

AGENDA MATERIAL

DATE 1/23/24

ITEM NO. RA 11

DR. MATT HEINZ

Supervisor

District 2



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Pima County Board of Supervisors

To: Melissa Manriquez, Clerk of the Board

From: Matt Heinz, Supervisor, District 2

Date: January 19, 2024

RE: BOS Agenda 1/23/24, Item #11 Draft RTA Next plan

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "MH", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Please attach this memo to the item I placed on the 1/23/24 Agenda re the RTA Next draft plan. Thank you.

Discussion:

County Administrator Leshner and Deputy Administrator DeBonis are to be commended for carefully crafting and shepherding through a compromise RTA Next draft proposal that takes into account the recommendations of the Citizens' Advisory Committee (CAC), the needs of the City of Tucson and the other jurisdictions, and other regional concerns, achieving near-unanimous support of the RTA's Technical Management Committee on 1/17/24 after a thoughtful, deliberative discussion. That said, the draft plan that was passed by the TMC can still be improved by the RTA Board.

Specifically, I propose the following three actions, for consideration, potential amendment and endorsement of the Board of Supervisors, to be our stated positions for consideration by the RTA Board at their meeting on 1/25/24.

Direction/Actions:

- 1) The current draft plan still lacks any funding for **maintenance/preservation/repair** of roadways built with RTA funds ("RTA One" projects). We know better. Roadways need maintenance and preservation, so they do not reach failing condition and end up costing even more to replace. The City of Tucson's Mayor and Council had advocated for the inclusion of \$200 million in RTA Next for maintenance/preservation/repair of RTA One projects. **But no funds were included in the current draft plan.** At the same time, the current draft plan includes a very expensive project on the outskirts of eastern Pima County -- Colossal Cave Road: I-10 to Mary Ann Cleveland Way -- to the tune of \$160.4 million, of which \$157.3M is proposed to come from RTA dollars. This project would represent 6.7% of the entire RTA Next funding available, in order to create a 4-lane divided highway in place of the current 2-lane road and thus *overbuild* capacity in a rural area of limited population near Vail. In fact, it would do nothing more than encourage further wildcat development out into the desert for the next 20 years and beyond -- in direct opposition to the stated goals of this Board when it comes to Climate Change, the Prosperity Initiative and more. **Therefore, I propose that the Colossal Cave Road project -- a Pima County project that was *not* among our highest priorities throughout this process -- be removed from the Plan, and that the \$157.3M instead be devoted to a new category within RTA Next for the Preservation, Maintenance and Repair of RTA-built Projects across the region.**
- 2) Per the recommendation of the CAC, I propose that any *shortfalls* in projected revenues over the 20-year lifetime of the RTA Next Plan *be applied equally across all Categories* of the plan, in terms of necessary cuts or scaling back of projects and initiatives needed; and further, that the voters be made aware of this contingency plan clearly in the Ballot language.

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As we know, in RTA One, when it became clear after the Great Recession that revenues would not meet initial projections, various of the "Categorical" projects -- including transit, safety and environmental projects -- were swept in order to attempt to complete the named corridor projects. This sweeping of funds from critical projects that were promised to the voters dates back to 2014 I believe. This is unfair to the voters and taxpayers of Pima County. If there's another shortfall in the future, the ramifications should be spread equally across ALL the categories of the plan.

- 3) In line with the spirit of the CAC's recommendations, I propose that if revenues *exceed* projections for RTA Next, which is possible considering that this time the RTA Board has chosen to base the plan on the "pessimistic" economic outlook for the next twenty years, *the surplus funds be applied equally across the following four Categories:*
- a. Transit
 - b. Environmental
 - c. Safety and Active Transportation
 - d. The new category of Preservation, Maintenance and Repair

These first three categories, as stated, got extremely short-changed in RTA One, with monies swept without checking with the voters first. The unmet needs within each category are great. Therefore, we owe it to the voters and taxpayers to direct any additional revenues here, along with to the new category of Preservation/Maintenance/Repair. Such contingency plan for excess revenues should also be communicated clearly in the Ballot language.

CC:
Hon. Rex Scott, Supervisor, District 1 and Board Representative to the PAG Regional Council & RTA Board
Jan Leshner, County Administrator
Carmine DeBonis, Jr., Deputy County Administrator
Kathryn Skinner, Director, Dept of Transportation