

# PINAL COUNTY TRANSIT FEASIBILITY STUDY

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## FINAL REPORT

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**PINAL COUNTY**  
*Wide open opportunity*

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

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Pinal County is a predominantly rural county that is experiencing a tremendous amount of growth. Over the next 20 years, the county is expected to grow from a population of 250,000 residents to more than one million. This growth will place significant new demands on the county's transportation system, and will create a greater need for effective transit services. To proactively plan for these needs, the County conducted the Pinal County Small Area Transportation Study (SATS) in 2006. That study presented a number of "initial transit related" recommendations, and further recommended that the county conduct a transit feasibility study to develop a more detailed blueprint for transit service through 2025.

Most recently, Pinal County updated its Comprehensive Plan, which sets forth a plan designed to manage growth in a manner that will preserve the county's character. The Comprehensive Plan is based on seven core values:

1. Sense of Community
2. Mobility and Connectivity
3. Economic Sustainability
4. Open Space and Places
5. Environmental Stewardship
6. Healthy, Happy Residents
7. Quality Educational Opportunities.

With respect to transportation, the plan identifies four growth areas and outlines an integrated, multimodal transportation system that provides for vehicular travel and transit, including commuter and local rail lines, along with bike and pedestrian routes, and lists 39 prospective mixed-use centers, each with 500 jobs for every 1,000 residents.

Modern, well planned, and sustainable communities strive to incorporate well-balanced transportation systems comprised of several elements: roadways, buses, rail, vanpools, volunteer driver programs, and walking and bicycle paths. It is the combined use of all these multimodal transportation elements that make it easier to travel and sustain growth while reducing traffic congestion, improving air quality and decreasing fossil fuel consumption.

This study addresses the next steps that the county should take to develop the transit components of such a multimodal system. As described in more detail in this report, the county's transit needs are still relatively small, but will grow rapidly, and this study sets forth a "roadmap" for the development of those improvements.





## Chapter 2

# Stakeholder Interview Results

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One of the first steps in the study was to conduct a series of Stakeholder interviews to determine transit opportunities, issues, challenges and perceptions. Information gleaned from these Stakeholder interviews were designed to identify issues that were addressed in the subsequent phases of the study.

### **STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW PROCESS**

Stakeholders were selected based on their representation of an important stakeholder group, particularly with respect to growth and transportation. The interviews were conducted with approximately 50 individuals who represented 21 organizations and consisted of a series of open-ended questions that explored interviewees' perceptions of area transit, transit opportunities, issues and challenges in terms of:

- Stakeholder interest in transit
- Transit issues and challenges
- Most effective services
- Least effective services
- Recommended new services or improvements
- Service evaluation considerations

The questions and topics included:

1. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the greatest, how would you rate the importance of transit for the county today?
2. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the greatest, how would you rate the importance of transit as the county grows?
3. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the greatest, how effective do you feel the county's current transit services are?
4. What do you think are the greatest strengths and weaknesses in current transit systems in your community and elsewhere in Pinal County?
5. How do you think that an improved transit system might benefit your community?
6. What do you think are the most important transit issues that need to be addressed in the short-term?
7. What do you think are the most important transit issues that will need to be addressed as the county grows?



8. Are there specific transit services that you believe should be implemented or considered?
9. What has worked well in the past and/or what could be done to improve how government deals with county and local transit needs?
10. What do you think will be the best way of including county residents in this study process?
11. Please identify the major employers/business leaders from your community that you recommend we include in the stakeholder outreach.

Because interviewees were assured of the confidentiality of their responses, any references to the interviewee or their association have been omitted. Comments and opinions are often paraphrased to preserve the interviewee's message while maintaining confidentiality. In addition, these paraphrased comments may represent one or multiple comments. Finally, it should be noted that comments are based on interviewees' perceptions, and while there were definitive themes that emerged during the interviews, there are also occasions where there were conflicting opinions. The following section summarizes the interview results.

## **OVERVIEW OF INTERVIEW RESULTS**

Unsurprisingly, a variety of opinions and perceptions exist amongst those interviewed. By the same token, there were a number of themes that emerged. These themes, particularly those that focused on services and routes, were an important component of the study as it progressed:

1. ***On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being greatest, how would you rate the importance of transit for the county today?***
  - The majority of stakeholders believe that transit is very important today, but that it is virtually nonexistent across the County and in key population nodes. Lack of funding is considered to be the primary impediment to viable transit programs and options, in almost every case.
  - Stakeholders commented on the lack of connectivity and the need for links to and from major centers and cities. Top needs mentioned included seniors' medical transport, transit-dependent populations and job transit. There is currently a lack of services, but a real need for populations to get around.
  - Mass transit is seen as critical to economic growth.
  - Some current programs are functioning, and, with funding, could act as models for other County areas. These include vanpool programs, Cotton Express in Coolidge, and Pinal County Rides.
  - There also is a need for transportation for shopping and entertainment.



**2. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the greatest, how would you rate the importance of transit as the County grows?**

- Nearly all of the Stakeholders interviewed rate the importance of transit as the County grows as very high. Residents will need to get around for employment, education, medical appointments, shopping and entertainment. The County will also need to move from its present auto-centric lifestyle.
- Need exists for three types of transit: (1) local service within the County's communities, (2) better connections within the county, and (3) commuter service into the Valley and Tucson.
- Sun Corridor growth and rail options are also seen as important to meet growing transit needs and requirements. The western areas of the County have grown while the County's Eastern regions have seen little growth. Studies saw growth and the economy bottoming out from 2009 to 2010 and getting back to a high in 2015 to 2020.
- Hunt Highway and Ellsworth also are challenges for future consideration. In addition, the potential of extending and expanding Valley Metro needs to be considered. Funding is seen as a problem for further transit expansion. Need exists to improve existing services before considering new services.

**3. On a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the greatest, how effective do you feel the County's current transit services are?**

- Current transit services in the County received a very low rating, mainly due to the lack of services and options. Selected services, such as Maricopa Xpress, Pinal Rides, and Coolidge's Cotton Express were viewed as successful. However, most other programs are only for seniors and persons with disabilities. Lack of transit is a frequent complaint of students and employees at Central Arizona College.

**4. What do you think are the greatest strengths and weaknesses in current transit systems in your community and elsewhere in Pinal County?**

- **Strengths:**
  - There is a broad belief among stakeholders that something needs to be done to provide better transit options. Also, the County and cities do have many people who are interested in listening and working on the issue. Cotton Express, Maricopa Express and County Vanpool are among programs that can be used as models for other communities. In some areas rail lines exist that could potentially be used for service. A common view is that a basic system infrastructure exists and that services should be built upon this infrastructure.
- **Weaknesses:**
  - There is no unified vision for the County, and funding is a big challenge. In addition, existing services are not coordinated and have different fares. Long distances also impede the creation of transit options and opportunities.



- Most people also are not aware of the transit services that do exist. Some Stakeholders asked that a countywide database of services be created to help key populations know what services are presently being provided or planned. Currently, many people leave their community or the County to work and there are large gaps in existing transit programs.

**5. How do you think that improved transit systems might benefit your community?**

- Quality of life could be improved through the provision of better transit connectivity within the county and to and from the Phoenix and Tucson areas. Transit can also help to drive economic development.
- Also, transit could contribute to cleaner air and a better environment, money savings on fuel, a reduction of “leakage” of tax dollars outside the County and fewer cars. Needs of single parent households also would be better met.

**6. What do you think are the most important transit issues that need to be addressed in the short-term?**

- The most important needs were viewed as:
  - The provision of transit service at a reasonable price and cost.
  - Identification of funding for transit.
- Overall, the County needs a vision to better care for and expand existing services (and roads). Also, issues of governance and sustainability need to be addressed.

**7. What do you think are the most important transit issues that will need to be addressed as the County grows?**

- The primary need for the future is to develop better connectivity within and without the County. A regional, unified vision and system are required. Stakeholders see a long-term goal of bringing people to the County to live, work and shop. Externally, the County needs and will require intercommunity transit and transportation options to and from Phoenix and Tucson.
- To date, County and local governments have largely played a passive role. The question for the future is whether that model will change.
- New, strong, well-populated centers need to be created within the County. These centers must be linked to centers outside of the County. Sustainability of transit systems is critical to growth. Funding is currently a significant problem and will increase in importance as the County progresses.



**8. Are there specific transit services that you believe should be implemented or considered?**

- Broadly speaking, stakeholders share the view that developing connections within and without the County are a priority. Particularly, regional services are required. Specific desires include:
  - Service between Pinal County activity centers.
  - Links to Phoenix and Tucson (including the extension of Valley Metro routes to Pinal County).
  - Better rideshare options.
  - The use of existing rail lines.
  - Amtrak service.
  - A mix of vehicles for different types of trips.
  - Bikeways, sidewalks, and paths.
  - Reduction of solid walls between subdivisions (for access to transit and to encourage walking and bicycling).

**9. What has worked well in the past and/or what could be done to improve how government deals with County and local transit needs?**

- Three programs and services were highlighted as effective models:
  - Pinal Rides
  - Cotton Express
  - Maricopa Xpress
- Relationships, collaboration and cooperation within the County and between the County and other governmental entities have also been very good. This is viewed as a considerable strength that will facilitate the development of regional improvements.
- Many stakeholders also noted the importance of implementing programs in line with growth—not to fall behind but also not get too far ahead.





## Chapter 3

# Existing Conditions

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A number of factors affect transit demand, and these include:

- Population and employment density
- Transit propensity
- Work trip travel flows
- Activity centers and major employers
- Current work trip modes

This chapter presents an overview of Pinal County's existing communities, and their socio-economic, travel, and development characteristics in terms of how they relate to the provision of transit service.

### **COMMUNITY PROFILES**

Although Pinal County is growing rapidly, it is still predominantly rural. Of the county's 326,000 residents, 170,000 live in 11 small incorporated cities, 107,000 live in 14 unincorporated communities, 9,000 live in Indian communities, and 40,000 live in other locations scattered throughout the county.

Between 2000 and 2007, the population of incorporated areas increased by 66%, with the largest growth occurring in Casa Grande, Apache Junction, Maricopa, and Florence. However, even greater growth has occurred in unincorporated areas, where the population has increased by 105% since 2000. Today, unincorporated San Tan Valley has become Pinal County's largest community, and its fastest growing. Gold Canyon and Arizona City have become the seventh and eighth largest communities. Maricopa, which was unincorporated in 2000 and had fewer than 700 residents, is now incorporated and the county's fourth largest community.

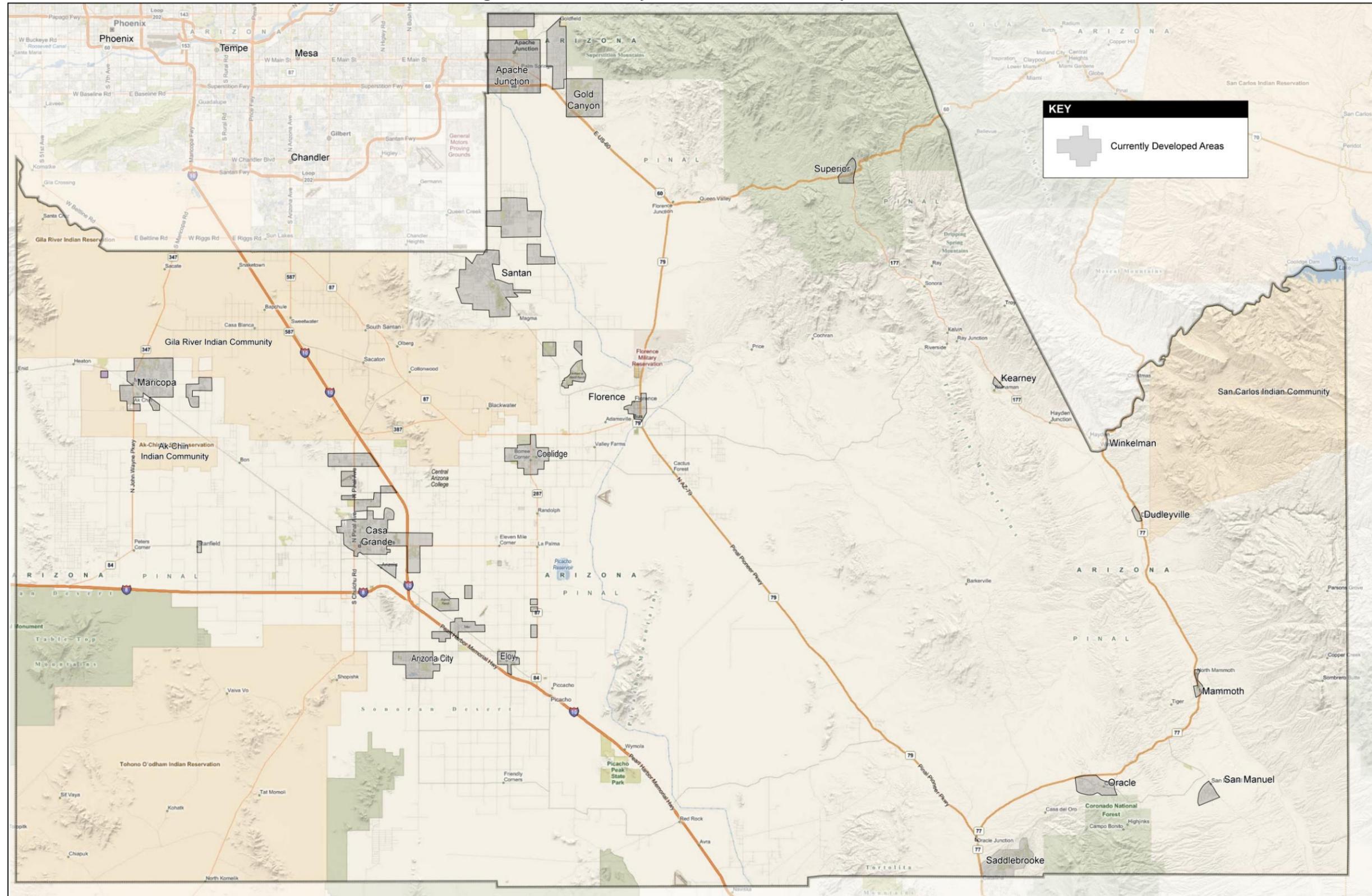
While the growth has been rapid, most communities are still small. San Tan Valley, which as mentioned above, is the county's most populous community, still has fewer than 50,000 residents, and Casa Grande, which is the county's most populous incorporated city, has approximately 42,000 residents.

Even with this growth and the development of new communities, developed areas are widely scattered, and generally separated by long distances (see Figure 3-1). Most are either self-contained or more connected to Maricopa County or Pima County than to other parts of Pinal County. Important characteristics of Pinal County's communities as they relate to transit are summarized in the following sections.

### **Ak-Chin Indian Community**

The Ak-Chin Indian Community is located in the southwest corner of Pinal County and has approximately 800 members (who are also part of the larger Tohono O'odham Indian Nation,

Figure 3-1: Pinal County Communities and Developed Areas





most of which is located in Pima County). Based on 2000 US Census data, and compared to the rest of Pinal County, the Ak-Chin Indian Community has a much higher proportion of youths, a much lower proportion of senior citizens, and lower household incomes (see Table 3-1).

**Table 3-1: Ak-Chin Indian Community Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Ak-Chin Indian Community	Pinal County
Total Population	742	179,727
% under 18	40%	25%
% 65 or older	4%	16%
% pop with disability	3%	23%
% minorities	96%	29.6%
Households	216	61,364
Employed Residents	54%	48%
Median Household Income	\$24,408	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	27%	17%
Occupations		
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food	30%	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	16%	
Educational, health and social services	11%	

Source: 2000 US Census

With its low population and large land area, residential development is overwhelmingly rural. Commercial development is also limited. The Ak-Chin Indian Community operates one casino (Harrah’s Ak-Chin, which is located off of Route 347 south of Maricopa) and an industrial park. These two enterprises are the Indian Community’s two largest activity centers. The major sources of jobs are the casino, farming, and education, health, and social services.

**Apache Junction**

Apache Junction is on the eastern border of Maricopa County. Apache Junction grew very rapidly in the 1990s, when its population grew by 75% to 32,000. Between 2000 and 2007, its population then grew to nearly 37,000. In addition to its year-round residents, the city estimates that it also has over 40,000 winter residents, many of whom are seniors. The city is largely residential, and has a very large proportion of mobile homes (50% of all housing units) and second homes (up to 40%). The city also has a significant number of adult-only communities.

In many respects, Apache Junction is an extension of the urbanized portion of Maricopa County, and the orientation of its residents is much more toward Maricopa County than other parts of Pinal County for work, shopping, and cultural activities. Except for the high proportion of mobile homes, the character of development in Apache Junction is similar to that in neighboring Maricopa County.

Based on 2000 Census data, and compared to the county as a whole, Apache Junction has a much larger proportion of elderly residents and fewer children and minorities (see Table 3-2). Median household incomes are slightly below but close to the county average, and a lower than average proportion of residents lives in poverty.



**Table 3-2: Apache Junction Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Apache Junction	Pinal County
Total Population	31,814	179,727
% under 18	21%	25%
% 65 or older	25%	16%
% pop with disability	27%	23%
% minorities	7%	29.6%
Households	13,775	61,364
Employed Residents	53%	48%
Median Household Income	\$33,170	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	12%	17%
Occupations		
Public administration	20%	
Manufacturing	14%	
Retail Trade	14%	
Education, health, and human services	13%	
Construction	12%	
Accommodation, recreation, arts	12%	

Source: 2000 US Census

Most business activity in Apache Junction consists of retail and service businesses located along West Apache Trail between Idaho Road and the county line. Many of the city’s commercial services cater to the area’s retirees and tourists visiting Central Arizona’s lakes and forests.

**Arizona City**

Arizona City is a new unincorporated community west of Eloy and I-10 and South of Casa Grande. It is almost exclusively residential, with a few retail establishments. In 2000, it had 4,385 residents, and by 2007, the population had nearly tripled to 12,238.

Based on 2000 US Census data, the characteristics of Arizona City residents largely mirrored those of the county as a whole (see Table 3-3). One exception is that there are significantly fewer minorities.

