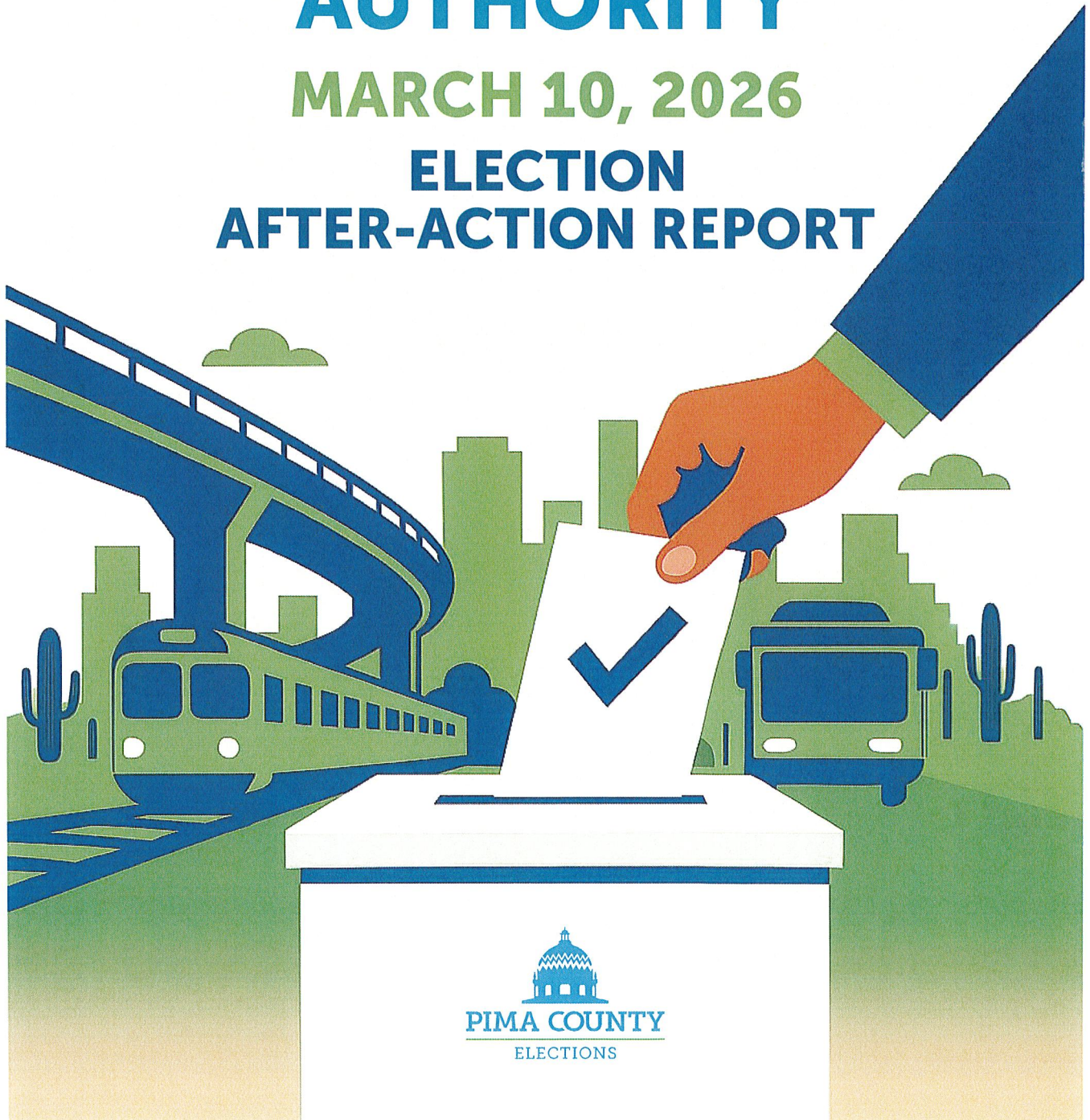


REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION AUTHORITY

MARCH 10, 2026

ELECTION AFTER-ACTION REPORT



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April 24, 2026

Honorable Members of the Pima County Board of Supervisors, the following after-action report provides information and an analysis of the March 10, 2026, Regional Transportation Authority Election conducted by the Pima County Elections Department. The report differs from other after-action reports due to the type of election. The Regional Transportation Authority Election was conducted as a ballot-by-mail election and did not require the Elections Department to open and staff Vote Centers on election day. The Elections Department performed all other statutory responsibilities required of the Board of Supervisors and the officer in charge of elections.

