



Building a Quality Arizona: State and Local Agencies Create a Common Vision

Quick Information

Organization(s): Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT); Arizona’s Council of Governments (COG); and Arizona’s metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs)

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Cooperation Topic(s): Statewide Planning

Cooperation Practice(s): Joint Planning Products

Cost Information: Costs divided among agencies

Faced with rapid development and population growth, Arizona’s Councils of Governments (COGs) and MPOs partnered with Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), State Legislature, Governor's Office, and Arizona Business Coalition to develop a common understanding of the State's infrastructure needs. In 2007, together they initiated Building a Quality Arizona (bqAZ), an unprecedented public outreach effort to stakeholders from Tribal governments, neighboring States and Mexico, environmental and business groups, and almost every transportation mode and region in Arizona. Their efforts culminated in a visioning document that details the State's transportation needs and goals for the next 50 years.

Motivation for Establishing the Collaboration

In the early 2000s, Arizona's economy and population were growing faster than its transportation infrastructure. Private developers began requesting additional interchanges on the interstate highway system to accommodate the developments they were constructing. The developers and MPOs did not communicate with each other, resulting in requests for duplicative or poorly planned highway projects. ADOT decided to initiate bqAZ to coordinate the needs of the many users of its transportation system into a common assessment and vision. While the Arizona Governor's Transportation Vision 21 Task Force published [a report in 2001](#) that compiled all MPOs' plans, bqAZ was the first visioning effort that brought multiple MPOs together to take an integrated look at the needs of all transportation users, model future scenarios, and use the information to determine a long-term statewide plan.

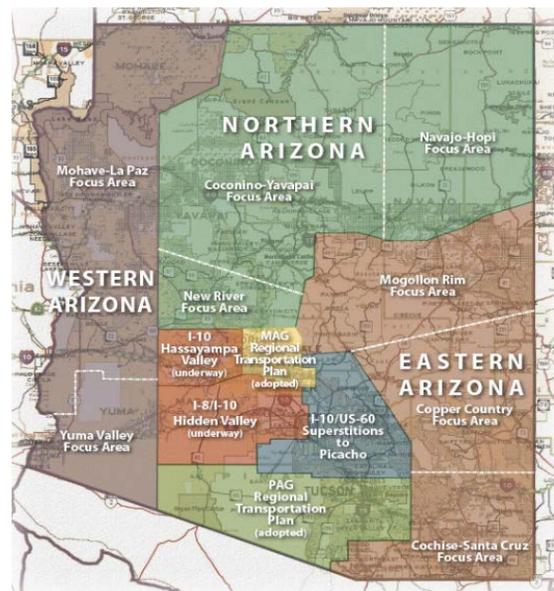


Figure 13. bqAZ framework study locations. Source: bqAZ

The Governor's Office established six primary goals for the visioning process. The process had to: (1) be multimodal, (2) consider smart growth, (3) promote the State's economy and businesses, (4) preserve the environment and allow conservation, (5) incorporate Tribal input, and (6) include collaboration with the State's MPOs and COGs.

Collaboration Structure and Process

The bqAZ team consisted of ADOT, five MPOs and four COGs from the State, four consulting teams, land-management agencies, environmental stakeholders, and universities. ADOT and the MPOs and COGs developed and signed a charter to formalize their partnership. The charter designated ADOT as the project manager and created four regional, multidisciplinary work groups that included representatives from each of the bqAZ partner agencies and met in person on a monthly basis. An ADOT regional manager was responsible for coordinating with the partner agencies in each region and serving as the liaison between them and the centrally-located team at ADOT. Including all of the partners in each work group enabled a comprehensive visioning process and provided a space in which members could keep each other up to date on their work.

In addition to the weekly team meetings, two formal committees guided the bqAZ effort. A policy committee consisting of representatives from the State Transportation Board, stakeholders from the trucking community, and elected officials from several cities and counties, met regularly to provide high-level input related to the vision itself. Similarly, a management committee, which included the Executive Directors from the State's MPOs and COGs, provided guidance about the practicalities of the visioning process. The four regional teams regularly presented to these committees their progress towards six visioning goals. The primary consultant maintained a website portal that documented the meetings and materials of each committee and regional team.

In 2007, the bqAZ teams conducted an intrastate mobility reconnaissance study (Appendix), which incorporated considerable public outreach regarding the topics in the six vision goals. When seeking input from and communicating results to the public, the bqAZ partners used a variety of tactics, including internet, television, and newspaper media. The consultants and ADOT also provided public involvement specialists to each regional team to facilitate discussion. The regional teams met with all 22 Tribal governments in Arizona and with interest groups related to highway, transit, freight, trucking, and the environment. These groups included the Arizona Department of Commerce, Department of Public Safety, Game and Fish

Takeaways

- bqAZ was an unprecedented public outreach effort to stakeholders from Tribal governments, neighboring States and Mexico, environmental and business groups, and virtually every mode and region in Arizona.
- ADOT served as the project manager and developed four regional work groups that included representatives from each of the bqAZ partner agencies.
- bqAZ allowed for the development of a statewide travel demand model.
- ADOT completed its statewide LRTP, *What Moves You Arizona*, in 2011.
- The planning team employed two methods of addressing the challenge of reconciling diverse interests: incorporating the existing visioning documents from metropolitan areas, and using consistent messaging to ensure that feedback could be more easily addressed.

