed the TMC in the Administrative Code, as well as the CART, to be advisory directly to the Board. The old language was to the Executive Director, so we're going through that exercise now. And so what you see there is some dated language. But the spirit and intent is for those advisory committees to be advisory to you, and the staff certainly can provide feedback and thoughts to you in those sessions, but clearly I want to make sure that particularly the citizens groups, like the CART, has an advisory role to you directly with no filter, and so that's really been the spirit and intent.

It's been codified in the Admin Code, and so it's memorialized now. I think we're solid there. We just have to go through the rest of these now.

Mayor Romero: Are we moving in terms of the Management Committee as well?

Michael J. Ortega: All of it.

Mayor Romero: I think that it's even though all the committees are going to have direct communication with the Executive Director, they're really citizen advisory to or technical advisory to the Regional Council or the RTA Board, and that's how it should go back to. One of the other issues that the City of Tucson had previously indicated we were not comfortable with is that, in the past, our technical experts on the Transportation Planning Committee, as well as on the TIP Subcommittee, were not allowed to make programming recommendations to the Board about RTA funds. I just want to make sure that our staff who have the best understanding of the projects, 100% of the time more than I do, I want to make sure that our staff can schedule at the meeting level the issues that they need to talk about. So in order to be able to do that, they need to be able to add items to the agenda when they're having their subcommittee meetings or committee meetings, to be able to recommend to the Regional Council and the RTA Board.

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, thank you Mayor Romero. So I think I mentioned before most all of the committees, and the only reason I say most all because I don't know every single one of them. The agendas now include future agenda items that the staff can bring up or the committee members can bring up and have on a future agenda, so I think that addresses that. Keep in mind I do

want to point one thing out. The Technical Management Committee and the Management Committee, they have subcommittees, and so those subcommittees would obviously filter back through those we'll say, main committees, to come to an advisory role to the Regional Council or the RTA Board. By and large, the ones that I'm focused on are those that have the strong citizen component, to make sure that you are getting information directly from those committees.

Mayor Romero: Then the last comment is the EPAC committee. We should be empowering the EPAC committee to be more meaningfully engaged in regional, environmental or climate resiliency initiatives. For example, the EPAC was completely sidelined and ignored, and they were unable to make recommendations for programming the Carbon Reduction Program funds that we had received under the Biden administration, which were in the tune of millions of dollars. I think it was \$11 million. And they were never consulted to make recommendations for carbon reduction or air quality or climate action funding.

Just want to make sure that we are reversing that trend that had been happening of not consulting the experts as well, and I completely hear you that we want to make sure that the citizens oversight, and all the citizens advisory committees have very clear advisory roles with us as well. But the technical committees, the engineers, the environmental, public health. all these experts that make up our committees to advise us, also have the ability to advise the Regional Council on these types of issues.

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, thank you, Mayor Romero. Around this table, we like engineers, so we think they're pretty amazing.

Mayor Romero: You all have your purpose.

Michael J. Ortega: Yeah, we have our purpose. Yes, we do. The EPAC, in particular. I think you saw at one of the previous meetings the actual, I believe, call it work list for the coming year and some of the things they want to focus on. But you also have seen a difference in the Carbon Reduction Program funding as well, and the approach to that was very open, very collaborative. I don't recall that we went directly to the EPAC for their opinion or their thoughts on it, but it was very open with the jurisdictional partners, most of which also sit on the EPAC, so the idea is to be as open and transparent in those conversations as possible.

I think you'll see over time that restructuring will help with that, and so, I appreciate those comments because we'll make a note of them. We'll make sure that we address them as we go forward. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mayor Post: Thank you. Board Member Maxwell.

General Maxwell: Hopefully, Mr. Chair, this will be just a quick question. So one of the questions I've been asked more in the last two weeks than before is, with the desire to ensure we have accountability under the next RTA, how do people apply for the at-large positions of the CART? They know they can go to their municipalities and see if they can, but if they want to be one of those seven at-large members, how can people go about doing that?

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, great question, so what I'm proposing is that we'll let you know that we're going to send out a solicitation, and we'll publicly post that or notice that and let folks know. We'll give that to you so you can send it out to folks as well, but the idea and the intent is that folks would send in a letter of interest, which then we will present to you all, and then you'll make a decision on those seven at-large positions.

General Maxwell: OK. Mr. Chair, thank you. Mike.

Mayor Post: Anybody else? Hearing none, moving right along, Item 10.

10. Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) 2026 Safety Performance Projections

[Item #10 Video Link](#)

Dr. Hyunsoo Noh: Mr. Chair and members of the Regional Council, it is my pleasure to introduce Dr. Amirul Rajib. Dr. Amirul Rajib is the Safety Program Manager at ADOT, where he leads States Highway Safety Improvement Program, Strategic Highway Safety Plan and Arizona Safety Circuit Rider Program. He's a licensed professional engineer, and a certified professional traffic operations engineer. Dr. Rajib earned his Ph.D. from ASU with a focus on sustainable infrastructure. He is here today to provide an update on the strategic safety performance projections and targets, and to recommend adopting the state safety projections and targets for the PAG region.

Floor is yours, Dr. Rajib.

Dr. Rajib: Thank you so much. Good afternoon, everyone. This is Amirul Rajib, I am the Safety Program Manager with the MPD division at ADOT. Today, I'll be presenting the Arizona Safety Performance Projection Targets for the year 2026. Next slide, please. So the safety performance targets is developed through the FHWA, which is the Federal Highway Administration-required criteria, so this is a requirement from the FHWA that every state should develop the safety performance projections for each year, and the development should have five criteria, so these are the number of fatalities, number of serious injuries, fatality rate, which is a per hundred million vehicle miles travel. Serious injury rate which is similar to the fatality rate as a per hundred million vehicle miles travels, and the number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries. The non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries are the number of vulnerable road users, fatalities and serious injuries. So these are the 5 values we have to come up with the targets for year 2026. So before we dive into the 2026 numbers, I am to give you an overview, how does the data look like for the year 2024. In the year 2024, the fatalities decreased by 6% from year 2023. It reduced to 1,229 compared to 1,308. Also, the serious injury decreased by 5%. It reduced to 3,582 compared to 3,786.

In year 2024, the non-motorized fatalities, which is the vulnerable road user fatalities decreased by almost 3% which is 307 compared to 317. However, the non-motorized serious injury increased, while the fatalities decreased for the non-motorized category, but the serious injury increased by 6% which increased to 595 compared to 561. Also the statewide vehicle mile travel decreased 6.87% from 2023 to 2024, and this data was obtained from the ADOT extent and travel reports, so these are some previous data for the year 2024. Now we'll move forward with the target for the year 2026. Next slide, please.

So here's the little background how we come up with the values or the targets. It was said that annual targets were set based on a reduction of 20% by 2030, so this was the target, like the base year is 2023, and by year 2030 we should see a 20% reduction of data of fatalities and serious injury data compared to year 2023. So this supports the Arizona governor's office and the 2024 ADOT strategic highway safety plan goal. With this methodology in year 2023, the crash, the fatalities was 1,308, and our target to reduce this by 20% which is resulted in 1,046 by year 2030, so these are the targets that we are planning that we should see a 20% crash reduction by the year 2030, and the total number would be like 1,046 for the fatalities.

For serious injury with 20% reduction by year 2030, it should be 3,028, and number of non-motorized fatalities and serious injury we could see a 20% reduction, which account for 702 crashes compared to 878, so these are the target methodology that it supports the governor's office of highway, and it is taken that we should reduce crashes by 20% by year 2030. Next slide, please.

So here is the estimation we did ourselves, the calculation, so if you see the year 2026, the number of fatalities, our target is not more than 1,194 and the 5-year rolling average is 1,264.8. The FHWA actually wants the report or the values, the previous 5-year rolling averages, not the actual value which is 1,194, but the FHWA wants the target is the 5-year rolling average, which actually the target is like 1,260 or so, so state of Arizona should see not more than 1,264 crashes in the year 2026.

That is the target, which is the 5-year rolling average for the fatalities, and now if you go to I think the middle column, which is the fatality rate in the year 2026, it says 1.52, the fatality rate should be this value. However, the reporting value which is the 5-year rolling averages value, it is 1.645, so this is just a one slide of how we calculate the data. But I have some historical value I will show in the next slide, but this is just to give you an idea like how we calculate the data. The base year here is 2023, which is 1,308 fatalities and our target in year 2030, we should see the crash not more than 1,046 in fatalities, so next slide, please.

This is historical data from year 2010 until year 2026. We see in 2026, the actual target we want, the fatality should not be more than 1,194, but which the 5-year rolling averages gives us the value higher than the actual value, which is 1,264, so with respect to the FHWA guideline, our reporting value is 1,264 so that our target is the 5-year rolling averages value should not be more than 1,264 in the case of fatalities. We have another four criteria, so this is the fatalities historical value. Next slide, please.