**Casa Grande**

Casa Grande is located in west central Pinal County near the intersection of I-10 and I-8 and approximately halfway between Phoenix and Tucson. It is Pinal County’s largest incorporated city, with 41,900 residents in 2007, and second largest community (after San Tan Valley).

Casa Grande was originally an agricultural center, but has more recently become home to many residents who commute to Phoenix and Tucson, and is one of the county’s fastest growing incorporated cities (up from 25,400 residents in 2000). As the population has increased, Casa Grande has begun to develop into a regional employment, retail, and service center. A new regional shopping mall has been built to the east of I-10, and the city has a regional medical facility. The city also has a manufacturing base, including a Frito-Lay plant.



**Table 3-3: Arizona City Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Arizona City	Pinal County
Total Population	4,385	179,727
% under 18	23%	25%
% 65 or older	22%	16%
% pop with disability	17%	23%
% minorities	15%	30%
Households	1,770	61,364
Employed Residents	51%	48%
Median Household Income	\$37,432	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	6%	17%
Occupations		
Education, health, and human services	15%	
Manufacturing	14%	
Public administration	14%	

Source: 2000 US Census

Based on 2000 Census data, and compared to the rest of the county, Casa Grande has higher proportions of youths, minorities, and employed residents, and a slightly lower proportion of elderly residents (see Table 3-4). The median family income is slightly above the county average, and the number of residents living in poverty is slightly below the county average.

**Table 3-4: Casa Grande Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Casa Grande	Pinal County
Total Population	25,224	179,727
% under 18	31%	25%
% 65 or older	14%	16%
% pop with disability	21%	23%
% minorities	35%	30%
Households	8,920	61,364
Employed Residents	61%	48%
Median Household Income	\$36,212	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	16%	17%
Occupations		
Education, health, and human services	21%	
Manufacturing	15%	
Retail Trade	12%	

Source: 2000 US Census

**Coolidge**

Coolidge is located approximately 11 miles west of Florence. Coolidge was established in 1926 following the construction of the Coolidge Dam as the agricultural center of the area to be irrigated by the waters made available by the dam. Coolidge remains one of the county’s more traditional communities, and is still a regional trade and service center for agricultural activities. Most development is still along and around its main street (Arizona Boulevard/Route 87) and



downtown. However, more recent development is occurring in new subdivisions located approximately one mile west of downtown, and in big box and chain retail establishments to the north of downtown.

Based on 2000 Census data (see Table 3-5), Coolidge is significantly less affluent than the county as a whole. Average household incomes are were \$29,000, or 19% below the county average. The number of residents living in poverty is also high, at approximately 25%. Coolidge also has a very high minority population, most of whom are Hispanic or African-American.

**Table 3-5: Coolidge Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Coolidge	Pinal County
Total Population	7,786	179,727
% under 18	33%	25%
% 65 or older	13%	16%
% pop with disability	27%	23%
% minorities	42.2%	29.6%
Households	2,585	61,364
Employed Residents	56%	48%
Median Household Income	\$29,049	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	25%	17%
Occupations		
Education, health, and human services	25%	
Public administration	20%	
Retail Trade	12%	

Source: 2000 US Census

Between 2000 and 2005, Coolidge’s population grew only modestly from 7,800 residents to 8,800. Then, between 2005 and 2007, with the construction of the new subdivisions, the population grew to 11,600.

Coolidge is also home to Central Arizona College (CAC), which is located approximately eight miles west of the center of town. CAC has approximately 4,500 full-time students and 350 staff, and is one of the major activity centers in the central part of the county. Other major activity centers and employers include a Walmart Supercenter and a Safeway. The City of Coolidge and its school district is also a major employer.

**Dudleyville**

Dudleyville, which is located along the eastern edge of Pinal County between Winkelman and Mammoth, has approximately 1,400 residents. Like most other eastern communities, Dudleyville’s population is relatively stable. The community is largely residential, with farming to the north. Major economic activities are related to mining (at the Ray Mine in Hayden) and farming.

Based on 2000 US Census data, Dudley has a higher proportion of children than the county as a whole, a slightly lower proportion of residents who are senior citizens, and a higher



percentage who are minorities (see Table 3-6). A larger percentage of Dudleyville’s residents work, and median incomes are similar as for the county as a whole.

**Table 3-6: Dudleyville Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Dudleyville	Pinal County
Total Population	1,323	179,727
% under 18	33%	25%
% 65 or older	12%	16%
% pop with disability	24%	23%
% minorities	38%	30%
Households	454	61,364
Employed Residents	59%	48%
Median Household Income	\$35,592	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	14%	17%
Occupations		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	28%	
Educational, Health and Social service	20%	
Retail Trade	10%	

Source: 2000 US Census

**Eloy**

Eloy is located along I-10 south of Casa Grande and has historically been a slow-growing agricultural center with highway-related commercial activities. More recently, the city has encouraged growth and a diversification of its economy. Between 2000 and 2006, the city’s total population grew from 10,400 to 11,500, and then between 2006 and 2007, it jumped to 14,000. However, like Florence, these figures are skewed by inmates housed in four prisons in Eloy. Deducting these inmates, the population actually declined from 8,700 in 2000 to 8,300 in 2006, and then increased to 10,800 in 2007.

Before the recent economic downturn, the city had expected up to 175,000 new houses to be constructed over the next ten years. The developed part of the city is split between the traditional downtown area and the newer Toltec area subdivisions about three miles to the northwest.

Similar to Florence, Ely’s largest employers are prisons. Correctional Corporation of America (CCA) operates four prisons in Eloy that house 3,200 inmates and employ over 1,500 workers.

Based on 2000 US Census data, and compared to the entire county, Eloy has a significantly higher proportion of youths (34%) and minorities (47%), and far fewer seniors (6%) (see Table 3-7). However, these figures are also skewed by the inmate population. The median income is also significantly lower than for the county as a whole, and a greater proportion of residents live in poverty.



**Table 3-7: Eloy Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Eloy	Pinal County
Total Population	10,375	179,727
% under 18	34%	25%
% 65 or older	6%	16%
% pop with disability	20%	23%
% minorities	47%	30%
Households	2,492	61,364
Employed Residents	47%	48%
Median Household Income	\$26,518	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	28%	17%
Occupations		
Education, health, and human services	17%	
Manufacturing	16%	
Public administration	11%	
Accommodation, recreation, arts	11%	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	11%	
Retail Trade	10%	

Source: 2000 US Census

**Florence**

Florence is the county seat and is located near the geographical center of the county. In 2007, Florence had nearly 25,000 residents, up from 19,800 in 2000. However, it should be noted that the population figures are highly skewed by the inmates in the city’s prisons, who are included in official population figures and who outnumber the non-inmate population. Deducting inmates, the city’s population is currently closer to 10,200 residents, and up from 8,000 in 2000. These residents are split between the older historic part of town near the intersections of Routes 79 and 87, and the new Anthem developments that are located about 10 miles northwest. To date, these two population centers have few commercial or cultural ties.

Florence is one of Pinal County’s two major employment centers. In addition to being the county seat, it is also home to a National Guard training facility and a large number of prison facilities (federal, state, county, and private). These include the Arizona State Prison complex, which has six units, a federal ICE detention center, the Pinal County Jail, and two privately operated prisons. In total, the prisons house approximately 16,000 inmates and employ 4,800 workers.

**Gila River Indian Community**

The Gila River Indian Community (GRIC) is located in the northwestern corner of Pinal County roughly between the Maricopa County line, the City of Maricopa, and Coolidge. The Indian community is home to members of both the Akimel O’odham (Pima) and the Pee-Posh (Maricopa) tribes, and currently has approximately 15,000 residents. Most residents live in one of 15 small communities, the largest of which are Sacaton, Komatke, Santan, and Blackwater. Residential development throughout the community is overwhelmingly rural. Compared to the rest of the county, Gila River’s population is much younger than average (43% of residents are under 18), and median incomes are much lower (approximately half of those for



**Table 3-8: Florence Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Florence	Pinal County
Total Population	17,054	179,727
% under 18	8%	25%
% 65 or older	8%	16%
% pop with disability	25%	23%
% minorities	42.9%	29.6%
Households	2,226	61,364
Employed Residents	13%	48%
Median Household Income	\$36,372	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	7%	17%
Occupations		
Public administration	49%	
Education, health, and human services	14%	

Source: 2000 US Census

the county as a whole) (see Table 3-9). GRIC also has a much lower proportion of senior citizens.

**Table 3-9: Gila River Indian Community Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Gila River Indian Community	Pinal County
Total Population	11,257	179,727
% under 18	43%	25%
% 65 or older	6%	16%
% pop with disability	5%	23%
% minorities	96%	29.6%
Households	2,686	61,364
Employed Residents	46%	48%
Median Household Income	\$18,599	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	52%	17%
Occupations		
Arts, entertainment, recreation, accommodation, and food	23%	
Education, health, and human services	21%	
Public administration	10%	

Source: 2000 US Census

GRIC has been steadily increasing retail, recreational, and industrial development, which has been located off of I-10 just south of the Maricopa County line. Tourism and recreational-related developments include three casinos, a resort hotel, a spa, an equestrian center, two golf courses, an arts & crafts center, two tribal museums, an NHRA certified racetrack, a racecar driving school, and a racing-boat course in the Wild Horse Pass development. Industrial and business developments include the Lone-Butte Industrial Park (which is located in Chandler just north of the Maricopa County Line) and the Wild Horse Pass business park. All of these developments are much more oriented toward Maricopa County markets than Pinal County, but are major Pinal County activity centers.



**Gold Canyon**

Gold Canyon is an affluent residential community located east of Apache Junction and north of Route 60. The area has more than doubled in population between 2000 and 2007 from 6,029 residents to 13,664. In addition, like nearby Apache Junction, Gold Creek has a large seasonal population that is estimated at approximately 7,000 residents.

Based on the 2000 US Census, and compared to the rest of the county, Gold Canyon residents are older and have much higher incomes (with a median income of nearly \$58,000 compared to the countywide median income of \$36,000 (see Table 3-10). Consistent with the high income figures, very few Gold Canyon residents live in poverty. There are also very few minorities.

**Table 3-10: Gold Canyon Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Gold Canyon	Pinal County
Total Population	6,029	179,727
% under 18	12%	25%
% 65 or older	30%	16%
% pop with disability	15%	23%
% minorities	4%	30%
Households	2,785	61,364
Employed Residents	46%	48%
Median Household Income	\$57,705	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	4%	17%
Occupations		
Education, health, and human services	21%	
Manufacturing	14%	
Professional	11%	
Accommodation, recreation, arts	10%	
Agriculture, forestry, fishing, hunting, mining	10%	

Source: 2000 US Census

Gold Canyon residents work in a wide range of professions, with the largest occupations being education, health and human services, manufacturing, professional positions, accommodation, recreation, arts, agriculture, and mining.

**Kearny**

Kearny, which is located near the eastern edge of the county along Route 177 between Superior and Winkelman has approximately 2,300 residents. Kearny’s population has remained relatively unchanged since 1990. Economic activity is centered on the Ray Mine and Hayden Smelter in nearby Hayden.

Based on 2000 US Census data, Kearny has a higher proportion of children than the county as a whole, and slightly lower proportions of residents who are senior citizens and who have a disability (see Table 3-11). Kearny is slightly more affluent than the county as a whole, with a higher median household income and fewer residents who live in poverty.



**Table 3-11: Kearny Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Kearny	Pinal County
Total Population	2,249	179,727
% under 18	30%	25%
% 65 or older	14%	16%
% pop with disability	20%	23%
% minorities	27%	30%
Households	873	61,364
Employed Residents	53%	48%
Median Household Income	\$39,906	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	13%	17%
Occupations		
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	28%	
Educational, Health and Social service	20%	

Source: 2000 US Census

**Mammoth**

Mammoth is located in the southeastern corner of Pinal County between Oracle and Dudleyville, and has approximately 1,800 residents. Similar to many other communities in the eastern half of the county, its population declined between 1990 and 2000 and has been stable since then. Mammoth was originally a mining town, but economic activities are now primarily focused around farming and tourism.

Based on 2000 US Census data and compared to the rest of the county, Mammoth has a higher proportion of children and minorities. Household incomes are also significantly lower and a high proportion of residents live in poverty (see Table 3-12).

**Table 3-12: Mammoth Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Mammoth	Pinal County
Total Population	1,762	179,727
% under 18	33%	25%
% 65 or older	12%	16%
% pop with disability	24%	23%
% minorities	38%	30%
Households	562	61,364
Employed Residents	48%	48%
Median Household Income	\$29,861	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	28%	17%
Occupations		
Construction	14%	
Educational, Health and Social Service	17%	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing, Hunting, Mining	12%	
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	11%	

Source: 2000 US Census



**Maricopa**

Maricopa is located near the northwestern corner of Pinal County and is bounded by the Gila River Indian Community to the north and east, and the Ak-Chin Indian Community to the west and south.

Maricopa is Pinal County’s newest incorporated city. When the city was incorporated in late 2003, it had a population of approximately 5,000 people. Since that time, the city has experienced large-scale residential development, and by 2007 the population had grown to 34,000. Although located in Pinal County, Maricopa is largely a bedroom community of the Phoenix area, and is often cited as an example of a city whose residents have accepted long commutes in order to achieve home ownership. More recently, Maricopa has been especially hard hit by the subprime mortgage crisis and some estimates indicate that 1 in 10 houses are vacant.

The town is overwhelmingly residential, with a limited amount of retail services that cater to local residents. The commercial activity is largely located along John Wayne Expressway (Route 347) that is also the main link to Maricopa County. As with most new residential communities, the character of development is highly auto-oriented.

**Oracle**

Oracle, which is located near the southeastern corner of Pinal County, has approximately 4,300 residents. Until the closing of the Oracle’s copper mine, its economic activities were largely related to mining. Now, the economic focus has turned more toward tourism. In addition, Oracle is also becoming a bedroom community to Tucson.

Based on 2000 US Census data, Oracle’s socio-economic characteristics generally match those of the overall county (see Table 3-13). However, more residents work, incomes are slightly higher, and fewer residents live in poverty.

**Table 3-13: Oracle Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Oracle	Pinal County
Total Population	3,563	179,727
% under 18	26%	25%
% 65 or older	14%	16%
% pop with disability	22%	23%
% minorities	23%	30%
Households	1,384	61,364
Employed Residents	58%	48%
Median Household Income	\$38,276	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	10%	17%
Occupations		
Construction	15%	
Educational, Health and Social Service	15%	
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	9%	

Source: 2000 US Census



**Saddlebrooke**

Saddlebrooke is an unincorporated community located off of Route 79 just north of the Pima County line that consists largely of planned residential communities centered on golf courses, many of which are retirement communities. Similar to the way that Apache Junction has stronger ties to Maricopa County than to the rest of Pinal County, Saddlebrooke has stronger ties to Pima County than to the rest of Pinal County.

Since 2000, Saddlebrooke has more than doubled in size from 3,900 residents to 10,600. The community is overwhelmingly residential, and the character of development is highly auto-oriented.

**San Manuel**

San Manuel is located in the southeastern corner of Pinal County to the east of Oracle and south of Mammoth, and has approximately 4,700 residents. Growth has occurred slowly in San Manuel, with the population increasing from 4,009 residents in 1990 to 4,375 residents in 2000 to 4,691 in 2007. San Manuel is overwhelmingly residential, with only limited commercial activity located in the vicinity of Route 76.

Based on 2000 US Census data and compared to the rest of the county, Mammoth has a higher proportion of children and a lower proportion of senior citizens. Household incomes are also significantly higher and a lower proportion of residents live in poverty (see Table 3-14).

**Table 3-14: San Manuel Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	San Manuel	Pinal County
Total Population	4,375	179,727
% under 18	33%	25%
% 65 or older	11%	16%
% pop with disability	17%	23%
% minorities	31%	30%
Households	1,458	61,364
Employed Residents	54%	48%
Median Household Income	\$40,019	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	13%	17%
Occupations		
Retail Trade	22%	
Educational, Health and Social Service	20%	
Construction	11%	

Source: 2000 US Census

**San Tan Valley**

San Tan Valley is an unincorporated community that borders the southeastern corner of Maricopa County, and is Pinal County’s fastest growing community. Most growth is in new residential developments, and between 2000 and 2007, San Tan Valley’s population grew from 651 residents to nearly 46,000. The community is overwhelmingly residential, and most employed residents work in Maricopa County.



At present, there are two separate developed sections of San Tan Valley. The first area straddles Hunt Highway generally between Magma to the south and the Maricopa county line to the north. The second is to the northeast and generally north and south of Ocotillo Road.

San Tan Valley, although unincorporated, is currently Pinal County's largest community. In 2004, San Tan Valley's residents attempted to incorporate the community. However, incorporation would have required the approval of all cities within five miles, and Florence withheld approval. Efforts to incorporate continue, but there are also indications that Florence may desire to annex San Tan Valley.

**Superior**

Superior, which has approximately 3,400 residents, is located along Route 60 in the Superstition Mountains to the east of Apache Junction. Like many other communities in the eastern part of the county, economic activities have historically been focused around mining. However, with the closing, reopening, and reclosing of the Magma Mine, economic activities have shifted to service industries and tourism. More residents also commute longer distances to jobs elsewhere, including Maricopa and the prisons in Florence.

Unlike other communities in the eastern part of the county, Superior is located relatively close to the Phoenix metropolitan area. However, its borders are fixed by the Superstition Mountain Wilderness Area, which surrounds it, and thus like other communities in the eastern part of the county, its population has remained relatively stable since 1990.

Based on 2000 US Census data, Superior has a slightly higher proportion of senior citizens and residents with disabilities (see Table 3-15). The median household income is significantly lower, and the percentage of residents living in poverty is significantly higher.

**Table 3-15: Superior Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Superior	Pinal County
Total Population	3,254	179,727
% under 18	27%	25%
% 65 or older	20%	16%
% pop with disability	26%	23%
% minorities	27%	30%
Households	1,237	61,364
Employed Residents	48%	48%
Median Household Income	\$27,069	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	28%	17%
Occupations		
Educational, Health and Social service	21%	
Arts, Entertainment, Recreation, Accommodation, Food Services	14%	
Public Administration	13%	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	10%	

Source: 2000 US Census



**Winkelman**

Winkelman is a very small community of approximately 430 residents that straddles the Pinal and Gila County lines just to the north of Dudleyville. Unusual for Pinal County, Winkelman’s population has been declining, from 676 in 1990 to 443 in 2000 to approximately 430 today.