Department, State Land Department, and Arizona State Parks. The bqAZ partners also held focus groups with representatives from Mexico, California, Utah, Nevada, and New Mexico to understand the impact that projects and plans in these jurisdictions would have on Arizona's infrastructure and development in the future.

The regional teams used input from the study to conduct further framework studies, including forecasts, environmental scans, and consideration of multi-modal alternatives and implementation strategies. The bqAZ team developed the [What Moves You Arizona Long-Range Transportation Plan \(LRTP\)](#) by consolidating the input and studies, prioritizing proposed projects, and developing a financial plan.

Collaboration Accomplishments

One of the main benefits of the bqAZ visioning process was that the State and local agencies better understood their stakeholders' priorities regarding future development. For instance, the bqAZ team learned that rural communities wanted to invest in transit infrastructure rather than in road construction, which prompted ADOT to seriously consider the expansion of alternative modes across the State. The visioning process also allowed State and local agencies to better understand the varying needs of different MPOs.

Before bqAZ began, ADOT did not have a statewide travel demand model, but rather used various models as available from its MPO partners. The lack of a statewide model caused bordering MPOs to make independent, and occasionally contradicting, transportation decisions based on their own regional models. ADOT initially created the first version of its statewide travel demand model to help smooth over differences between framework studies during the development of bqAZ. Now, the agency is working to develop the third version of its statewide travel demand model that MPOs and regional agencies can use in their decisionmaking.

The conversations made possible by the collaborative structure led to several new, actionable ideas. One concept that emerged from bqAZ regional discussions was the idea of a new interstate highway that would connect Phoenix to Nevada. ADOT completed a two-year study with Nevada DOT (NDOT) that led to the creation of a multi-state planning and environment linkages (PEL) document. ADOT has since begun a Tier 1 environmental impact statement (EIS) process and is currently working through the National Environmental Policy Act phase of development for the project.

The agencies involved developed strong relationships by working together on the public outreach and visioning efforts. These relationships have carried over into other State planning projects. Working with the MPOs and COGs on the bqAZ committees and regional teams encouraged ADOT to include these groups as members of the What Moves You Arizona LRTP project management team. Beyond their traditional role as stakeholders, the MPOs' and COGs' inclusion in the project management team enabled them to help guide and direct the LRTP work. The What Moves You Arizona LRTP itself

represents another lasting accomplishment in agency collaboration. ADOT, the MPOs, and the COGs continue to use the document as a starting point for their planning processes and project prioritization.

That same collaborative spirit also helped to catalyze the creation of [the Joint Planning Advisory Council](#) (JPAC), a planning partnership for the Arizona Sun Corridor. The agencies in the council are located adjacent to one another and recognize that regional planning issues often transcend jurisdictional boundaries. The JPAC meets quarterly to identify mutual goals, provide guidance on joint activities, and enhance communication and cooperation among the region's policymakers.

Challenges and Lessons Learned

While listening to and securing buy-in from all stakeholders was crucial to the success of bqAZ, it also presented one of the effort's main challenges: reconciling the diverse interests of different, diverse entities into a single vision for the entire State. For example, certain regions of Arizona with unique wildlife challenges worried that a statewide visioning effort would not adequately address their environmental needs, whereas others were most interested in the profitability of their transportation systems. The partners addressed this challenge in two ways: first, they incorporated the existing visioning documents from the State's two metropolitan areas, Phoenix and Tucson, into the overall plan without change; and second, they used consistent messaging with groups in the rest of the State to ensure that feedback could be more easily compiled and reconciled. The bqAZ regional teams employed scenario planning to illustrate the different visions and messages to stakeholders. They presented three scenarios to each stakeholder group: maintaining the status quo by focusing on personal mobility, emphasizing investments in transit, and promoting compact growth in the urban areas. Presenting the options in a consistent way and incorporating the urban region's existing visions enabled the bqAZ partners to establish a specific combination of the three scenarios as the statewide plan.

bqAZ presents an impressive example of multi-jurisdictional planning. Incorporating multiple stakeholders on the project management teams, securing input from representatives of all modes and regions, and balancing

Additional Resources

- [What Moves You Arizona LRTP](#)
- [Joint Planning Advisory Council website](#)
- [Work Plan Template for bqAZ Framework Studies](#)
- [Proposal for bqAZ: Statewide Intrastate Mobility Reconnaissance Study](#)

the interests of urban and rural areas provided Arizona with a shared vision and plan that will guide the State's transportation infrastructure development during times of critical growth and change.