This is the fatality rate historical value from year 2010 to year 2026. In year 2026, the 5-year rolling averages value is 1.645. This is the target. The rate should be less than 1.645 in year 2026. Next slide, please.

Yeah, this is the number of serious injury historical values for year 2010 to 2026. In 2026, the 5-year rolling averages value is 3,671.4, so this is the target. The serious injury rate should be less than this value with the 5-year rolling averages value. Next slide, please.

This is the injury rate similar to the fatality rate is historical value from 2010 to 2026, and this is like the target value is 4.756 which is the 5-year rolling averages value. Next slide, please.

This is the vulnerable road users or you can say non-motorized fatalities and serious injuries, so that is the combined value of fatalities and serious injuries from year 2010 to 2026. In year 2026, the actual value should not be more than 803. However, the 5-year rolling averages value is higher than this, which is 862.8, so these are the five criteria we should report to FHWA. Next slide, please.

This is just a summary what I have presented already. These are the values we should have not more than this value. These are the target for year 2026, so if you see in a glance that the target value which is the far right column, number of fatalities should not be more than 1,264 which is the 5-year rolling average value. Rate of fatalities should not be more than 1.645. Number of serious injury should be not more than 3,671. Rate of serious injury should not be more than 4.756, and the number of vulnerable road users or fatalities and serious injury should not be more than 862.8, so these are the values ADOT came up with, and we distributed these results to all the MPOs to add up these values. Next slide, please.

So here's some literature that MPOs choose to set separate projections. That means if they want to develop their own, they can do it, so if they want to do separately their own, they must report the vehicle multiple estimate used and the methodology to develop this estimate, and they should maximize use of highway performance metric system data when preparing estimates. So projections or these targets are reported to ADOT and made available to the FHWA upon request if the MPO chose to develop their own. MPOs established targets 880 days after state, so the state typically develops this the end of August and the MPO has six months to develop their own or adopt ADOT developed values.

MPOs targets are not included in the assessment of whether a state made significant progress toward meeting its target. However, if the MPOs choose to develop their own, that's fine. If not, ADOT recommends adopting a state safety performance projection target, so we actually recommend them. ADOT developed values so that they don't need to develop their own, and if MPOs choose to adopt ADOT numbers, they should send us a confirmation email or confirmation letter depending on if they want to adopt in perpetuity or not, so next slide, please.

Here are some available resources if you want to see the number of crashes or serious injuries. There is a crash facts link on ADOT public websites. You can go and download the crash data. Also, if you want to see the FHWA safety performance guidelines or the previous historical data, you can go to the FHWA website, so these are some resources you have. Next slide, please.

Yeah, I think this is the end of my presentations. Now it's open for questions or discussion. I will be happy to answer if you have any questions or any suggestions.

Mayor Post: The board have any questions?

Michael J. Ortega: Mr. Chairman, if there are no questions, staff would like a motion to accept the ADOT safety performance projections in perpetuity. The reason for that is we're the only ones in the state that don't do that. We've been bringing it to you every year. I'm happy to bring reports to you, but if you don't mind, this would be one where I think we should follow everybody else in this case.

Mayor Winfield: Motion to accept.

Mayor Romero: Second.

Mayor Post: We have a motion and a second. All in favor?

All: Aye.

Mayor Post: Opposed? Motion passes. Thank you very much.

Dr. Rajib: Thank you.

Mayor Post: Item eleven. Future agenda items.

11. Request for Future Agenda Items

[Item #11 Video Link](#)

Mayor Post: Hearing none, motion to adjourn, so moved.

12. Adjournment

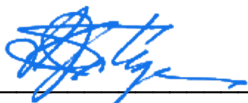
[Item #12 Video Link](#)

Mayor Post: We are adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:14 p.m.

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing is a meeting summary of the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) Regional Council meeting held on March 26, 2026. This summary is not intended to be verbatim. It serves as the summary of action items taken at the meeting upon approval by the PAG Regional Council. An audio recording is available upon request and serves as the official minutes. I further certify that a quorum was present.



Michael J. Ortega, P.E.
Executive Director

In compliance with the Arizona Open Meeting Law, the PAG Regional Council legal actions and this meeting summary are posted online, and an audio recording which serves as the official minutes of the meeting is available upon request. In addition, a meeting video is also available at: [Recorded Meeting \(YouTube\)](#)