Most of Winkelman’s economic activity is related to copper mining (at the Ray Mine and Hayden Smelter in Hayden). In addition, the community is also a service center for other small communities in the eastern part of the county, including Dudleyville. Winkelman’s socio-economic makeup is similar to that of the county as a whole, except that the community has a higher proportion of minority residents, incomes are significantly lower, and a high proportion of residents live in poverty (see Table 3-16).

**Table 3-16: Winkelman Socio-Economic Characteristics (2000)**

	Winkelman	Pinal County
Total Population	443	179,727
% under 18	29%	25%
% 65 or older	14%	16%
% pop with disability	28%	23%
% minorities	38%	30%
Households	160	61,364
Employed Residents	45%	48%
Median Household Income	\$25,455	\$35,856
% pop below poverty line	27%	17%
Occupations		
Educational, Health and Social Service	22%	
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting, and Mining	20%	
Retail Trade	10%	

Source: 2000 US Census

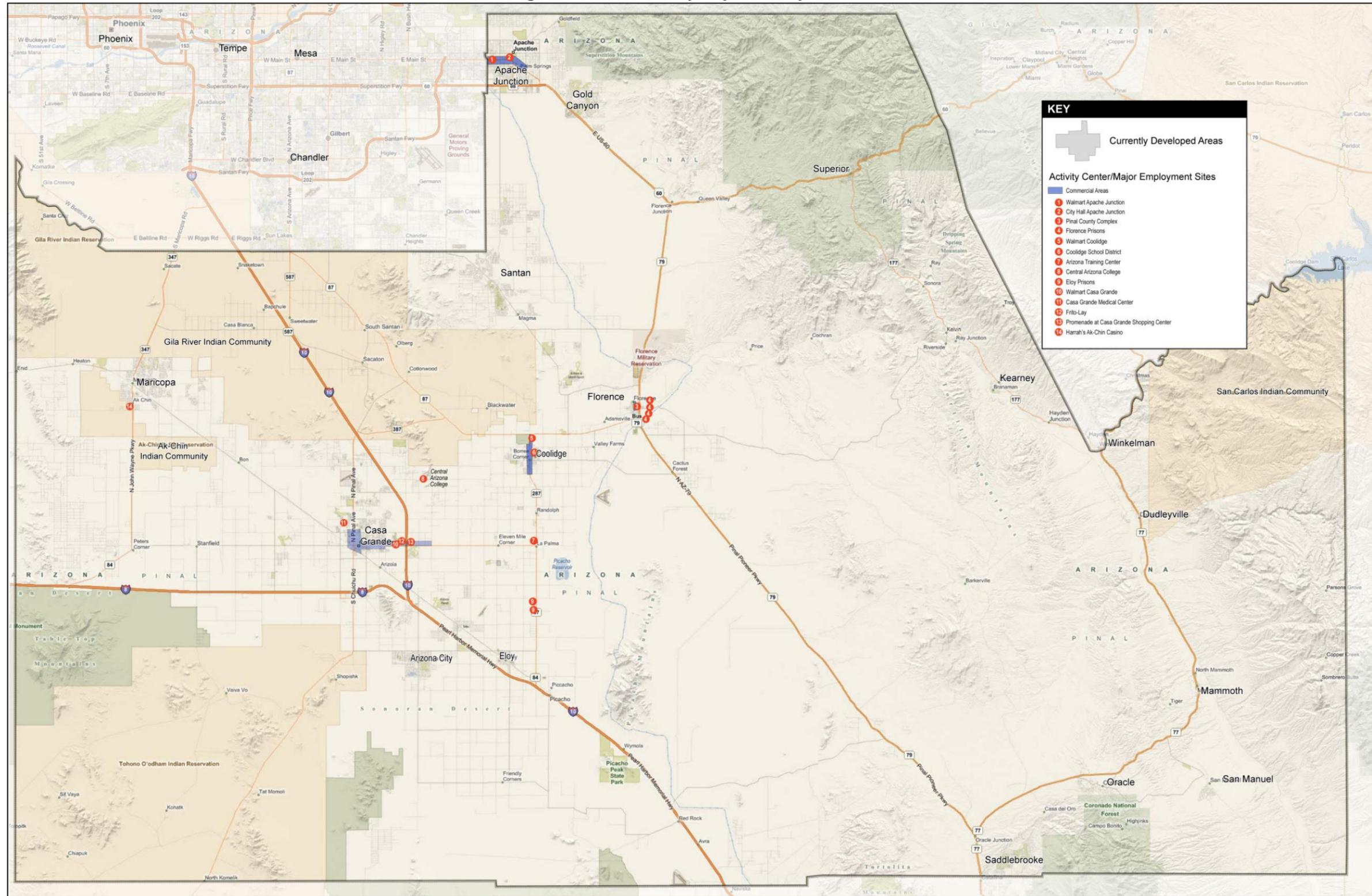
**ACTIVITY CENTERS AND MAJOR EMPLOYERS**

As described above, Pinal County is still sparsely developed, and most new development has been large-scale residential communities. Retail and service businesses are starting to following the new residents, but to date, the number of major activity centers within the county is limited. Major activity centers include (see also Figure 3-2):

- Commercial districts in Apache Junction, Coolidge, and Casa Grande.
- Central Arizona College (CAC).
- The Pinal County complex in Florence.
- The Casa Grande Regional Medical Center in Casa Grande.
- The new Promenade at Casa Grande shopping center in Casa Grande.
- Walmarts in Apache Junction, Coolidge, Casa Grande, and Maricopa.

The county’s largest employers are its prisons (see Table 3-17). In total, the prisons in Florence and Eloy employ over 6,000 workers. The prisons have also been the county’s major growth industry since 2000. Other major employers include the Harrah’s Ak-Chin Casino on the

Figure 3-2: Pinal County Major Activity Centers





Maricopa Line, the Casa Grande school system, the Casa Grande Regional Medical Center, the Arizona Training Center in Coolidge, Frito-Lay in Casa Grande, and the county. Walmarts are also among the largest employers in the communities in which they are located.

**Table 3-17: Pinal County Major Employers by Jurisdiction**

Community	Employer	Employees
Apache Junction	City Hall	220
	Walmart	260
Casa Grande	Walmart	250
	Frito-Lay	450
	Casa Grande Regional Medical Center	600
	Horizon Human Services	200
	School System	900
	Promenade at Casa Grande	NA
Coolidge	Walmart	225
	Arizona Training Center	450
	School District	300
	Central Arizona College	300
Eloy	Prisons	1,500
	School District	280
Florence	County Government	500
	Prisons	4,800
Kearney	United Steelworkers of America	320
Maricopa	Harrah's Ak-Chin Casino	1,700
	Mobile Mini	300
Sacaton	Gila River Farms	200
	Huhukam Memorial Hospital	250
	GRIC Tribal Government	NA

NA= Not available

**POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT DENSITY**

For transit to be successful, there must be sufficiently high volumes of travel. Typically, traditional fixed-route transit can be provided productively if there are at least 3 households per acre or at least 4 jobs per acre. With higher levels of population and employment, more frequent service can be supported.

At the present time, these population and employment densities exist in only a few parts of Pinal County—generally the developed portions of Apache Junction, Casa Grande, Coolidge, and Maricopa that were shown in Figure 3-2.

**TRANSIT PROPENSITY**

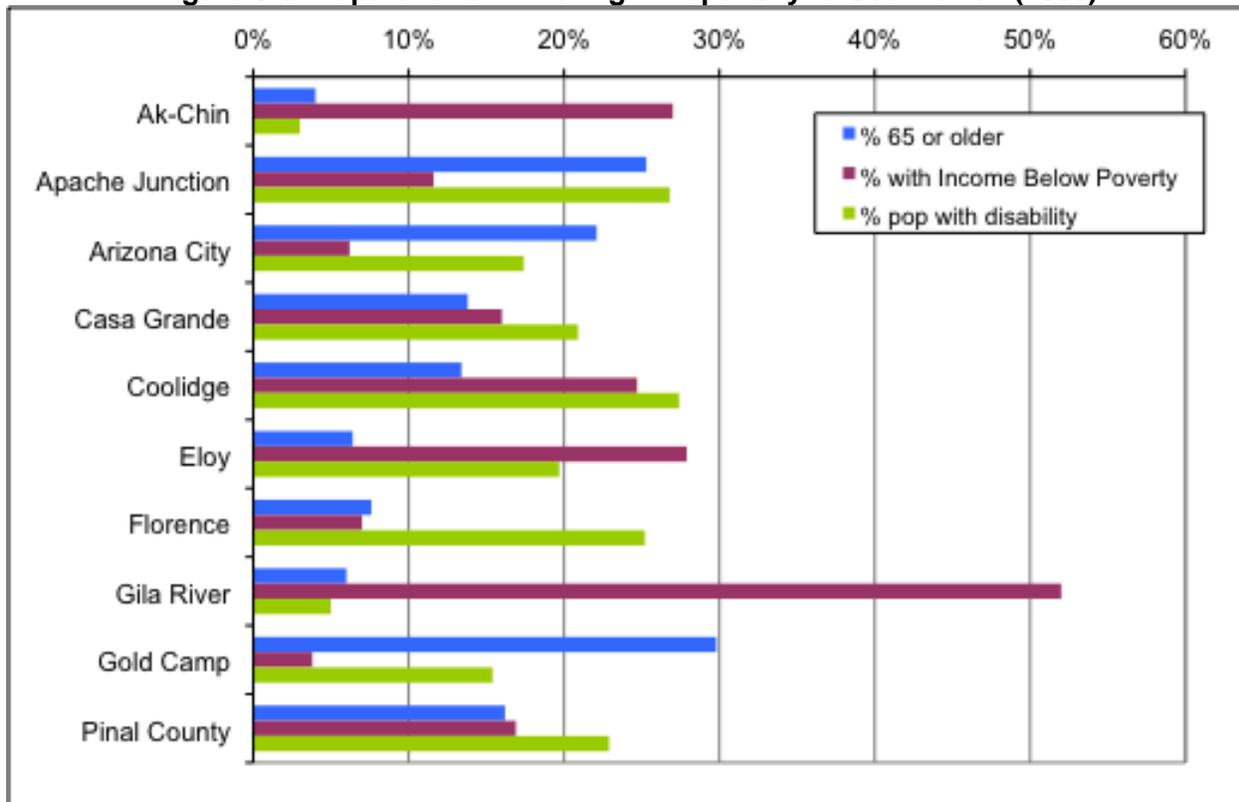
Certain population groups have a higher propensity to use transit than others. Chief among these groups are seniors, persons with disabilities, and those with low incomes. As shown in Figure 3-3, the relative sizes of these populations vary greatly throughout the county.

In general, the older established communities and the two Indian Communities have higher populations of residents with a high propensity to use transit. In particular, Florence, Coolidge, and Apache Junction have relatively large proportions of residents with disabilities, and Eloy,



Coolidge, and the Ak-Chin and Gila River Indian Communities have very high proportions of residents living in poverty. Apache Junction, Arizona City, and Gold Camp have a high proportion of senior residents. The impact of high proportions of residents with these characteristics can be seen in Coolidge—while the city has a small population, it does have a high proportion of residents for whom transit can be very important, and is one of the reasons for the success of Coolidge’s Cotton Express. These same characteristics indicate that there would be significant demand from these populations in Casa Grande and Apache Junction.

**Figure 3-3: Populations with a High Propensity to Use Transit (2000)**



Source: 2000 US Census

Also, while the above discussion focuses on the residents of individual communities, worker characteristics also influence transit demand. In Florence and Eloy, a very large proportion of workers are employed at the prisons. Most of these jobs, while not low paying jobs, are lower paying jobs (less than \$30,000 per year) and many of the prison workers commute long distances. Thus, these workers can be particularly sensitive to commute costs and represent a strong potential transit market.

### **TRAVEL FLOWS**

Even in areas with low population and employment densities, there can be sufficiently high volumes to and from some locations to serve effectively with transit. For example, population and employment densities are low in much of Maricopa, and populations with a high propensity to use local transit are low. However, there are sufficiently high travel volumes between the City of Maricopa and Maricopa County to support Maricopa Xpress service.



In 2006, the largest volume of travel for all trip purposes was between Pinal County and Maricopa County (see Figure 3-4). The majority of these were from Apache Junction (99,000 trips per day), followed by Maricopa (32,000), Florence/San Tan Valley (25,000), and Casa Grande (17,000). The largest numbers of trips between areas within Pinal County are from Eloy, Maricopa, and Coolidge to Casa Grande, and from Florence to Coolidge. The largest flows to Pima County are from the Oracle area.

For work trips, which are a particularly important source of transit trips, the highest travel flows are also from Pinal County to Maricopa County (see Figure 3-5). The largest of these are from Apache Junction (20,000 per day), Maricopa (10,000 per day), and Casa Grande (5,000 per day). The largest work trip flows within Pinal County are to Casa Grande: 10,000 per day from Maricopa (which is the same level as to Maricopa County) 8,000 per day from Eloy, and 6,000 per day from Florence. Given the popular success of Maricopa Xpress, these flows indicate that at the present time, commuter services could be feasible between Apache Junction and Maricopa County, between Maricopa and Casa Grande, and Eloy and Casa Grande.

### **CURRENT WORK TRIP MODES**

Although Pinal County currently has a high percentage of residents who would likely use transit, their actual numbers are few. As a result, few transit services have been developed, and thus few residents use transit. In 2007, only 0.3% of Pinal County's residents used transit to commute to work. However, 16% used carpools or vanpools, which is above the 14% average for the State of Arizona. This high rate of carpooling and vanpooling likely represents, to some extent, a latent demand for transit service.

In addition, the Arizona Rural Transit Needs Study (RTNS) conducted by Arizona State Department of Transportation (ADOT) study found that Pinal County residents have the largest county-to-county commuter travel flows in the state. Most of these county-to-county commuter trips are between Pinal County and Maricopa County. As evidenced by the Maricopa Xpress service, there is also likely latent demand for additional commuter services to the Phoenix and Tucson areas.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSIT SERVICE**

At the present time, due to a combination of small population and employment bases located across a large area, the overall demand for transit service is low. However, there are a number of individual markets where there is demand for transit, and where transit may be feasible and could operate effectively and productively:

#### **Ak-Chin Indian Community**

The Ak-Chin Indian Community's population is very small, and too small to support local services for the general public. However, a very high proportion of residents lives in poverty, which indicates that there is a need to provide "lifeline" services to the community's neediest residents—for shopping, medical, and other similar types of trips. The greatest opportunity to provide for these needs will likely be through the development of volunteer driver programs similar to those provided in Apache Junction and Casa Grande.







### **Apache Junction**

There are high volumes of travel between Apache Junction and Maricopa County. In addition, except for the high proportion of mobile homes, the character of development in Apache Junction is similar to that in neighboring Maricopa County. As a result, it is likely that transit needs in Apache Junction are similar to those in the eastern portion of Mesa, and that similar types of transit could be appropriate. This could also include the extension of Valley Metro services across the county line into Apache Junction to provide connections to and from the Phoenix area.

### **Arizona City**

Development in Arizona City is very auto-oriented, and there is almost certainly very little demand for local general public transit service. There may be demand for commuter service to Tucson, which could potentially be served via stops on a Casa Grande – Tucson route. Stronger vanpool efforts could also serve this market.

### **Casa Grande**

Casa Grande has high proportions of residents who fall into groups that would be likely to use local transit service. As Casa Grande continues to grow and becomes even more of a regional center, the demand for transit will also grow. The city recently examined the development of two routes to serve local trips (but has not proceeded with implementation due to economic conditions). There may also be sufficient demand to support commuter routes to Phoenix. In addition, commuter volumes to Casa Grande are fairly high from Maricopa and Eloy, which indicate that commuter routes from those areas to Casa Grande may be feasible.

### **Coolidge**

Relatively compact development along Route 87 is well suited to the provision of transit service. Although the city's new developments are currently separated from the older part of town by undeveloped land, they are still relatively close, and it should be possible to expand the Cotton Express to that area. Coolidge's economic and cultural ties with Casa Grande are apparently increasing, and CAC is a large activity center located between the developed parts of the two cities. As a result, there may be demand for a regional route between the two cities via CAC (and Coolidge's Cotton Express recently began operation of this service on a test basis).

### **Eloy**

Work trip travel volumes from Eloy to Casa Grande are fairly high (8,000 trips per day), which indicates that commuter service from to Casa Grande may be feasible. In addition, as is the case in Florence, there is likely the potential to develop a stronger vanpool program to serve jobs at the prisons. However, based on the city's still relatively small population, there is likely low current demand for local transit except to targeted markets such as the elderly and disabled.

### **Florence**

In Florence, county government and the prisons draw a large number of workers from throughout the county. These flows could almost certainly support the development of a stronger vanpool program, and potentially the development of commuter-oriented bus services.



For more local travel, with a small residential population that is split between to separate areas, demand for general public service is likely relatively low. However, there may be demand for targeted service to the new Walmart and Safeway in neighboring Coolidge. Furthermore, it may be possible to use Coolidge's Cotton Express to provide service between the two communities.

### **Gila River Indian Community**

The populations in Gila River's residential communities are very small, and almost certainly too small to support local services for the general public. However, a very high proportion of residents lives in poverty, which indicates that there is a need for "lifeline" services to the community's neediest residents. As in the Ak-Chin Indian Community, the greatest opportunity to provide for these needs will likely be through the development of volunteer driver programs (as in Apache Junction and Casa Grande).

In the Wild Horse area, where the number of jobs continues to increase and there is a significant amount of tourist traffic, it may be possible to develop links to Valley Metro services in Maricopa County.

### **Gold Canyon**

Development in Gold Canyon is very auto-oriented, and there is almost certainly very little demand for local general public transit service. There may be demand for commuter service to the East Valley, and this could likely be served with the same routes that could also serve Apache Junction (either via extension or access via park and ride lots in Apache Junction).

