

# Building a Quality Arizona

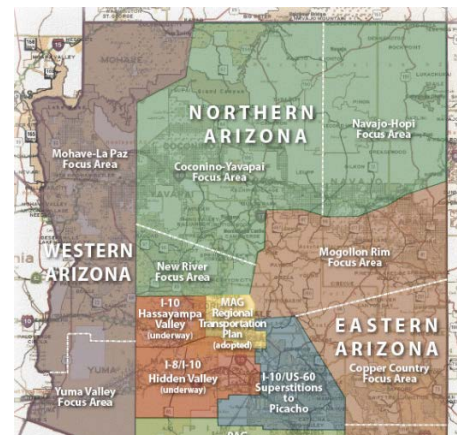
## Regional Models of Cooperation Case Study Series

### State and Local Agencies Create Common Vision for Arizona

Faced with rapid development and population growth a few years ago, the Arizona Council of Governments (COG)/Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) Association teamed up with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), State Legislature, Governor’s Office, and Arizona Business Coalition to develop a common vision for the state’s infrastructure needs. In 2007, the partners 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 virtually every 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—often in duplicative locations because they had not communicated with each other. MPOs were also planning freeway-type facilities to accommodate anticipated growth. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) decided to initiate bqAZ to coordinate the needs from the many users of its transportation system into a common 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 took an integrated look at the needs of all transportation users, modeled future scenarios, and used the information to determine a long-term statewide plan.



bqAZ Framework Study Locations

#### Collaboration Structure

The bqAZ team consisted of ADOT, five MPOs and four COGs from the state, four consulting teams, as well as 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 workgroups that included representatives from each of the bqAZ partner agencies. Including all the partners in each workgroup enabled a comprehensive visioning process and kept the members up to date with each other’s work.

In addition to the weekly team meetings, two formal committees helped with the bqAZ effort. A policy committee consisting of the 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 on their progress towards specific goals, described in the next paragraph. The primary consultant maintained a website portal that documented the meetings and materials of each committee and regional team.

The Governor's Office established six primary goals for the visioning process. The process had to be multimodal, consider smart growth, promote the state's economy and businesses, preserve the environment and allow conservation, incorporate tribal input, and include collaboration with the state's MPOs and COGs.

To achieve these goals, the bqAZ teams conducted considerable public outreach for the project through an intrastate mobility reconnaissance study. When seeking input from and communicating results to the public, the bqAZ partners used a variety of tactics, including internet, media, television, and newspaper. The consultants and ADOT also provided public involvement specialists to each regional team to facilitate discussion. The regional teams met with all 23 tribal governments in Arizona and with interest groups related to highway, transit, freight, trucking, and the environment. These included the Arizona Department of Commerce, Department of Public Safety, Game and Fish Department, State Land Department, and Arizona State Parks. The bqAZ partners also met 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 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. Finally, the bqAZ team created the MoveAZ statewide 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 in regards to future development. For instance, the bqAZ team learned that rural communities wanted to invest in transit infrastructure rather than in building more roads, which prompted ADOT to seriously consider the expansion of alternative modes across the state.

The teamwork inherent in managing the public outreach and visioning efforts also established strong relationships that 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 MoveAZ 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.

Finally, the MoveAZ LRTP itself represents a lasting accomplishment of the agencies' collaboration. ADOT, the MPOs, and the COGs recognize the projects listed in this product as representative of many stakeholders' interests and continue to use the document as a starting point for their planning processes and project prioritization.

### 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 many different entities into a single vision for the entire state. The partners addressed this challenge in two ways: first, by accepting the existing visioning



documents from the state's two metropolitan areas, Phoenix and Tucson, and incorporating them into the overall plan without change; and second, by using consistent messaging with groups in the rest of the state to ensure that feedback would take a relatively consistent form that could be more easily compiled and reconciled. The bqAZ regional teams 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 multijurisdictional planning. Incorporating multiple stakeholders on the project management teams, securing input from all modes and regions, and balancing 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 this time of critical growth.