Respectfully Submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Hargrove', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Constance L. Hargrove
Elections Director

Summary

The Pima County Elections and Recorder's offices conducted a ballot-by-mail election for the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA). The Arizona Revised Statutes allows special taxing districts to hold such elections with the approval of the County Board of Supervisors (A.R.S. § 16-409(A); A.R.S. § 16-558(A)). Both offices adhered to all statutory requirements in conducting the election.

The Election's staff worked closely with the RTA team to prepare the publicity pamphlet and the ballot. A part of that process was the implementation of a new ballot measures portal that allows citizens to submit comments in favor of or against Pima County ballot measures. The Information Technology Department designed and built the portal. The portal also has an online payment feature. The online payment feature requires coordination with the Finance and Treasurer's offices. The portal was successful and made the process more efficient.

The Elections Department conducted logic and accuracy testing on February 6, 2026. Representatives from the Republican and Democratic parties were present to observe and certify the test's accuracy. The RTA also had representatives present to observe the testing. My staff and I explained the logic and accuracy testing process to the RTA representatives during the test to ensure they understood the steps taken.

After weeks of preparation, proofing, and translation, the publicity pamphlets were mailed on January 30, and the ballots on February 11, 2026.

The Elections Department and the Recorder's Office coordinated ballot transfer and the preparation of the canvass document. Ballot transfer between offices is a critical step in processing and counting ballots to produce election results. The coordination begins before the ballots are mailed to voters and continues throughout the election. The communication is at least daily, but most days it is more frequent. Reconciliation to prepare the canvass documents is ongoing throughout the election. The election board documents every action taken regarding a ballot. The final reconciliation and canvass documents cannot be completed until all ballots are received from the Recorder and tabulated by the Elections Department.

All ballots transferred from the Recorder's Office to the Elections Department contain a Ballot Turnover Receipt. The Ballot Turnover Receipt is the chain-of-custody document between the Recorder's and Election's offices. The receipt is signed and dated by staff from

each office. The processing board manually verifies the count in each batch before they begin opening affidavit envelopes. The Recorder's staff is notified of any discrepancies. The Recorder's staff will take back or redline any problem or missing ballot affidavit. The processing of a batch stops until the discrepancy is resolved. Both offices sign off on any changes to notated reports.

The Elections Department provides information on early ballot turnover and processing on our website to increase transparency. Each department follows established rules and procedures regarding daily posting. Our office produces a spreadsheet that provides the date the Recorder's Office prepares the turnover and the actual date we receive it. The Recorder's Office posts the actual Ballot Turnover Receipts on its website. The Elections Department did not experience any ballot discrepancies during the election. Both offices maintain the chain-of-custody documents regarding ballot transfers.

The Recorder's Office provided the Elections Department with corrected voter registration numbers while preparing the canvass document. The total number of ballots processed and counted remained the same.

The Board of Supervisors canvassed the election on March 24, 2026. Two RTA board members and other staff attended the canvass.

Call for the Election

On September 2, 2025, the Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) presented the Board of Supervisors with a resolution to adopt a twenty-year comprehensive regional transportation plan. (A.R.S. § 48-5314(A)). The Board of Supervisors unanimously approved the resolution, and the RTA election was set for March 10, 2026.

The questions submitted to the voters were as follows:

- 1) Approval of the regional transportation plan, as submitted to the Board by the RTA on September 2, 2025, and
- 2) Approval of levying a half-cent transaction privilege (sales) tax for regional transportation purposes. (A.R.S. § 48-5314(E)).

Question one became Proposition 418 and question two became Proposition 419.

The RTA requested a ballot-by-mail election in the resolution to the Board. (A.R.S. § 16-558(A)). The ballot-by-mail election is less expensive because it eliminates the need to open voting centers. The ballot-by-mail election also eliminates the wait time to process ballots received from voting centers.

The IGA

Pima County and the Regional Transportation Authority entered into an intergovernmental agreement that the Board of Supervisors approved on October 21, 2025. The IGA includes a provision that the RTA shall reimburse the County, in full, within thirty days of invoice for all costs of the election at the rates set out in the IGA. The RTA's reimbursement to the County also includes all costs incurred by printing and mailing the publicity pamphlet.