### **Maricopa**

In Maricopa, the character of development is highly auto-oriented, which discourages demand for local transit. In addition, most residents have the means to travel independently, and relatively few residents fall into population groups that would be most likely to use local transit. However, there are large volumes of travel to and from Maricopa County and the success of the newly implemented Maricopa Xpress indicates that there is demand for commuter services to the East Valley. This service could be expanded and provides an example for similar services from other Pinal County communities. In addition, work trip travel volumes to Casa Grande are as high as to Maricopa County, which indicates that commuter service to Casa Grande would also be feasible.

### **Saddlebrooke/Oracle**

Saddlebrooke, and to a certain extent, Oracle, are much more oriented to the Tucson area than to the rest of Pinal County. Development is very auto-oriented, and there is almost certainly very little demand for local general public transit service. There may be some demand for commuter service to Tucson, but at the current time, not enough to support regularly scheduled service. There could, however, be sufficient demand to warrant expanded vanpool efforts.

### **San Tan Valley**

San Tan Valley's current development patterns are highly automobile-oriented, and the demand for local transit is almost certainly very low. However, there may be demand for better connections to the Signal Butte retail area in Mesa and commuter services to and from the East Valley. As in Apache Junction, one potential way to develop these services would be the



extension of existing Valley Metro services. New dedicated commuter services such as the Maricopa Xpress could also be feasible.

### **Superior**

With the closing of the Magma Mine, Superior residents are traveling longer distances to work, including to Maricopa County and Florence. However, the city's population is too small to support regularly scheduled service. However, there is likely sufficient demand to warrant expanded vanpool efforts.

### **Other Eastern Communities**

The populations of all of the eastern communities are very small, and almost certainly too small to support local services for the general public. Furthermore, these communities are separated by relatively long distances, which would make the provision of daily regional services expensive. In these communities, the greatest needs are largely to provide "lifeline" services to the communities' neediest residents—for shopping and medical and other similar types of trips. The greatest opportunities to provide for these needs will likely be through the development of volunteer driver programs (as in Apache Junction and Casa Grande), and part-time regularly scheduled services (for example, one or two days a week to shopping centers, medical facilities, and social service agencies).



## Chapter 4

# Future Conditions

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At the present time, Pinal County has approximately 326,000 residents. In spite of very rapid growth throughout the 2000's, Pinal County still consists largely of small cities, small unincorporated communities, lightly populated and developed Indian communities, and wide-open spaces.

However, rapid growth is expected to continue, and as it does, many areas will change much more significantly. Casa Grande, Apache Junction, Eloy, and Florence will grow to medium-size cities that will also be regional employment centers. Undeveloped areas between Apache Junction and San Tan Valley will be developed, and in many respects, will become an eastern extension of Maricopa County. Most of the western half of the county between the Gila River Indian Community and the Ak-Chin Indian Community to the north and the Tohono O'odham Indian Community to the south will be developed and largely centered on Casa Grande and Eloy. Maricopa will continue to grow, and travel will continue to be highly oriented toward Maricopa County, but also with higher levels of travel to Casa Grande. In general, and as shown in Figure 4-1, there will be an arc of development around the eastern and southern sides of the Gila River Indian Community and along I-10 between Casa Grande and Eloy. To the east, the county will also grow, but to a much lesser extent and will remain overwhelmingly rural.

This development will produce profound changes in travel to, from, and within Pinal County and will increase the demand for transit service. This chapter describes expected growth as it relates to the demand for future transit services.

### **FUTURE GROWTH ASSUMPTIONS**

Prior to the current recession, Pinal County's 2008 Regionally Significant Routes for Safety and Mobility (RSRSM) study<sup>1</sup> projected that the county would ultimately grow to 2.2 million residents and 655,000 jobs. However, the recession has produced a very significant reduction in growth and to take that into account, the work presented in this document is based on a 2025 population of half that level, or 1.1 million residents and 376,000 jobs.<sup>2</sup>

To determine the impacts of the county's growth on travel patterns, the overall population and employment projections were allocated between the same planning areas used in the RSRSM study to determine where growth will most likely occur first. This was done using two basic assumptions:

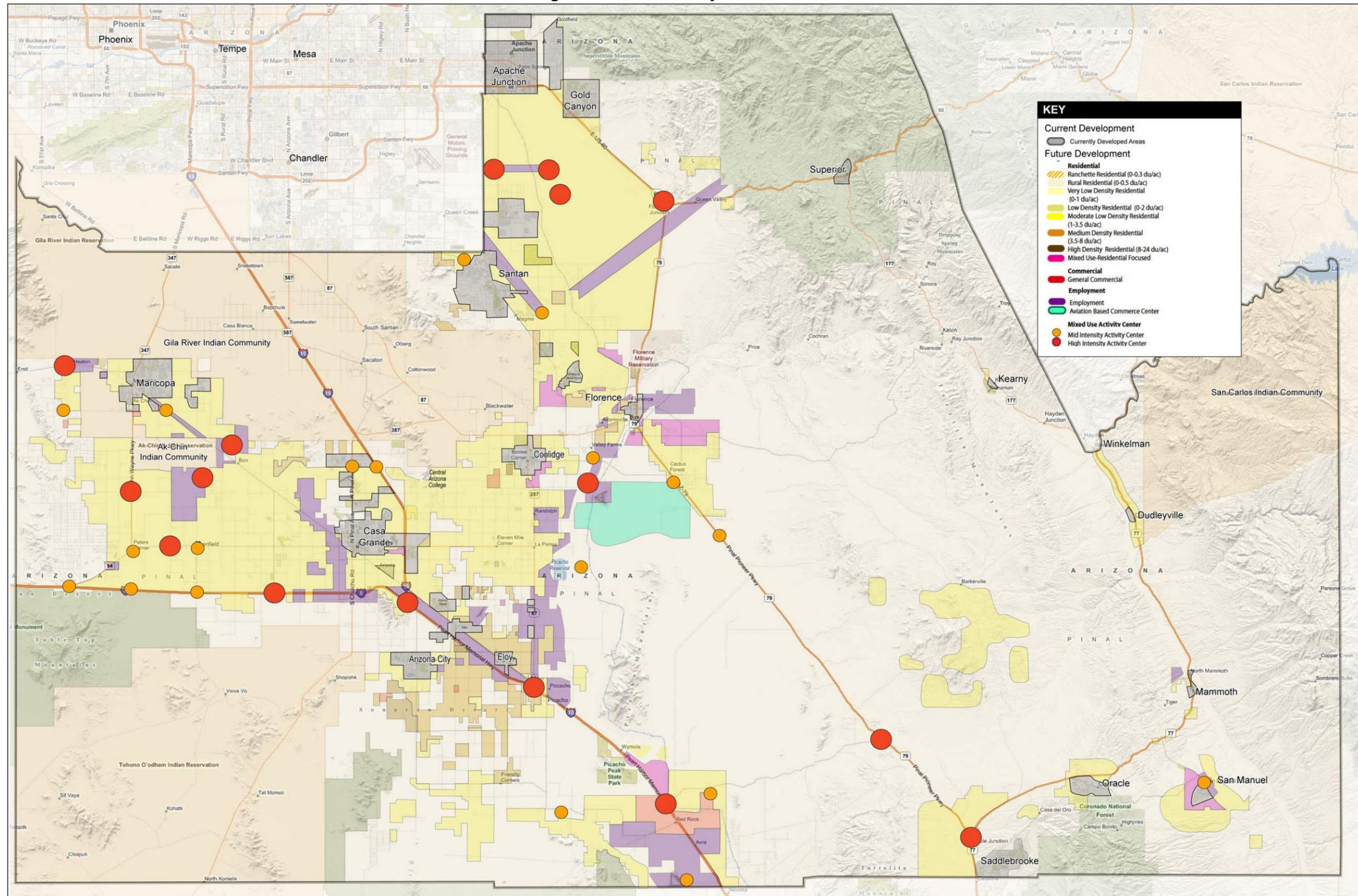
- Current patterns will continue in which development will generally grow outwardly from existing developed areas.

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<sup>1</sup> Final Report, prepared by Lima and Associates for Pinal County, September 2008.

<sup>2</sup> Recent work (that is still underway) as part of CAAG's Pinal County Projections Study that takes into account the impacts of the recession indicates that population will grow to 800,000 to 1.1 million in 2025, which is generally consistent with the assumptions used for this work.

Figure 4-1: Pinal County Land Use Plan



Data source: Pinal County Comprehensive Plan



- Jobs will follow population, and as a result, the county will develop a more balanced population and employment mix. At present, the county has only one job for every six residents. The RSRSM study projected employment would grow to one job for every three residents, and this ratio was also used for 2025.<sup>3</sup>

## **FUTURE POPULATION AND EMPLOYMENT**

The largest amount of population growth is projected to be in Eloy, followed by Casa Grande, Maricopa, and Apache Junction (see Table 4-1). The largest amount of employment growth will occur in Casa Grande, followed by Apache Junction, Eloy, and Florence. Combined, these figures point out that, in the future, the importance of travel to and from Casa Grande and Eloy will increase significantly, and also that Apache Junction and Florence will become increasingly important job centers.

**Table 4-1: Population and Employment Projections**

	Population			Employment		
	2007	2025	Increase	2007	2025	Increase
Apache Junction	38,927	77,130	38,203	6,708	41,265	34,557
Casa Grande	43,912	97,033	53,121	12,798	53,951	41,153
Coolidge	9,846	20,254	10,408	2,338	7,143	4,805
Eloy	9,523	92,198	82,675	2,346	34,058	31,712
Florence	10,279	32,446	22,167	5,082	33,056	27,974
Maricopa	29,234	76,621	47,387	2,018	15,971	13,953
Other	141,897	701,692	559,795	13,506	190,982	177,476
<b>Total</b>	<b>283,618</b>	<b>1,097,374</b>	<b>813,756</b>	<b>44,796</b>	<b>376,426</b>	<b>331,630</b>

*Source: Total estimates based on 50% of build-out projections from Regionally Significant Routes for Safety & Mobility (RSRSM) Study; allocations by area based on Jacobs' estimates.*

As shown in Figure 4-2, the highest densities of population will be located in four areas:

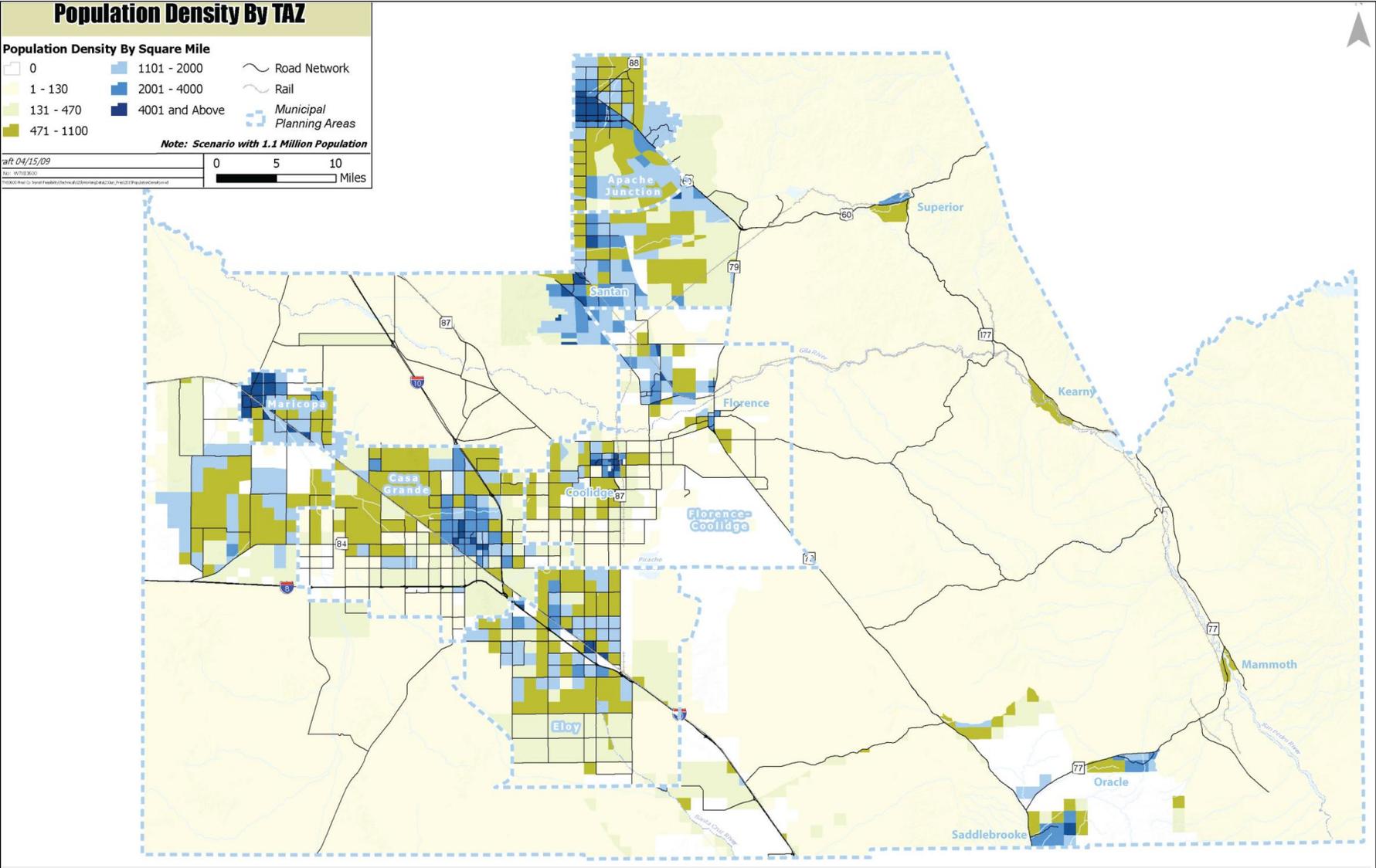
- In the north along the southeastern border of Maricopa County. This growth will be centered in Apache Junction, San Tan Valley, and Florence, with large amounts of infill development between Apache Junction and San Tan Valley and between San Tan Valley and Florence.
- Along I-10 in Casa Grande and Eloy with infill development beginning to occur between the two.
- In Maricopa, where geographical limitations set by the Indian community boundaries will lead to more dense development than in much of the rest of the county.
- South of the Ak-Chin Indian Community and west of Casa Grande, where in effect, Casa Grande will spread westward.

Employment is expected to closely follow the growth of population. By 2025, Casa Grande will become the county's primary employment center, followed by Apache Junction, Eloy, Florence,

<sup>3</sup> The more recent Pinal County Projections Study indicate that employment growth will lag population growth for longer than previously believed, and that in 2025, rather than one job for every three residents, there will be only one job for every four to five residents. In this case, the travel flows presented herein may overstate internal travel flows and understate external travel flows (primarily to and from Maricopa County).



Figure 4-2: 2025 Population Density



Note: The Municipal Planning Areas are the same as those used in the RSRSM Study.



and Coolidge (see Figure 4-3). No large new employment areas are expected to develop in the eastern part of the county.

## **FUTURE TRAVEL PATTERNS**

Growth in population and employment will increase travel volumes and travel patterns.<sup>4</sup> Currently, the largest volumes of travel are between Pinal County and Maricopa County. The majority of these are from Apache Junction (99,000 trips per day), followed by Maricopa (32,000), Florence/San Tan Valley (25,000), and Casa Grande (17,000). The largest number of trips between areas within Pinal County are much smaller: 15,000 from Eloy to Casa Grande, 14,000 from Maricopa to Casa Grande, 14,000 from Florence to Coolidge, and 10,000 from Coolidge to Casa Grande. In addition, approximately 16,000 trips are made from the Oracle area to Pima County.

### **Regional Trips for All Trip Purposes**

Through 2025, the highest travel flows for all trip types will continue to be to and from Maricopa County. However, travel flows within the county will grow faster than travel flows to neighboring counties, and thus will comprise a much greater proportion of total trips. For all trip purposes, the most significant travel flows will be as follows (see also Figure 4-4):

- The largest flows between any two areas will be between Apache Junction and Maricopa County. Apache Junction is already more linked to Maricopa County than the rest of Pinal County, and this is likely to continue. However, one significant difference is that where Apache Junction to Maricopa County trips now outweigh Maricopa County to Apache Junction trips nearly two to one, the ratio will fall to approximately four to three. As a result, where the greatest transit demand is currently for Apache Junction to Maricopa County service, in the future there will be a need for bi-directional service.
- The amount of travel between Maricopa and Maricopa County will more than double from 32,000 trips per day to 76,000. However, the amount of travel from Maricopa to Casa Grande will more than quintuple and be as high as to Maricopa County.
- The amount of travel between Florence/San Tan Valley and Maricopa County will more than triple from 25,000 trips per day to 83,000. However, the amount of travel from Maricopa County to Florence/San Tan Valley will increase to a greater extent, from less than 10,000 trips per day to 41,000.
- The amount of travel between Casa Grande and Maricopa County will also increase significantly, from 17,000 trips per day to 52,000. However, unlike with communities farther to the north, there will not be a significant amount of travel from Maricopa County to Casa Grande.
- Within Pinal County, the largest travel flows will be to Casa Grande and Eloy. The largest volumes of trips to Casa Grande, as previously mentioned, will be from Maricopa (76,000 trip per day). In addition, there will be 56,000 trips from Eloy. The largest volumes of trips to Eloy will be from Casa Grande (64,000) and Coolidge (29,000).
- Travel from the Oracle area to Pima County will also increase significantly and will nearly quadruple from 16,000 trips per day to 63,000.

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<sup>4</sup> The information presented in this section was developed using the Pinal County transportation model developed for the RSRSM study. That model divides Pinal County into 15 “districts” that, for the most part, represent the various major county jurisdictions.



