

The April 2022 Pima Association of Governments (PAG) Regional Transportation Authority (RTA) Plan performance audit conducted by the independent firm Sjoberg Evashenk Consulting, Inc., under contract with the Arizona Auditor General, provided information on 51 projects included in the RTA Plan, 45 of which were completed or in progress as of June 30, 2021. The audit report also provided information on an approximate \$149 million funding gap needed to fulfill RTA Plan promised projects that PAG, the RTA, and local jurisdictions are working to address; and performance results related to mobility, congestion, and safety; and included recommendations for strengthening management of costs and funding and continuing to improve PAG and RTA's performance measurement framework. The contractor made 5 recommendations to PAG and/or RTA, and their status in implementing the recommendations is as follows:

## **Status of 5 recommendations**

In process 5

We will conduct a 24-month followup with PAG and RTA on the status for the recommendations that have not yet been implemented.

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## **Chapter 2: While Funding is Reasonably Available for Many Remaining RTA Plan Projects, There is an Estimated \$149 Million Funding Gap Affecting Eleven Projects**

To strengthen management of total RTA Plan project costs and funding available to mitigate potential funding gaps, RTA should:

1. On an annual or more frequent basis, require RTA member jurisdictions to submit complete capital project cost estimates and actual expenditure data from regional and local sources. RTA should monitor and summarize the revised cost estimates in addition to all available funding sources to pay for project costs to further enhance RTA's gap analysis.

**Implementation in process**—In June 2022, RTA distributed memos to all RTA member jurisdiction lead agencies with remaining RTA projects in the current RTA Plan yet to be completed requiring the lead agencies to provide RTA with updated capital project cost estimates as well as their cost-estimation methodology, available funding sources, and actual expenditure data for each remaining project at that time. RTA will use this cost and funding information from the lead local agencies to update its RTA Plan funding gap analysis. Once fiscal year 2023 closes, PAG/RTA indicated that it plans to send another letter requesting updated cost and funding information that will be shared with the RTA Board prior to its August 2023 meeting. Further, RTA will continue to request updated cost and funding information every July after the close of the fiscal year as part of its normal transportation planning processes to enhance its gap analysis through the end of the RTA Plan in June 2026. RTA will monitor and summarize the gap analysis when member jurisdictions provide updated cost estimate data for the remaining RTA projects yet to be completed through June 2026.

2. Continue working with local jurisdictions to secure needed non-RTA funding for RTA Plan projects before and after the end of the RTA Plan on June 30, 2026.

**Implementation in process**—Through a series of formal agreements and discussions at RTA committee meetings, RTA has worked with the lead local jurisdictions to obtain and refine project cost estimates to more precisely identify funding gaps and to discuss the approach for securing non-RTA funding for the remaining RTA project phases. RTA will continue to work with the local jurisdictions on funding for the RTA Plan projects through

the end of the current RTA Plan expiring in June 2026. In addition, at the June 2, 2022 and November 3, 2022, RTA Board meetings, RTA reported that lead agencies approved deferring 4 projects from the current RTA Plan into a proposed sales tax continuation plan to begin after June 2026, allowing the local jurisdictions more time to secure additional funding for the projects. RTA will continue to meet regularly with RTA member jurisdiction lead agencies on the deferred projects as part of annual budget cycles and transportation planning and will present updated capital project cost information during public meetings of the RTA Board and its committees until the projects are completed after June 2026.

### **Chapter 3: Roadway Congestion and Mobility Generally Improved Since 2016, Although PAG and RTA's Performance Measurement Could be Further Developed**

To continue improving its performance measurement framework and provide additional accountability, PAG and RTA should consider the following:

3. Formally study and quantify the cost-benefit of obtaining raw performance data including the cost of dedicating resources for data refinement, validation, analysis, and reporting.

**Implementation in process**—In 2019, PAG contracted with the University of Arizona to complete a formal 3-phase study to compile performance data and develop performance measures. Phase 1, which was completed in April 2021, focused on integrating data from individual roadway intersections into a comprehensive set of region-wide traffic data and creating processes for sampling, refining, and validating traffic source data for analysis and evaluation. Phase 2, expected for completion by summer 2023, will use the traffic data from Phase 1 to develop performance measures for the PAG region-wide area, such as calculating and analyzing travel time. Phase 3, which is estimated to begin in fall 2023, will assess available performance data and develop metrics that could be used for transit, bicycle, and pedestrian modes of transportation across the region in the future. PAG estimated that Phase 3 of the study will be completed by the end of fiscal year 2025. Following completion of the phased study, RTA will need to work with the local jurisdictions through the PAG Transportation System and Safety subcommittee where discussions and implementation strategies will depend on the study results and how the jurisdictions on the subcommittee choose to proceed.

4. Consider avenues for obtaining actual data such as partnering with other regional or state partners to acquire and prioritize certain key data for performance assessment, in addition to develop a plan with timelines to pursue these avenues so that performance can better be assessed.

**Implementation in process**—PAG is collaborating with the Arizona Department of Transportation and local jurisdictions to identify actual data already captured by those entities, such as travel surveys, annual pavement data, and bike counts, and anticipates gathering and summarizing that performance data by the end of fiscal year 2025. Additionally, as previously discussed (see explanation for Recommendation 3), PAG has contracted with the University of Arizona to study and refine actual traffic performance data for measuring traffic delay and traffic flow based on cost-effective regional performance measures. Following completion of the phased-study, RTA will need to work with the local jurisdictions through the PAG Transportation System and Safety subcommittee where discussions and implementation strategies will depend on the study results and how the jurisdictions on the subcommittee choose to proceed.

5. If modeled data continues to be used for performance measurement, provide sampling and validation of the model output to ensure accuracy of the modeled data. Alternately, provide supplemental or contextual information to the PAG Regional Council and RTA Board of Directors regarding data limitations and caveats on actual versus modeled data.

**Implementation in process**—PAG continues to use modeled data for performance measurement. However, PAG internally calibrates and validates its model to best ensure accuracy. PAG staff plan to summarize and discuss the technical results of its validation effort at the PAG Regional Council and/or the RTA Board level by the end of calendar year 2023. Further, PAG is working on enhancing its model to include validation results with performance measures by the end of calendar year 2023. Measures will include traffic volume, speed, and transit ridership.

PAG has also contracted with the University of Arizona to study and refine actual traffic performance data for measuring traffic delay and traffic flow based on cost-effective regional performance measures (see explanation for Recommendation 3 for more information). Following completion of the phased study by the end of fiscal year 2025, RTA will need to work with the local jurisdictions through the PAG Transportation System and Safety subcommittee where discussions and implementation strategies will depend on the study results and how the jurisdictions on the subcommittee choose to proceed.