The Publicity Pamphlet

A publicity pamphlet is required for an election on a regional transportation and excise tax plan. (A.R.S. § 48-5314(C)). Per State statute, information in the pamphlet included:

- The date of the election.
- The individual household's polling place and the time the polls will be open.
- A summary of the principal provisions of the issue presented to the voters, including the rate of the transportation excise tax, the number of years the tax will be in effect and the projected annual and cumulative amount of revenues to be raised.
- A statement describing the purposes for which the transportation excise tax monies may be spent as provided by law, including:
 - A summary of the regional transportation plan adopted pursuant to section 48-5309 and subsection A of this section, including a description of each transportation element of the regional transportation plan.
 - A map of proposed routes and transportation corridors of all major transportation projects and public transportation systems.
 - The percentage share and dollar amount of transportation excise tax revenues, together with other identified revenues, dedicated for each transportation element, transportation project and public transportation systems and conditions and limitations on the use of the money.
- The form of the ballot.

The publicity pamphlet also included arguments for and against the ballot measures. (A.R.S. § 48-5314(C)). The Elections Department collaborated with the County Information Technology Department to implement an online portal to receive arguments and payment for arguments electronically. The cost to submit an argument was \$25, plus a flat-rate merchant fee of 2.75% plus \$0.20 for electronic submissions (one electronic submission = \$25.71).

The online argument portal was open from November 14, 2025 to December 10, 2025. The Elections Department received 211 total arguments: 209 submitted through the online portal and two submitted in person. Subsequently, two electronic submitters requested to withdraw their arguments, bringing the final total for arguments printed in the pamphlet to 209.

Publicity Pamphlet Arguments	Number of Submissions
Proposition 418 – For	76
Proposition 418 – Against	38
Proposition 419 – For	79
Proposition 419 – Against	16
Total	209

Language

The RTA ballot and publicity pamphlet included translations in both English and Spanish. Pima County is covered by Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act, which requires qualifying jurisdictions to provide instructions and information related to voting in applicable minority languages. The Elections Department outsources language translations to vendors approved by the County.

Ballot Processing

The Pima County Recorder’s Office sent out 651,388 ballots to registered Pima County voters. Of that total, 243,319 ballots were returned and 209,533 ballots were ultimately turned over to the Elections Department for tabulation.

Ballot processing for the RTA Special Election was a three-week operation from start to finish. There were 35 intermittent election aides assigned as bipartisan teams, which included 3 supervisors. The department worked closely with the Pima County Recorder’s Office to coordinate daily ballot turnovers. Our processing boards kept up with each turnover by working 7-hour days. Following election day, half the boards were released from assignment, as only a small number of ballots remained to be processed. The operation ran seamlessly and without any major interruptions.

The following provides a detailed breakdown of the ballot board teams and the duration of their employment over the course of the election.

Party Affiliation	Number of Board Members
Democrat	16
Republican	17
Libertarian	0
Green	1
Unaffiliated	1
Total	35

Board Member Assignments	Number of Boards	Number of Members
Supervisor	2	3
Adjudication	4	8
Duplication	3	6
Opening	1	2
Processing	8	16
Total	18	35

Processing by Week	Number of Board Members
Week 1: 2/23/26 – 2/27/26	33
Week 2: 3/2/26 – 3/6/26	32
Week 3: 3/9/26 – 3/10/26	33
Post Election Day: 3/11/26 – 3/13/26	17
Last Day of Processing – 3/16	5

The Elections Department began tabulating ballots on February 27, 2026 and concluded tabulating on March 16, 2026.

Election Results

2026 RTA Election Results 209,533 Total Ballots Cast		
Proposition 418		Proposition 419
Yes	125,362 (60.42%)	120,381 (58.26%)
No	82,128 (39.58%)	86,236 (41.74%)

Election Costs

Category	Cost
Temporary Staff – Regular and Overtime	\$53,869
Overtime – Permanent Staff	\$1,281
Ballots	\$207,845
Publicity Pamphlet	\$783,525

Early and Mail Ballots Comparisons – Ballot-by-Mail Elections

The chart below compares ballot-by-mail elections. The information reflects when the Elections Department received ballots from the Recorder's Office. The first results posted on election night are early ballots. All early ballots received, processed and tabulated by election day are reflected in those results.