Figure 4-3: 2025 Employment Density

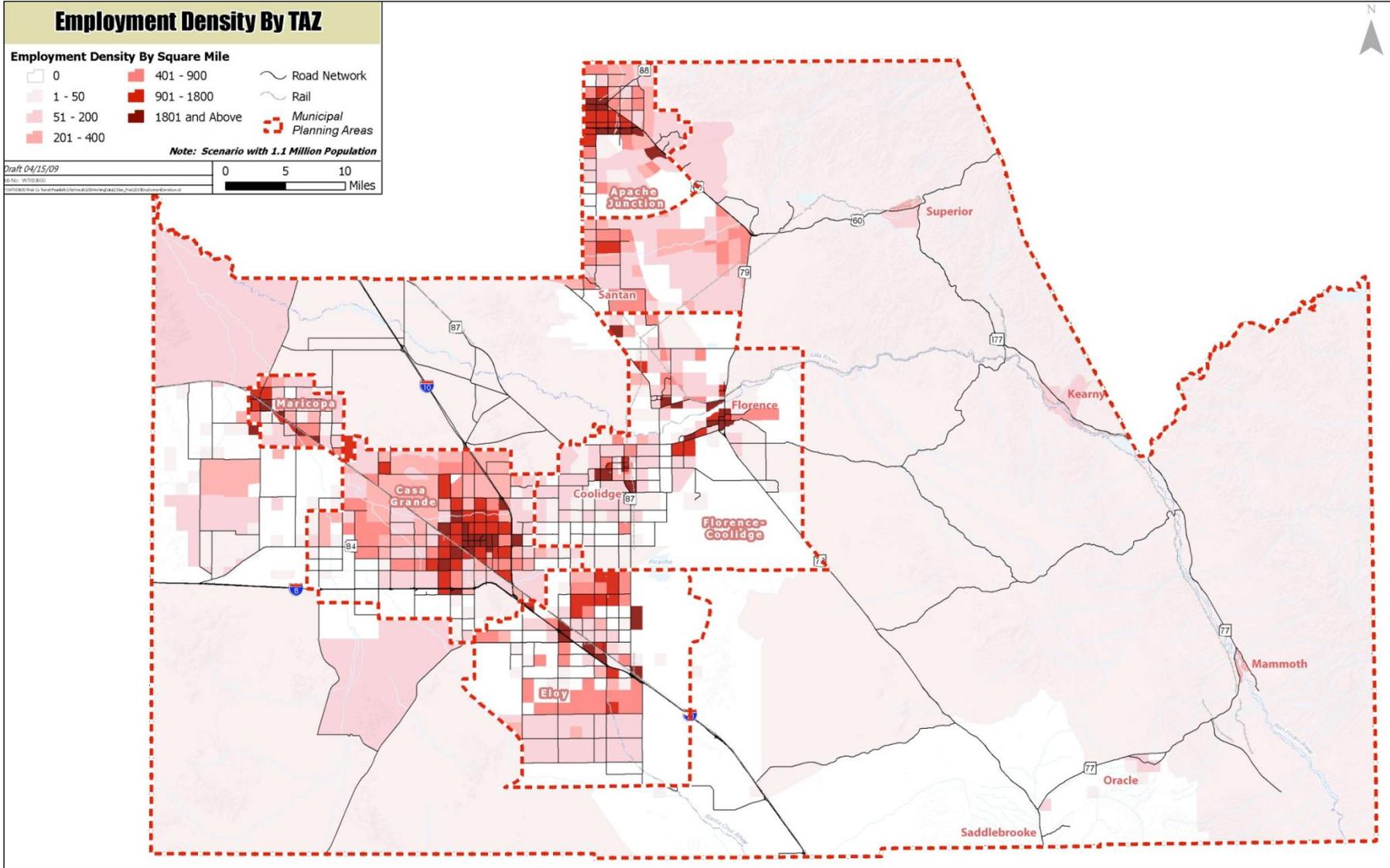
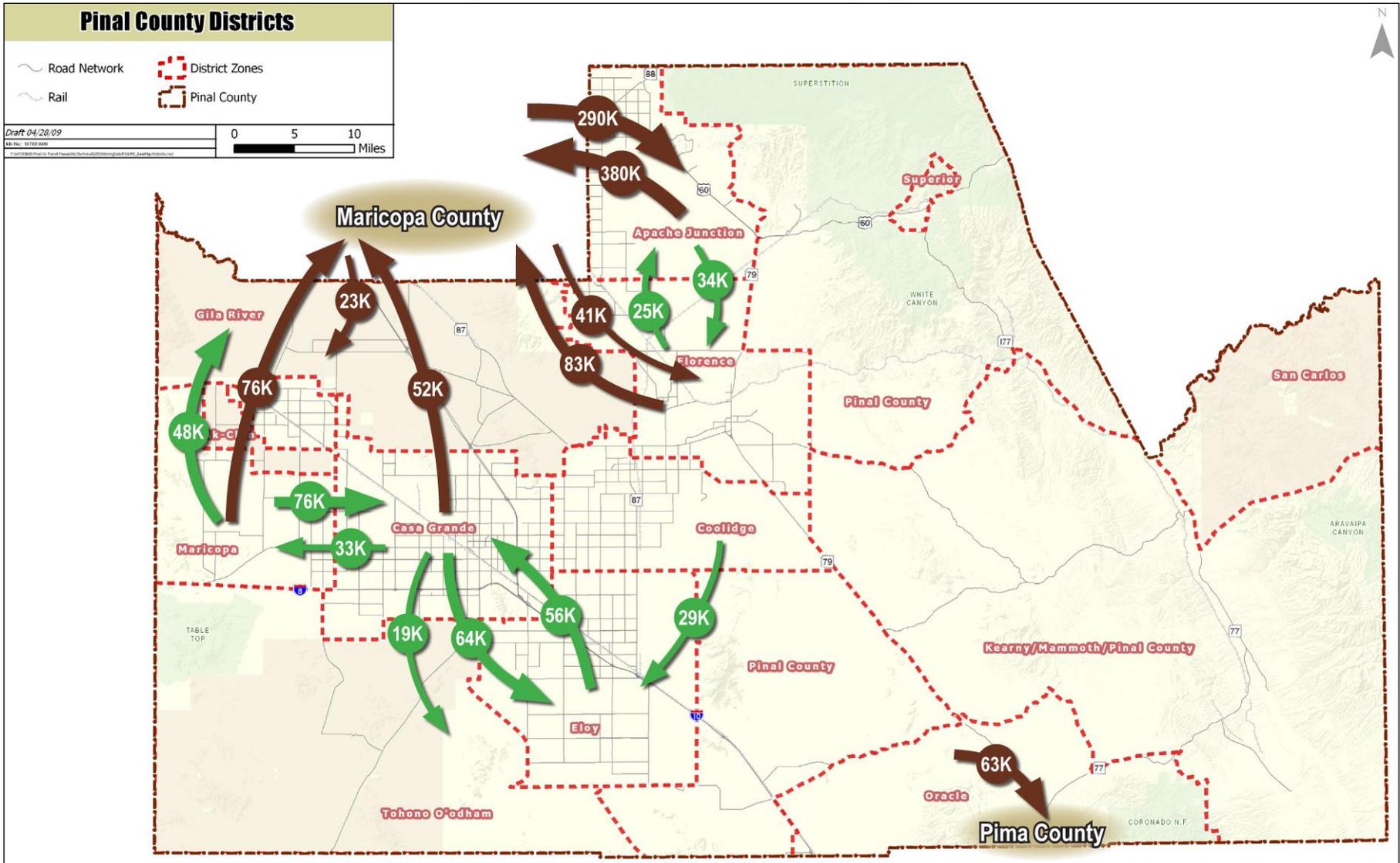


Figure 4-4: 2025 Travel Flows: All Trip Types





With relatively little growth expected in the eastern part of the county, travel volumes will remain relatively low, within the eastern part of the county, between the communities, and to and from other western parts of Pinal County and adjoining counties.

### **Regional Work Trips**

Work trips are a particularly important source of transit trips. Currently, the largest work trip volumes are to Maricopa County: 20,000 per day from Apache Junction and 10,000 from Maricopa. The largest work trip flows within Pinal County are to Casa Grande: 10,000 per day from Maricopa (which is the same level as to Maricopa County) and 8,000 per day from Eloy.

As with all trip types through 2025, the highest travel flows for work trips will continue to be to and from Maricopa County. However, work trip travel flows within the county will grow faster than travel flows to neighboring counties, and will thus comprise a much greater proportion of total trips. For work trips, the most significant travel flows will be (see also Figure 4-5):

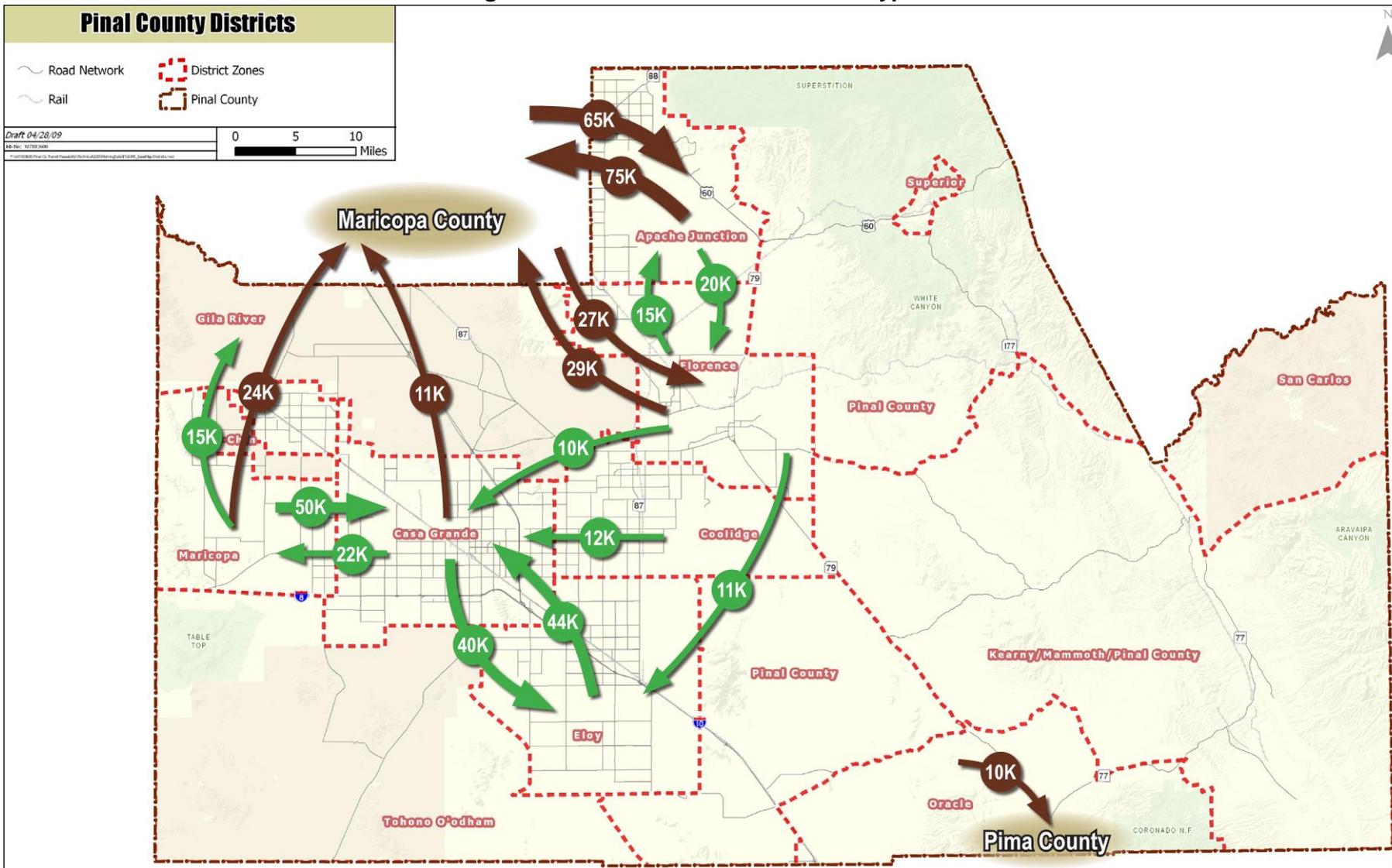
- The largest work trip flows between any two areas will be between Apache Junction and Maricopa County, and these volumes will grow significantly. Work trips from Apache Junction to Maricopa County will nearly quadruple, while trips from Maricopa County to Apache Junction will increase over eight-fold. With continued growth in Apache Junction, trips in the two directions will become nearly balanced at 75,000 from Apache Junction to Maricopa County and 65,000 from Maricopa County to Apache Junction.
- The amount of travel between Florence/San Tan Valley and Maricopa County will increase to 29,000 and will represent the second highest volume of trips to Maricopa County. In addition, the amount of travel from Maricopa County to Florence/San Tan Valley will increase to almost the same level.
- The amount of work trip travel between Maricopa and Maricopa County will more than double from 10,000 trips per day to 24,000. The amount of travel from Maricopa to Casa Grande will quintuple and will be twice as high as to Maricopa County (50,000).
- The amount of work travel between Casa Grande and Maricopa County will increase from 5,000 trips per day to 11,000. However, as with all trip types, there will not be a significant amount of travel from Maricopa County to Casa Grande.
- Within Pinal County, the largest travel flows will be to Casa Grande and Eloy. The largest volumes of trips to Casa Grande will be from Maricopa (50,000 trips per day) and Eloy (44,000). The largest volumes of trips to Eloy will be from Casa Grande (40,000) and Florence (11,000). There will also be significant bi-direction work trip flows from Apache Junction to Florence (20,000 trips) and in the reverse direction (15,000).
- Travel from the Oracle area to Pima County will increase significantly, to 10,000 trips per day.

### **Local Trips**

In addition to regional trips, a large number of trips are made locally, which for these purposes, are defined as trips made within the same planning district. Local trip volumes are much larger than regional trip volumes, but are also typically more difficult to serve with transit because they are shorter and more dispersed (even though they are made within a smaller area). As shown in Table 4-2, for all trip types, the largest volumes of local trips will be within Casa Grande (675,000 trips), followed by Eloy (426,000), Florence (269,000), Maricopa (239,000), and Apache Junction (228,000).



Figure 4-5: 2025 Travel Flows: Work Types





**Table 4-2: Pinal County Intra-District Travel Forecasts**

District	2025	
	Work Trips	All Trips
Ak-Chin	11	163
Apache Junction	35,939	228,237
Casa Grande	83,988	674,695
Coolidge	1,131	66,505
Eloy	41,918	426,406
Florence	20,106	268,744
Gila River	562	40,829
Kearny/Mammoth	6,455	41,398
Maricopa	37,783	238,795
Oracle	3,321	5,201
Pinal County	646	11,260
Pinal County	216	1,296
San Carlos	89	902
Superior	222	4,044
Tohono-O'odham	476	27,820
<b>Totals</b>	<b>232,877</b>	<b>2,036,429</b>

Local work trip volumes will be highest within Casa Grande, at 84,000, and approximately twice as high as in any other area. The next highest volumes will be within Eloy (42,000), Maricopa (38,000), Apache Junction (36,000), and Florence (20,000). Local travel volumes in other areas of the county will remain low.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR TRANSIT SERVICE**

At the present time, due to a combination of small population and employment bases located across a large area, the overall demand for transit service is low. However, as the county grows, travel volumes will increase significantly, and transit demand will grow:

**Apache Junction**

There is already significant demand for transit from Apache Junction to Maricopa County, and over the next 15 years, work trip travel volumes will quadruple. In addition, work trip travel volumes from Maricopa County to Apache Junction will grow to almost as high as from Apache Junction to Maricopa County. Potential transit improvement includes the extension of Valley Metro services across the county line into Apache Junction to provide connections to and from the Phoenix area, and/or dedicated services between Apache Junction and Maricopa County. There will also likely be demand for service between Apache Junction and Florence.

**Florence/San Tan Valley**

In Florence, county government and the prisons draw a large number of workers from throughout the county, and these volumes are projected to increase significantly. These flows could certainly support the development of a stronger vanpool program, and by 2025, potentially the development of commuter-oriented bus services.



Travel volumes between San Tan Valley and Maricopa County will continue to grow, and as is the case with Apache Junction, potential transit improvement would include the extension of Valley Metro services across the county line to San Tan Valley. Dedicated services between San Tan Valley and Maricopa County could be supported as well.

### **Maricopa**

In Maricopa, both population and employment densities will increase, as will volumes of travel between Maricopa and Maricopa County, Maricopa and Casa Grande, and within Maricopa. There is the potential to expand existing Maricopa Xpress service to Maricopa County and to develop new regional services to Casa Grande and local service within Maricopa.

### **Coolidge**

Although Coolidge will continue to grow, growth is not expected to the same extent as in other communities, and Coolidge is expected to remain relatively small through 2025. As Coolidge grows, it should be possible to expand the Cotton Express to new areas. Also, travel to Casa Grande will increase significantly, and CAC is a large activity center located between the developed parts of the two cities. As a result, regional service between Coolidge and Casa Grande via CAC should be feasible.

### **Casa Grande**

Casa Grande, already Pinal County's largest city, will strengthen its position as Pinal County's major commercial center as it grows. Travel volumes to and from Casa Grande will be larger than between the other two areas with the exception of Apache Junction and Maricopa County. With this growth, there will likely be sufficient demand to support local transit service, as well as regional connections to Maricopa and Eloy. There may also be sufficient demand to support regional services to Coolidge and Florence, and express service to Maricopa County.

### **Eloy**

Eloy is projected to be Pinal County's fastest growing community, and by 2025, will be nearly as populous as Casa Grande. With this growth, there will likely be sufficient demand to support local transit service as well as regional connections to Casa Grande and Florence.

### **Saddlebrooke/Oracle**

Expected growth in the Saddlebrooke/Oracle area will increase travel volumes to Pima County to similar levels as at present between Maricopa and Maricopa County. As a result, the development of new commuter services to Tucson could be feasible.

### **Other Eastern Communities**

A large amount of growth is not expected in the communities located in the eastern half of Pinal County. As a result, the greatest transit needs in the eastern communities will likely continue to be as at present, which will be to provide "lifeline" services to the area's neediest residents—for shopping and medical and other similar types of trips. The greatest opportunities to provide for these needs will likely be through the development of volunteer driver programs, and part-time regularly scheduled services (for example, one or two days a week to shopping centers, medical facilities, and social service agencies).





# Chapter 5 Existing Transit Services

At the present time, transit service in Pinal County is limited. There are no county-wide services, and most available services are for senior and disabled residents. Public transit exceptions are limited to Cotton Express service in Coolidge and the new Maricopa Xpress services between Maricopa, Phoenix, and Tempe.

This chapter describes the public transportation services that do exist, and since most services are locally-based, the description is by geographic area.

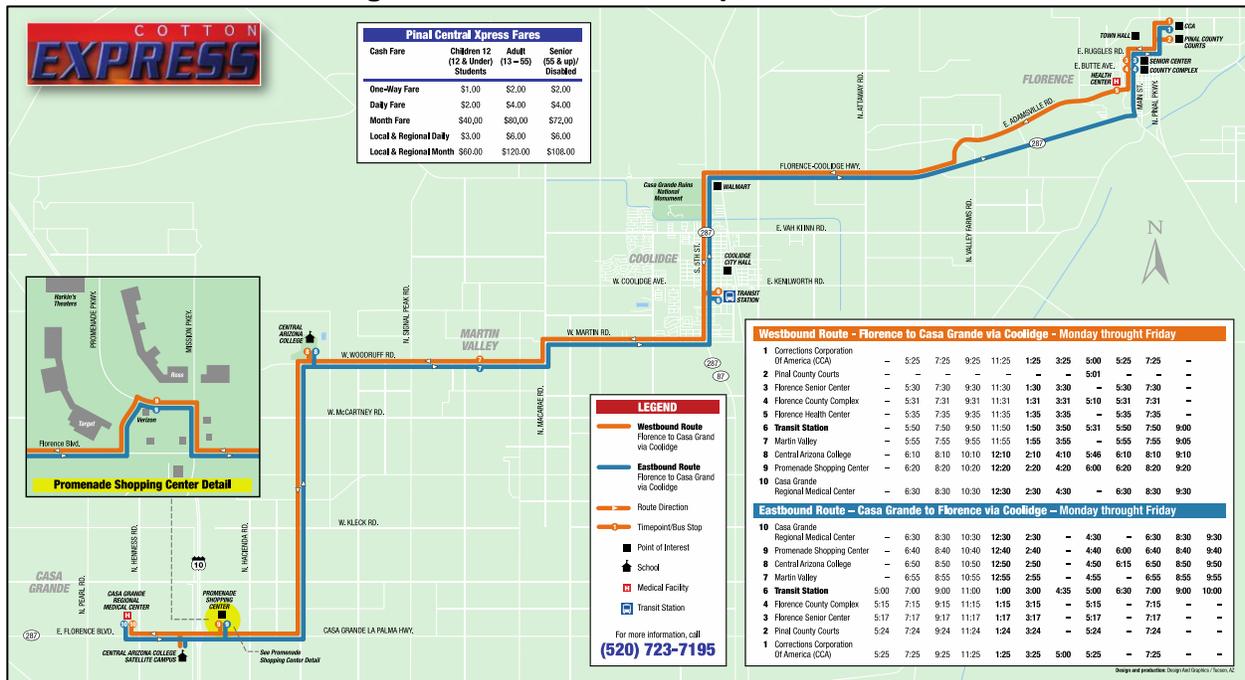
## REGIONAL SERVICES WITHIN PINAL COUNTY

Currently, there is only regional public transportation route within Pinal County that is available to the general public, and only two limited services for elderly and disabled riders:

### Pinal Central Express

In 2010, Coolidge’s Cotton Express, working with the City of Florence implemented Pinal Central Express service that operates between Florence and Case Grande via Coolidge and Central Arizona College (CAC) (see Figure 5-1). This service is designed to serve shopping and medical trips to and from Casa Grande and service operates on weekdays from 5:00 AM to

Figure 5-1: Pinal Central Express Service





10:00 PM, with service approximately every 120 minutes. One-way fares are \$2 for adults and seniors, and \$1 for children.

### **On-the-Go Express**

The Pinal County Department of Public Health operates On-the-Go Express service in the eastern half of the county that transports older adults aged 60 and over and persons with disabilities to medical appointments and shopping in Pinal County. The service will also pick up and deliver prescriptions. The suggested donation for services is \$2, and it operates Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM until 5:00 PM. The service provides about 1,900 rides per year.

### **Pinal Rides**

Pinal Rides is a pilot program that is operated by the Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens (PGCSC) that provides one day a week service on two regional routes designed primarily to transport residents of outlying communities to medical appointments in Casa Grande. The two routes are:

- Tuesdays: Florence – Coolidge – Casa Grande
- Wednesdays: Arizona City – Eloy – Toltec – Casa Grande

Service is provided primarily for seniors and usually for medical purposes. However, on a space available basis, Pinal Rides will also transport other (non-senior) riders and those making non-medical trips. For senior riders, there is a suggested donation of \$3 per one-way or round trip, and for non-senior riders there is a charge of \$3 per one-way or round trip. Trips must be booked in advance at least 24 hours in advance, and medical trips are served on a first-come, first-served basis.

### **PGCSC Senior Van Service**

PGCSC's senior van service primarily provides rides to and from senior centers in Apache Junction, Hayden, Coolidge, Casa Grande, Eloy, and Superior. However, limited transportation is also provided for medical and shopping trips. Service availability, fees, and donations vary by location.

### **APACHE JUNCTION AND VICINITY**

At the present time, no public transit service for the general public is available in Apache Junction. However, many residents can access Valley Metro services in neighboring Mesa for trips to and from Maricopa County. For seniors and disabled residents, East Valley Senior Services provides taxi subsidies, transportation for medical and shopping trips, and administers an innovative volunteer driver program.

### **General Public Transit Services**

As stated above, there are no public transit services that are available to the general public that operate within Apache Junction. However, Valley Metro's Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot is located six miles to the west of Apache Junction at the Superstition Springs Center mall (which is located at the intersection of Power Road and the Superstition Freeway in Mesa). Six



Valley Metro local routes operate out of the Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot (see Figure 5-1).

- Metrolink, which operates between Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot and the Mesa end of Valley Metro's new light rail line.
- Route 30 University Drive, which operates between Mesa and Tempe, generally along University Drive.
- Route 40 Apache Boulevard/Main Street, which operates between the park and ride lot and Sky Harbor Airport along Apache Boulevard and Main Street.
- Route 45 Broadway Road, which operates between the park and ride lot and Phoenix along Broadway Road.
- Route 61 Southern Avenue, which operates between the park and ride lot and Phoenix along Southern Avenue.
- Route 108 Elliot Road, which operates between Mesa and Tempe, largely along Elliot Road.

In addition, four express routes serve the area:

- Route 532 Mesa – Downtown Phoenix via McKellips Road
- Route 533 Mesa – Downtown Phoenix via Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot
- Route 535 Northeast Mesa – Downtown Phoenix
- Route 536 Northeast Mesa – Tempe/ASU

One option for providing transit service between Apache Junction and Maricopa County, and within Apache Junction, would be to extend one or more of these routes to Apache Junction, or to implement a new route that would operate between Apache Junction and the Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot.

### **Services for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities**

East Valley Senior Services (EVSS) operates three human service transportation programs that are funded by the City of Apache Junction. These include Ride Choice, Coupons for Cabs, and van service.

#### **Apache Junction Ride Choice**

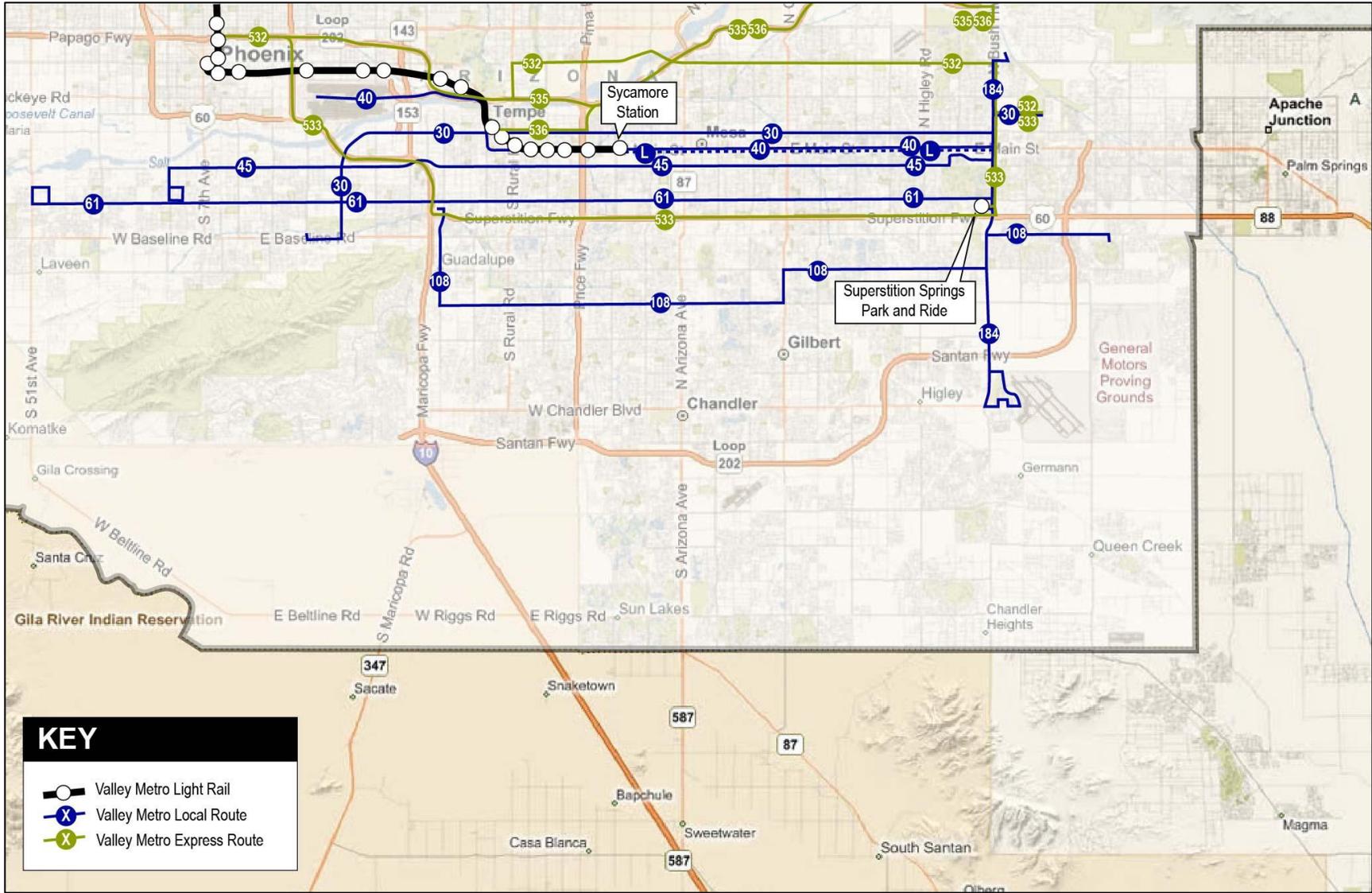
EVSS administers Apache Junction Ride Choice, which is a volunteer driver program. Through this program, older adults (aged 60+) and persons with disabilities can get a mileage reimbursement for a person who drives them. Qualifying residents who do not own or operate a car arrange for a driver of their choosing, and the program reimburses the drivers on a per mile basis (currently 44 cents per mile). Most passengers can claim up to 300 miles per month; the reimbursement is provided directly to the passenger, who is then obligated to pass it on to the driver, on a monthly basis.

#### **Apache Junction Coupons for Cabs**

EVSS also offers a program called Coupons for Cabs. The program offers persons aged 60 and over and persons with a disability coupon book containing 10 tickets worth \$1 of cab fare each



Figure 5-2: Valley Metro Service that Serve Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot



for the price of \$2.50 (i.e. a 75% discount). Most eligible clients can purchase up to \$100 worth of the tickets per month.

### Shopping & Medical Transportation

EVSS also provides additional transportation for shopping and medical trips:

- On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday mornings, EVSS transports clients to medical appointments for certain areas and purposes: Mondays in Gold Canyon, Wednesdays for blood draws and tests in Apache Junction, and Fridays near Power Road. Medical transportation must be booked one day in advance. The fare for persons with disabilities under age 60 is \$2.00, and the suggested donation for persons aged 60 and over is \$2.00.
- On Monday, Wednesday, and Friday afternoon, EVSS transports clients in the Apache Junction area to medical appointments.
- On Tuesdays and Thursday, EVSS transports clients to grocery stores for a two hour shopping period.

### SAN TAN VALLEY

Although San Tan Valley is now Pinal County's largest community, there are no public transit services available to the general public or to seniors or disabled residents.

### MARICOPA

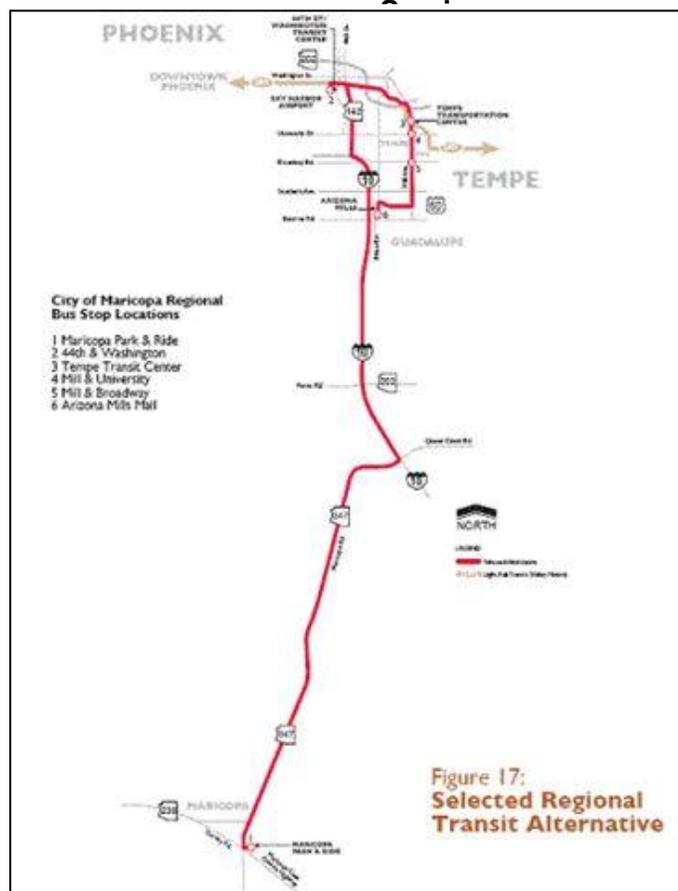
In April 2008, the City of Maricopa instituted Maricopa Xpress express bus service between Maricopa, Phoenix, and Tempe, and in 2010, implemented "Comet" local circulator service.

### General Public Transit Services

#### Maricopa Xpress

Maricopa Xpress was implemented in April 2008 to provide commuter service between Maricopa, Phoenix, and Tempe. Initially, two routes were provided: one to Phoenix and a second to Tempe. However, due to economic conditions, these two routes have since been consolidated to a single route that serves both Phoenix and Tempe, with connections to Maricopa County's Valley Metro Rail light rail line (see Figure 5-3).

**Figure 5-3: Maricopa Xpress**



**Figure 17: Selected Regional Transit Alternative**

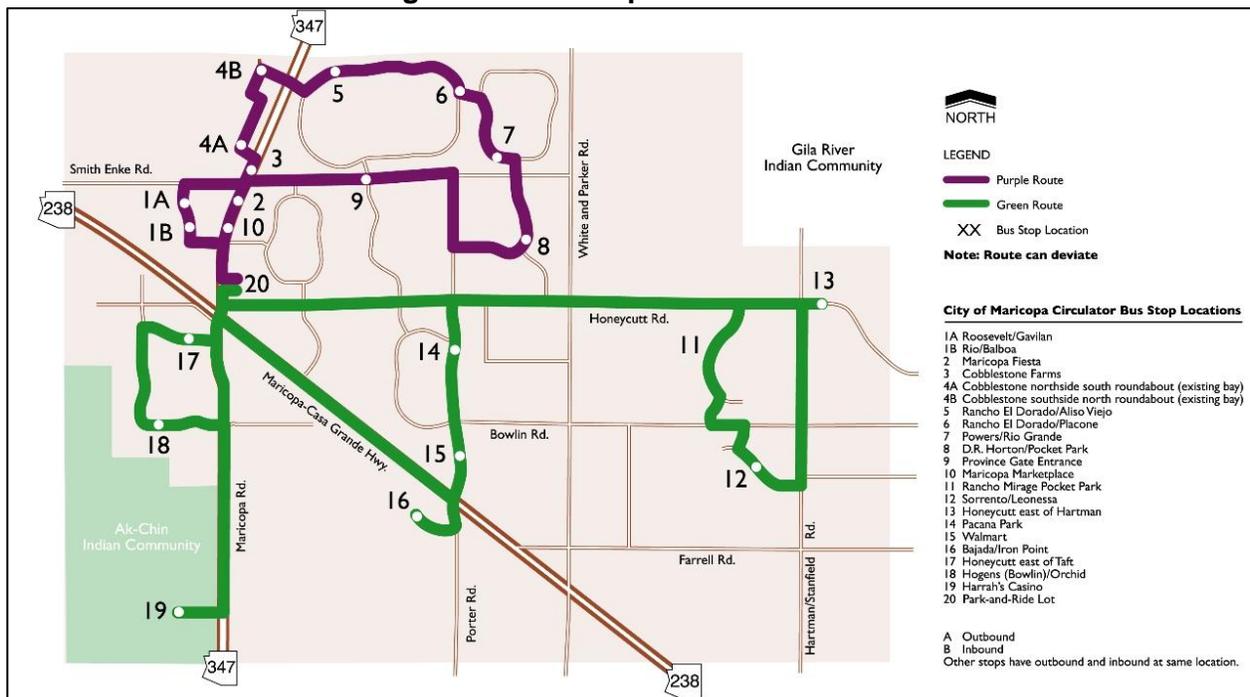
The current consolidated route provides two round trips per weekday and operates from the Maricopa Park and Ride Lot and at the Phoenix/Tempe end operates in a loop via Phoenix and Tempe. The loop operates clockwise in the morning and counter-clockwise in the afternoon. The two morning trips begin at 5:35 AM and 6:25 AM and each take about 50 minutes to Phoenix and 90 minutes around entire loop through Tempe. The two evening trips depart Tempe at 4:29 PM and 5:29 PM and arrive in Maricopa at 6:00 PM and 7:00 PM, respectively.

The regular adult one-way fare is \$3, the senior fare is \$2 (aged 60 and up), and children aged five and under ride for free. Monthly passes are available for \$120 (\$80 for seniors), 10-ride ticket books are available for \$30 (\$20 for seniors), and 20-ride books for \$60 (\$40 for seniors), respectively.

**Comet**

Maricopa implemented Comet local circulator service in October, 2010. This circulator service consists of two route: a Purple Route and a Green Route (see Figure 5-4). The route serves Maricopa Fiesta, Cobblestone Farms, Rancho El Dorado, Province, Maricopa Marketplace, Pacana Park, Walmart, Harrah's Casino and the City's Park-and-Ride Lot, and other locations. Each route provides three round trips per weekday, with all trips provided during the midday. Comet service is currently free.

**Figure 5-4: Maricopa Comet Service**



**FLORENCE**

There are currently no transit services available in Florence for the general public. However, as described above, Pinal Rides provides one day a week service between Florence and Casa



Grande via Coolidge that primarily serves medical trips for seniors, but will serve younger riders and other trip purposes on a space available basis. In addition, the Dorothy Nolan Senior Center provides service to seniors.

### **Services for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities**

#### **Dorothy Nolan Senior Center**

The City of Florence, through the Dorothy Nolan Senior Center, operates a shuttle service for older adults aged 60 and over that is available for daily errands with pickups from 9:00 AM until 11:30 AM Monday through Friday. In addition there is a once a week trip to Coolidge (on Mondays), and a trip once every other month to the Superstition Mall in Mesa. Registration must be made in advance, and the fare is 50¢ for regular trips and \$1 for the Coolidge shopping trip.

### **COOLIDGE**

Coolidge is the only community in Pinal County that provides local transit service to the general public. The city also provides dial-a-ride service for older adults and persons with disabilities.

### **General Public Transit Services**

#### **Cotton Express**

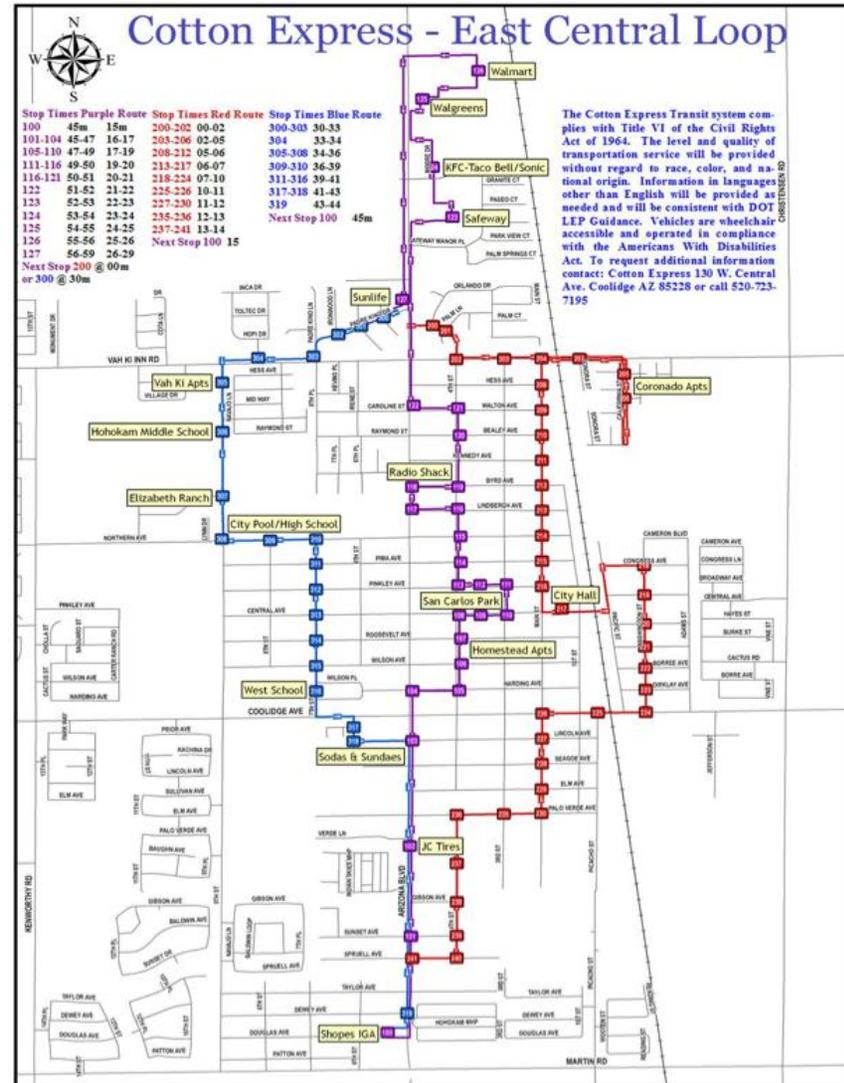
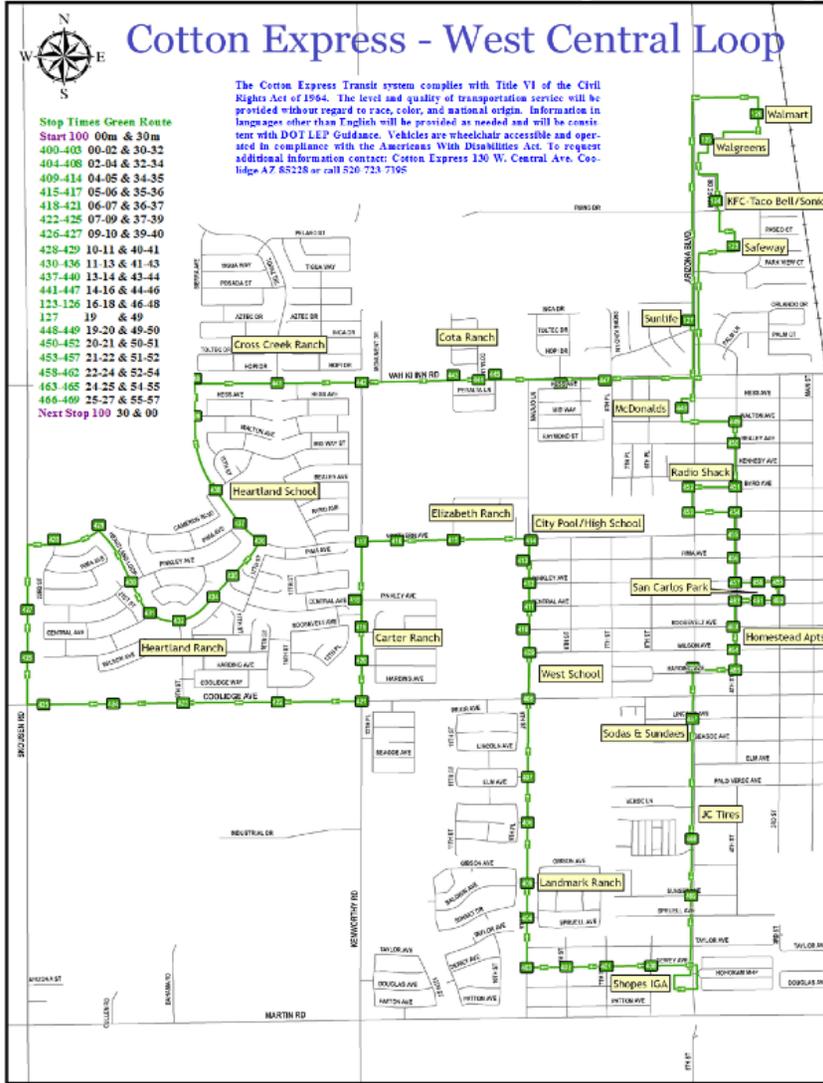
The City of Coolidge operates Cotton Express service that provides service on four bus routes that operate on weekdays from 7:30 AM to 5:30 PM and that are identified by colors (see **Figure**):

- The Green Loop operates every 30 minutes and begins at Shope's IGA and travels clockwise primarily on Dewey Avenue, 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Northern Avenue, Kenworthy Road, Coolidge Avenue, Skousen Road, Heartland Loop, Vah Ki Inn Road, and Arizona Boulevard, then serves the regional shopping area northward to Walmart. The route then turns south toward the Shope's IGA primarily via Arizona Boulevard and 4<sup>th</sup> Street.
- The Red, Purple, and Blue routes all operate in the downtown area and complement each other on a north-south axis. The purple route travels northward from Shope's IGA along the same alignment as the Green Loop (but in reverse since the Green Loop only travels south along this path). After it passes through the regional shopping area and heads south again, the route travels south as either the Blue Route (beginning around Padre Kino Drive) or the Red Route (beginning around N. 4<sup>th</sup> Street). The Blue Route travels south primarily along Padre Kino Drive, Vah Ki Inn Road, 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Northern Avenue, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and Arizona Boulevard. The Red Route travels south primarily along Vah Ki Inn Road, Coronado Apartments, Main Street, Washington Street, Coolidge Avenue, and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. The purple route operates on a 30 minute headway and the Red and Blue Routes on 1 hour headways (half each of the Purple Route trips).

All routes provide route deviation service for older adults and passengers with disabilities. The fare for the deviated fixed-route services is \$1.25 per ride, 75¢ per ride for children aged 3-11, and free for children 2 and under.



Figure 5-5: Coolidge Cotton Express Service





In fiscal year 2005, the Cotton Express carried 23,000 passengers, up from 21,600 in the previous year. Since Coolidge schools do not operate bus service, 50% of Cotton Express' ridership is students.

### **Services for Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities**

As described above, Pinal Rides provides one day a week service between Florence and Casa Grande via Coolidge that primarily serves medical trips for seniors, but will serve younger riders and other trip purposes on a space available basis. In addition, the city provides local transportation for older residents and persons with disabilities.

### **Cotton Express Dial-A-Ride**

Residents aged 55 and over or with a disability that prevents them from walking two blocks to a bus stop can use the Cotton Express Dial-a-Ride (curb to curb) service. The service operates from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM Monday through Friday. The service answers immediately to calls (rides do not need to be pre-booked) but riders should allow one hour from the time of the call to get from their origin to their destination. Dial-a-Ride service costs \$1.50 per ride for all passengers.

### **CASA GRANDE AND VICINITY**

Casa Grande currently does not provide transit for the general public, but is examining the feasibility of a local circulator service. For seniors and disabled riders, the Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens (PGCSC) provides two different types of service.

### **General Public Transit Services**

As stated above, the City of Casa Grande currently does not provide any general public transit services. It has, however, recently conducted a study to evaluate the feasibility of a local circulator system that would operate within Casa Grande. As shown in Figure 5-6, one option would be a two loop system that would serve most of the older part of Casa Grande plus the new Promenade at Casa Grande Shopping Center. However, the implementation of this service is currently on hold due to economic conditions.

### **Services for the Older Adults and Persons with Disabilities**

The Pinal-Gila Council for Senior Citizens (PGCSC), which is the Area Agency on Aging for Pinal and Gila Counties, recently initiated two new transportation programs for seniors within Casa Grande, which are described below. In addition, the Pinal Rides service that was described above provides once-a-week transportation from Eloy and Arizona City to Casa Grande.

### **Volunteer Driver Program**

Similar to the Apache Junction Ride Choice program provided by Eastern Valley Senior Services, the PGCSC provides a volunteer driver mileage reimbursement for persons aged 60





### **Greyhound**

Greyhound Lines bus service operates four trips per day (two in each direction) between Phoenix and Tucson that stop in Casa Grande.

### **Douglas Shuttle**

Douglas Shuttle operates shuttle service between Douglas (on the Mexico border) and Phoenix that stops in Casa Grande three times a day.

### **Amtrak**

Two Amtrak lines run through Maricopa and provide limited service to Maricopa on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Sundays.

- Amtrak's Sunset Limited line operates between Los Angeles and Orlando. Eastbound service stops in Maricopa at approximately 11:00 PM, and westbound service stops at approximately 2:00 AM.
- The Sunset Eagle Line operates between Los Angeles and Chicago. Eastbound service stops in Maricopa at approximately 11:00 PM, and westbound service stops at approximately 2:30 AM.

Ridership on Amtrak from the Maricopa station has fluctuated somewhat over the past five years. In 2008, ridership was 8,288 passengers; this figure dropped in 2007 to 7,679 and by 2006 ridership had dropped to 4,713. However, since then ridership has since increased again to 5,655 in 2007 and 6,301 in 2008.





## Chapter 6 Transit Service Options

As previously discussed, Pinal County is a challenging area in which to provide effective transit service. In general, transit is most cost-effective when large volumes of passengers can be transported for short to moderate distances. Pinal County, by comparison, has a small population spread out over a very large area, which means that overall travel volumes are lower than in urbanized areas and many trip distances are very long.

This does not mean that transit is not needed, or that it cannot be provided effectively. However, it does mean that it must be designed in consideration of the well-defined markets, and that certain cost metrics will be higher than in more urbanized areas.

Over the longer term, as Pinal County grows, a better balance between residents and jobs will develop, which will mean that more people will both live and work in Pinal County. The growth, by itself, will increase the demand for transit, and as more residents commute to more jobs within Pinal County than to Maricopa County, average trip lengths should shorten. Both of these changes will mean that it will be possible to provide transit service more productively and more cost-effectively.

This chapter describes the different types of transit services that could be feasible in Pinal County, and presents service scenarios for short-term transit (over the next five years) and long term (2025) transit improvements. It also presents associated ridership, costs, and other impacts.

### TRANSIT SERVICE TYPES

Transit service can be provided in a variety of ways, ranging from rail to BRT to bus to paratransit to volunteer driver services, and for transit to be most effective, individual services must be designed to match market demand and the operating environment. The following sections describe different transit types that could be appropriate within, from, and to Pinal County.

#### Commuter Rail/Intercity Rail

Commuter and intercity rail services provide fast rail service in long high volume corridors. Service operates on exclusive rights-of-ways, often on rail lines that are owned by freight railroads. As the names imply, commuter rail service is oriented to serving commute trips,

**New Mexico RailRunner Commuter Rail**





and intercity service primarily serves intercity trips. However, many intercity services also serve commute trips.

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG) are now examining commuter rail service between northern Pinal County and Phoenix (as discussed further below). Such services could provide very high quality service between many areas of Pinal County and Maricopa County

### **Light Rail**

Light rail provides urban rail service that operates in a combination of exclusive rights-of-ways and mixed traffic. It is typically operated with one to three car trains and is designed to serve high volume corridors at moderate speeds.

In the Phoenix area, Valley Metro's new Valley Metro Rail "starter line" provides light rail between Phoenix and Tempe. Through 2030, a number of extensions are planned, including an extension to Mesa in 2016.

Projected population and employment densities and travel volumes in Pinal County through 2025 indicate that there will not be sufficient demand to support light rail within Pinal County. However, Valley Metro Rail, and especially the Mesa extension, could provide connections with services that operate to and from Pinal County.

### **Valley Metro Rail Light Rail Service**



### **Bus Rapid Transit**

Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) is an integrated system of transit measures that work together to make bus service similar to rail. These measures include:

- **Exclusive Bus Lanes**—either dedicated rights-of-ways, or reserved lanes on existing roads—allow buses to avoid the delays experienced in mixed-traffic operations.
- **Transit Priority Measures** such as signal priority and queue jump lanes speed buses through congested areas.
- **Special Vehicles** provide BRT service with a unique image that differentiates it from "regular" bus service.
- **BRT Stations and Shelters** provide similar features, amenities, and levels of passenger comfort as rail stations.
- **Pre-Paid Fare Collection** via either pre-paid passes or the sale of tickets from ticket vending machines at stations and stops reduces delays associated with on-board fare collection.
- **Real Time Passenger Information** informs passengers when buses will actually arrive or depart from stations, which reduces some of the uncertainty that is often associated with bus service.



- **Intelligent Transportation System Technologies** such as Automatic Vehicle Location, which can be used to maintain consistent spacings between buses and to keep them on schedule.

These measures work together to make service fast and reliable, to make it convenient and comfortable service, and to establish a strong image and identity for service—characteristics which are all associated with rail service.

**Kansas City MAX BRT**



**Express Bus**

Express bus service provides fast limited stop bus service that is typically designed to serve moderate to long distance commute trips to and from major employment areas. Express bus service often operates only during peak commuting periods, but in some high volume areas, can provide all day service.

**Maricopa Xpress**



Express bus service is provided in nearly all major urban areas, and typically operates from outlying areas. Valley Metro operates a large express network in Maricopa County, the City of Maricopa provides Maricopa Xpress express bus service between Maricopa, Phoenix, and Tempe. As Pinal County grows, travel volumes between Pinal County and Maricopa County will increase significantly, and the demand for express bus service will increase.

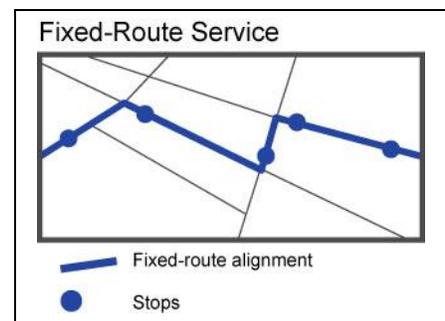
**Regional Bus Service**

Regional bus services provide connections between regional destinations, which for Pinal County would include destinations within the county as well as in Maricopa and Pima Counties. Regional routes often operate to and from transit centers, where connections can be made to local services. However, they can also provide their own local circulation at one or both ends, especially in areas where local circulator routes are not available.

Regional services can also operate as fixed-route service or as route-deviation service.

**Fixed-Route Service**

Fixed-route bus services operate along a fixed route at set times and headways. Services typically operate with designated stops or as a flag stop service, where riders “flag down” the bus at any safe location along the route.

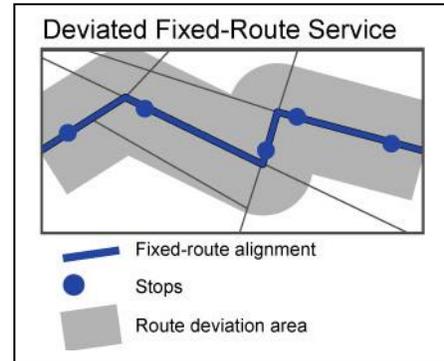




### Deviated Fixed-Route Service

Deviated fixed-route service is a variation of fixed-route service that deviates off of the fixed route to provide curbside service in certain locations. When there are no requests for the deviation, service operates in the same manner as standard fixed-route service.

In order to be dropped off of the normal route, riders simply request the service from the driver when they board the bus. For pick-ups, riders must call the transit system in advance with the location where they want to be picked-up, and the time or trip that they want to be picked-up by. Specific reservation procedures vary and are determined by the transit system based on factors such as policy, level and type of demand, and other factors.



Deviated fixed-route service is typically used in more rural areas to expand service coverage. Deviated fixed-route services are considered to be “demand-responsive” under ADA regulations. As a result, if deviated fixed-route service is provided, it is not also necessary to provide complimentary paratransit service.

Finally, regional routes can provide full-time or part-time service. In higher demand areas, they typically operate five to seven days a week and throughout the day. In lower volume areas (such as the eastern half of Pinal County), they can provide one or two day a week service to serve critical needs such as medical appointments and shopping trips.

### Local Bus Service

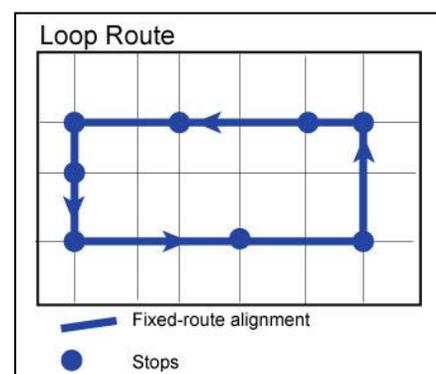
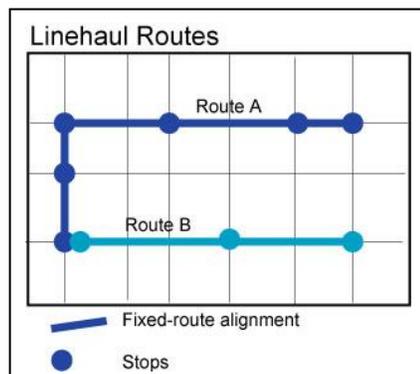
Local routes serve a variety of local activity centers and provide connections to regional services. As with regional services, local services can provide both fixed-route and route-deviation service.

Most fixed-route services operate as linehaul service, which means that the bus travels along the same alignment in both directions. This type of route generally provides the fastest service, as riders only ride the segment of the route between their origin and destination in both directions.

In low density areas and in areas where development is concentrated into a small area, routes also often operate as loops. One-way loop routes allow transit systems to provide greater service coverage with fewer vehicles.

However, service is less convenient for riders as

round trips require a trip around the full loop, rather than just the segment between the rider’s





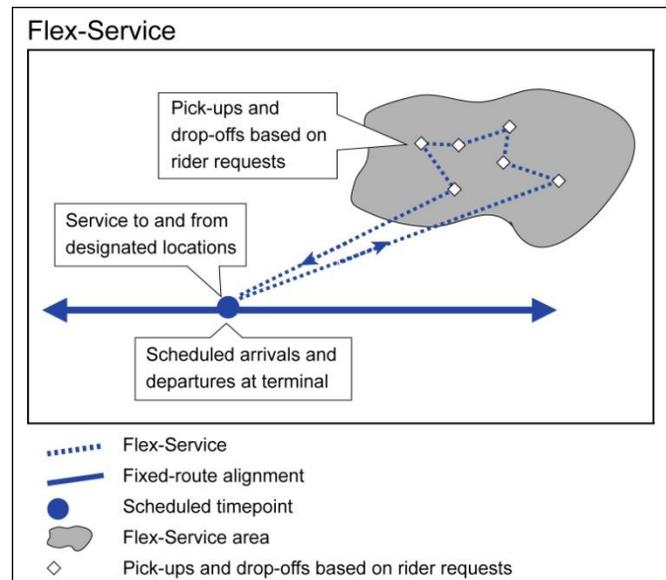
origin and destination. Coolidge's Cotton Express currently operates as loop service, and the service that is being considered for Casa Grande would also be loop service.

### **Flex Service**

Flex-Service is a hybrid of fixed-route service and demand responsive service. At one end, it operates on a fixed schedule to and from specific locations. At the other end, it operates within a designated flex-area along a variable route providing demand-responsive service. Flex routes provide a flexible way to expand service to areas where current population and employment densities or the road network make traditional fixed route service infeasible.

Flex routes serve a number of different types of trips, only some of which require reservations:

- For trips from scheduled departure points to the flex areas, riders do not need reservations. Riders board the Flex route in the same manner as a regular route, and upon boarding, tell the driver where they want to go. They are then dropped off at the curb in front of their destination.
- For trips from flex areas to terminal points, riders would need to make reservations to be picked up directly at the curb in front of their origin. They call the transit office and schedule the trip based on their desired arrival time.
- For trips entirely within flex areas, riders make reservations for curb-to-curb service.



Flex services are also considered to be “demand-responsive” under ADA regulations; as a result, complementary paratransit services are not necessary.

### **Volunteer Driver Service**

Volunteer Driver programs use “volunteer” drivers who use their own vehicles to provide transportation to targeted individuals. The volunteer drivers are not paid an hourly wage or a salary, but are usually reimbursed a mileage rate (typically the IRS rate), which in many cases exceeds the driver’s actual cost to provide the service and thus does provide some income.

Volunteer driver programs are usually provided to targeted populations such as the elderly and disabled (as is the case with the existing programs in Apache Junction and Casa Grande). However, they can also be provided for the general public. These types of programs can be much more cost-effective than traditional transit, especially in sparsely populated areas such as the eastern half of Pinal County.

Volunteer Driver programs can be administered in a number of ways. Most often, the administering organization has a formal relationship with the volunteers, and:



- Conduct checks to ensure that the volunteers have a good driving record.
- Inspect vehicles to ensure that they are in good working condition.
- Match drivers with passengers and schedule trips.
- Reimburse the drivers for their mileage.

Pinal County's two volunteer driver programs work differently, however, and do not have a formal relationship with the drivers. Instead, they rely on passengers to find their own volunteer drivers (often friends and family), and then provide the mileage reimbursement to the passenger who is obligated to pass it on to the driver.

### **Vanpool**

Vanpools provide transportation to groups of approximately seven to 15 people between any two points at any times desired by the traveling group. They are generally best suited to commute travel to large employment sites (for example, the Florence County Complex and the prisons in Florence and Eloy).

Pinal County's Air Quality Department administers a county-wide vanpool program that encourages the county's employers to promote and subsidize vanpooling, assists with formation of vanpools, and subsidizes vanpools for county employees.

For the traditional transit modes described above, public agencies typically pay all of the costs to purchase or lease vehicles and 70% or more of operating costs (the proportion that is not covered by fares). By contrast, subsidies for vanpool users are usually much lower. In Pinal County, vanpool users are charged the lease cost of the vehicle (approximately \$1,000 to \$1,400 per month depending upon mileage) plus fuel costs, and subsidies are at the discretion of individual employers. (Pinal County subsidizes the vehicle lease cost by 50% for its employees.)

### **POTENTIAL SHORT-TERM TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS**

Over the short-term (between now and 2015), as the economy recovers from recession, it is likely that growth will be much lower than throughout most of the 2000s. As such, potential short-term improvements would be designed to serve the county's current population and development patterns with only moderate growth. As described in the market analysis, the major travel flows over the short-term will be:

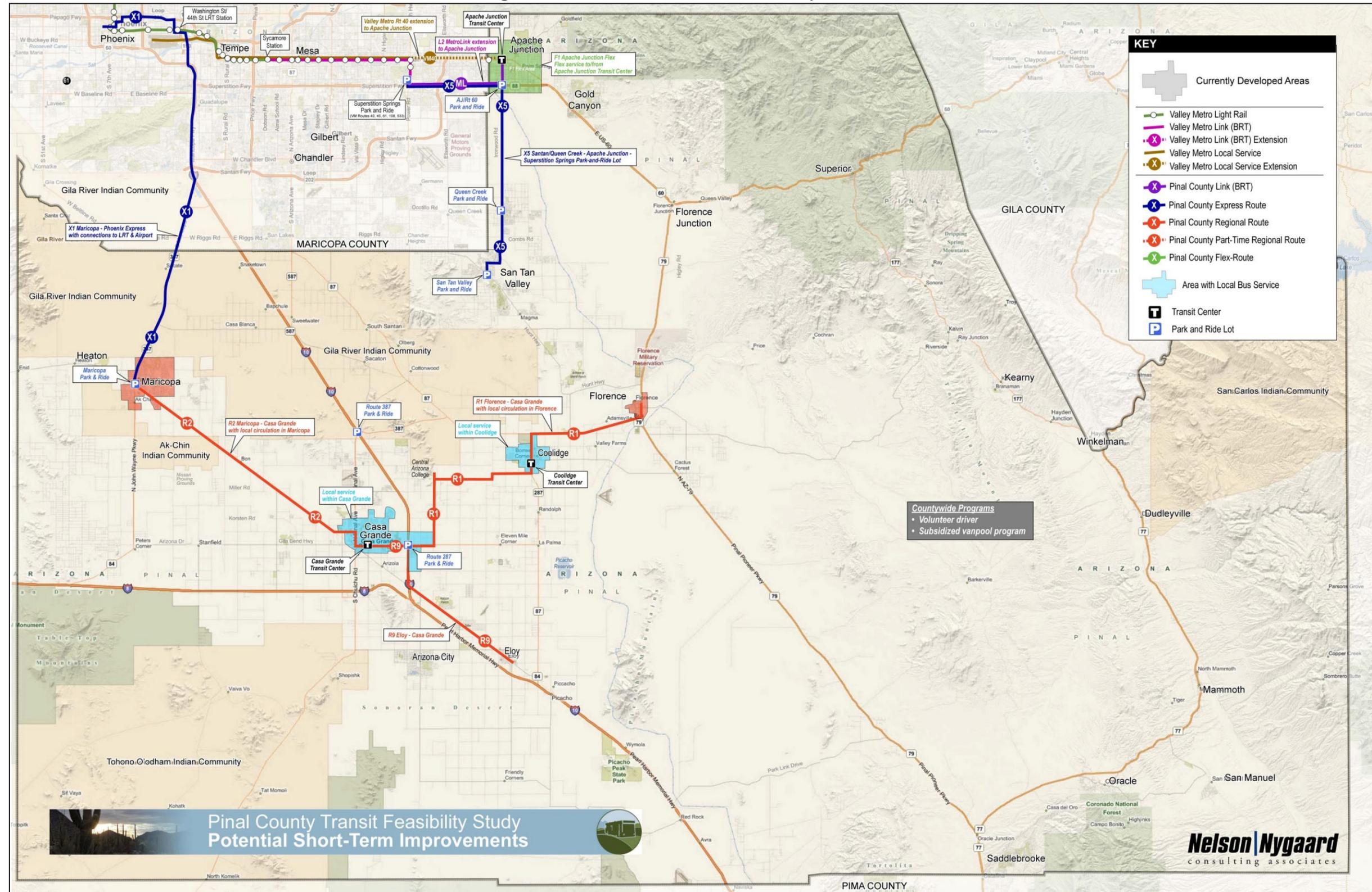
- Apache Junction, Maricopa, and Casa Grande to Maricopa County.
- Maricopa to Apache Junction.
- Eloy, Maricopa, and Coolidge to Casa Grande
- Florence to Coolidge

These trips could be served by a variety of transit services and facilities that is illustrated in Figure 6-1 and that would include:

- **Transit centers** at key locations around which transit services could be focused.
- **Park and ride** lots along key bus routes (that could also be used as staging areas for vanpools and carpools).



Figure 6-1: Potential Short-Term Transit Improvements



Pinal County Transit Feasibility Study  
Potential Short-Term Improvements



**Nelson Nygaard**  
consulting associates



- **Express service** from Maricopa, Casa Grande, San Tan Valley, and Apache Junction to downtown Phoenix with connections to light rail and Sky Harbor Airport.
- **Arterial BRT service** between Apache Junction and the end of the Valley Metro Rail Line in Tempe that would utilize the existing Valley Metro Link BRT corridor.
- **Regional routes** between Florence and Casa Grande via Coolidge and Central Arizona College, between Maricopa and Casa Grande, and part time service between Arizona City and Casa Grande via Eloy and Toltec.
- **Local service** within Apache Junction, Coolidge, and Casa Grande.
- A countywide **volunteer driver** program to provide service in areas that would not otherwise be served.
- An expanded **countywide vanpool** program.

### Transit Centers

Transit centers can provide a focal point for area services and provide a comfortable and attractive waiting environment for passengers. They are especially useful at locations where connections would be made between routes. They can also provide a focal point for transit-oriented-development (TOD).

In Pinal County, potential transit center locations would be:

- **Apache Junction**, near the intersection of Apache Trail and Ironwood Road. This location, which would have parking, could be a terminal for Arterial BRT service between Apache Junction and the end of Valley Metro Rail in Tempe, a stop on express bus service between San Tan Valley and Phoenix via Apache Junction, and a terminal point for local services.
- **Coolidge**, on Arizona Boulevard (which was recently completed). This transit center would be the focal point for local service within Coolidge, as well as a transfer point with regional service to Florence, Central Arizona College, and Casa Grande.
- **Casa Grande**, at a location near or along Florence Boulevard. This transit center would be a terminal point for express service to Phoenix, regional service to Maricopa, Central Arizona College, Coolidge, and Florence, and provide connections to local service.

#### Coolidge Transit Center



### Park and Ride Lots

Park and ride lots would provide parking for express bus riders and vanpool and carpool users. Potential park and ride locations would include:

- **Apache Junction**, at the intersection of Superstition Freeway/Route 60 and Ironwood Road, which would be served by Arterial BRT and express service.
- **Casa Grande**, near the intersection Route 287/Florence Boulevard and I-10. This lot would be served by express service to Phoenix.



- **Route 387** at the intersection of I-10. This lot would be served by express service between Casa Grande and Phoenix, and could be used by commuters from Coolidge and Florence.
- **Maricopa**, which would be served by express service to Phoenix, and regional service to Casa Grande.
- **San Tan Valley**, along Hunt Highway. This lot would be served by express service to Phoenix via the Apache Junction Transit Center.
- **Queen Creek**, along Ironwood Road. This lot would be served by express service to Phoenix via the Apache Junction Transit Center.

**Express Bus**

There is currently sufficient demand for express service to Maricopa County from Apache Junction, Maricopa, and San Tan Valley/Queen Creek. These markets could be served by two routes (see Figure 6-2):

**Figure 6-2: Potential Short Term Express Bus Changes**





- **X1 Maricopa – Phoenix Express:** This route would operate between the Maricopa Park and Ride Lot and downtown Phoenix via Route 347, I-10, Valley Metro Rail’s Washington Street/44<sup>th</sup> Street Station (where connections could be made to Valley Metro Rail and to Sky Harbor Airport) Loop 202 and I-10.
- **X5 San Tan Valley – Queen Creek – Apache Junction Park and Ride – Superstition Springs:** This route would operate between the San Tan Valley Park and Ride lot and operate via Hunt Highway to Village Lane to Skyline Drive to Charbray Drive to Empire Road to Gantzel Road to Ironwood Drive to the Apache Park and Ride Lot. From there, it would operate via Route 60/Superstition Freeway to the Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot where connections could be made to Arterial BRT and connecting express services to Mesa, Tempe, and Phoenix.

The express routes would provide three to four inbound trips in the morning and three to four outbound trips in the afternoon/evening. Each of these routes would operate to downtown Phoenix. Trips to Tempe (and other locations) would be served via a connection to Valley Metro Rail at the Washington Street/44th Street Station near Sky Harbor Airport.

**Arterial BRT**

In conjunction with Valley Metro Rail, RTPA also implemented Valley Metro Link arterial BRT service that links East Mesa with the light rail system. The Link operates between the end of the light rail line in Tempe and the Superstition Spring Park and Ride Lot in Mesa, largely along Main Street (see Figure 6-3). Service is provided with specially branded and equipped buses, and route serves only limited stops and employs transit signal priority for faster service.

**Figure 6-3: Valley Metro Link and Potential Apache Junction Arterial BRT Service**



In the same manner that Valley Metro Link links East Mesa with light rail, an Arterial BRT route could also be extended to link Apache Junction with light rail. Apache Junction service could operate between the Apache Junction Transit Center and Superstition Springs Park.

**Regional Routes**

As Casa Grande is becoming Pinal County’s major commercial center, regional routes would be focused on providing service to and from Casa Grande. In addition, these routes would provide service between other communities as they operate to and from Casa Grande, and through connections in Casa Grande:



- **R1 Florence – Casa Grande via Coolidge and Central Arizona College:** This route would provide local circulation in Florence and then operate to Casa Grande via Route 287/Florence-Coolidge Highway, and Route 287 Arizona Boulevard to the Coolidge Transit Center. From there it would operate back along Route 287/Arizona Boulevard to Martin Road, Macrae Road, Woodruff Road, and Overfield Road to Central Arizona College. From there it would operate back along Overfield Road to Route 287/Florence Boulevard via the Route 287 Park and Ride Lot to the Casa Grande Transit Center. Ideally, this route would operate every 60 minutes from early morning until early evening, but if demand is lower, could also operate every 120 minutes.
- **R2 Maricopa – Casa Grande:** This route would provide local circulation in Maricopa and then operate between the Maricopa Park and Ride Lot and the Casa Grande Transit Center along Route 238. Ideally, this route would operate every 60 minutes from early morning until early evening, but if demand is lower, could also operate every 120 minutes.
- **R9 Eloy – Casa Grande:** This route would provide local circulation in Eloy and then operate between Eloy and the Casa Grande Transit Center along Route 84 and I-10. Ideally, this route would operate every 60 minutes from early morning until early evening, but if demand is lower, could also operate every 120 minutes.

### **Local Service**

Local service is currently provided in Coolidge, but not in Casa Grande or Apache Junction, which are larger. Continued growth will warrant the development of new local services in Apache Junction and Casa Grande, and the expansion of Coolidge's service to new areas:

- **Apache Junction:** In Apache Junction, there is demand for greater connections to Maricopa County, and for service within Apache Junction. Connections to Maricopa County could be improved through Arterial BRT service (described above), and through an extension of Valley Metro's Route 40 Apache/Main Street route and the development of Flex Service:
  - