



PIMA COUNTY

Dr. Matt Heinz, Supervisor, District 2

April 20, 2021

Honorable Rex Scott, Supervisor
Pima County Board of Supervisors
33 N. Stone Avenue, 11th Floor
Tucson, Arizona 85701

Dear Supervisor Scott:

Thank you for making it your priority to have an inclusive, transparent, and public conversation with the Board about what kinds of topics and issues Pima County should address at the PAG/RTA Retreat this Thursday.

I think the following points are important to keep front and center as you represent the County at the PAG Regional Council and RTA Board table, both Thursday and going forward:

1. The Next RTA will look very different from the first. Technology, shifting habits, a greater focus on safety, flexibility, resilience, and investing in a livable community are the County's priorities for regional funding -- and will greatly benefit everyone in the region.
2. A great deal of education and dialogue with the public will be required to ensure that the RTA Next plan truly meets the needs of our community. This will necessitate forms of community engagement that far exceed what we've seen in the past from PAG and the RTA.
3. It is clear that different jurisdictions have different needs, and have access to different types of funding and resources. We will need much more collaboration, dialogue, transparency, and *demystification of the transportation funding process*, so that our regional partners and members of the public will feel good about voting for a new RTA package.
4. Climate Change -- If the RTA Next plan fails to address the impacts of Climate Change, and fails to mitigate against it, **we will have failed**. Not just my constituents, but ALL our constituents, will suffer greatly if we continue to move forward as if Climate Change were just some distant concern. It's real. It's happening. We need to start planning accordingly.
5. Planning for PEOPLE, not for CARS -- **I urge you to fight for an RTA Next plan that prioritizes the movement of people, not cars**. The plan should focus on how we improve *mobility* -- for folks on their feet, on two wheels or on four; for folks choosing to ride transit, or to

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carpool, or to telecommute... for folks willing and able to use their smart phone to make smarter transportation choices. Pima County's new ***Regional Center for Smart Mobility Solutions*** is a great start. I hope you will advocate strongly for the RTA Next package to support this Center and its initiatives – and for the integrated use of technology more broadly and a strong focus on **Travel Demand Management** across the board.

6. We have heard from our constituents, from our Transportation Dept experts, and from the *Tucson Mayor and Council* in their letter to the RTA's executive director dated February 22, 2021, that our constituents want *"increased transportation choices, improved safety, and investments in maintaining our existing infrastructure."* Please fight for these priorities, at the Retreat on Thursday and at every opportunity you have moving forward.
7. If we do this right, it will propel us safely, and sustainably, into the 21st Century, and prepare us for a world in which the impacts of Climate Change on our daily lives will only continue to increase.

Finally, I have some *process* points:

- a) The work of the PAG Regional Council and RTA Board is simply too important to be relegated to 4 one-hour meetings a year... or in the case of 2021 so far, none! I hope you will demand a return to the way PAG and the RTA used to function, with meetings of the PAG Regional Council and RTA Board happening *monthly*.
- b) As we've seen, our Transportation Department leaders – and their colleagues at the other jurisdictions – have a wealth of expertise to bring to bear on how we program *hundreds of millions of dollars* to improve transportation and mobility in our community. The current process at PAG/RTA is sidelining these experts and not allowing the debates and discussions they hold, nor their general expertise, to reach the Regional Council/Board table.
This needs to change, immediately.
- c) The RTA Next process needs to be a lot more transparent. Even the Citizens Advisory Committee is complaining that they're not receiving enough information, or being allowed to debate the big issues around how the RTA Next package will be built. *Nobody* seems to be debating in any kind of public forum how much the RTA Next package should focus on road projects vs. all the other priorities identified by Pima County and others. I hope you will demand a radical opening-up of the process, to let the public in and actually listen to the public's needs.
- d) Related to this, in the original RTA package, so much of the funding that was promised to go to sidewalk and bicycle improvements and other safety measures was SWEPT in

the end, to try to finish the named roadway projects as presented on the 2006 ballot, even though we've known since at least 2009 that revenues would fall well short of projections. This is why it's so important that in RTA Next, these "categorical" funds (sidewalks and pedestrian infrastructure; bicycle infrastructure, safety improvements...) are explicitly protected, AND why roadway project *flexibility* needs to be built into any plan *before* it goes to the voters.

- e) And finally, this PAG/RTA Board Retreat came about only after, ostensibly, the PAG Regional Council Chair Mayor Honea decided to cancel the March Board meeting at the very last minute. The January meeting, which bylaws state must happen, was also skipped. Please assert at the Retreat that it is **the member jurisdictions, not the PAG/RTA staff, who should be driving the process**. The PAG Regional Council/RTA Board has a 5-year TIP (Transportation Improvement Program) to review and approve, the PAG/RTA Executive Director's job performance to review, an RTA Next process to dramatically open up and improve, and so much more. Don't let staff further delay the important work that needs to be done!

Thank you for your consideration. Please call me any time to discuss.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'M. Heinz', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Sup. Matt Heinz

- C: Honorable Chair and Members, Pima County Board of Supervisors
Chuck Huckelberry, Pima County Administrator
Carmine DeBonis, Deputy Pima County Administrator for Public Works
Dr. Yves Khawam, Assistant Pima County Administrator for Public Works
Ana Olivares, Director, Pima County Transportation Department
Kathryn Skinner, Deputy Director, Pima County Transportation Department