Election Date	Election Type	Ballots Rec'd by Election Day	Ballots Rec'd Wk of Election	Ballots Rec'd Wk After Election	Total Ballots Rec'd from Recorder	% Ballots Rec'd by Election Day
2023	Consolidated City of Tucson and Vail	109,360	21,738	73	131,171	83%
2025	Consolidated City of Tucson and Schools	98,718	15,851	0	144,569	86%
2026	RTA	194,281	15,170	82	209,533	93%

The RTA election was the first countywide ballot-by-mail election held in at least 20 years. The City of Tucson and Vail Incorporation Election was a hybrid election. The Vail Incorporation Election was a full election requiring poll workers and polling places. The totals are still useful for comparison because Vail accounts for only a small percentage of the ballots cast in the election. The City of Tucson and the School's elections were also ballot-by-mail. In ballot-by-mail elections, most ballots are received by election day.

Early Ballot Comparisons - Voting Center Elections

The chart below reflects and compares full-service elections that include both early ballots and election day voting at vote centers. The 2022 elections are midterm elections, and the 2024 elections are presidential year elections. All elections except the 2022 General Election show a percentage rate comparable to that of ballot-by-mail elections.

Election Date	Election Type	Ballots Received by Election Day	Ballots Received Week of Election	Ballots Received Week After Election	Total Ballots Received from Recorder	% Ballots Received by Election Day
2022	Primary	164,949	31,589	86	196,624	84%
2022	General	236,026	94,312	968	331,304	71%
2024	PPE	147,937	8,954	74	156,965	94%
2024	Primary	150,028	23,409	177	173,614	86%
2024	General	359,494	80,669	2,246	442,409	81%

Early and Mail Ballot Processed by the Early Board Comparisons

The chart below combines both ballot-by-mail elections and full-service elections. The early board must process all ballots received before the counting team can tabulate the ballots. The ballot-by-mail election percentages for ballots received and processed are very close, if not identical. However, the 2022 Primary and General Elections and the 2024 General Election reflect significant differences. The delay in processing the ballots also delays counting them.

It is also important to pay attention to the number of ballots received the week of the election. The ballots that are received the week of the election are not considered late early ballots. The department received 94K ballots in November 2022 and 81K ballots in November 2024. Part of the problem was the number of ballots received the week of the election, and part was the processing boards. The Elections Department has evaluated the problem and can make adjustments for our processing boards. However, the department has no control over when we receive ballots from the Recorder's Office.

Election Date	Election Type	Ballots Processed by Election Day	Ballot Processed Week of Election	Ballots Processed Week After Election	Total Ballots Processed	% Ballots Processed by Election Day
2022	Primary	136,108	59,757	759	196,624	69%
2022	General	191,863	102,876	36,565	331,304	58%
2023	Consolidated City of Tucson and Vail	109,353	21,744	74	131,171	83%
2024	PPE	147,934	8,957	74	156,965	94%
2024	Primary	150,019	23,418	177	173,614	86%
2024	General	274,205	78,584	87,898	440,687	62%
2025	Consolidated City of Tucson and Schools	95,316	19,253	0	114,569	83%
2026	RTA	194,279	15,147	107	209,533	93%

New for this Election

Ballot Measure Portal

- Partnership with Information Technology, Finance, and Treasurer's Office
- Allow citizens to submit arguments for and against a ballot measure
- Fee charged per argument submission
- Payment made through the online portal

Results Reporting

Pima County transitioned to a new Election Night Reporting (ENR) platform this year. The March 10, 2026 RTA Election was the first election reported using the platform. The County will use the new ENR for all future elections. The Secretary of State's Office will no longer report election results for local elections.

- New database housed on the Elections Department website to display all results for local elections.

- Also displays statewide and legislative offices in Pima County. (Aggregate totals are still displayed on the Secretary of State website.)
- The Secretary of State's office no longer supports the reporting of local election reports.

Conclusion

The RTA election was successful. The election provided valuable statistical information on conducting ballot-by-mail elections. The department frequently conducts consolidated ballot-by-mail elections, but they do not encompass the entire County. In addition, the department is not normally responsible for producing and mailing publicity pamphlets. The experience and information garnered from this election will enable us to plan staffing and budget more accurately.

The department also continues to advance technology and efficiency, as demonstrated by the ballot measure portal and the election night reporting software. However, we have learned some important lessons as we prepare for future elections. One such lesson concerns some adjustments needed to messaging to users of the ballot measure portal. We also need to make some adjustments to messaging and reports in the ENR platform. I believe the most important message concerns information posted on the website about ballots. It is important to provide transparency, but it is equally important that voters have enough context to understand how the information affects the election. The office will work towards providing that information so that our website remains a trusted source for election information.



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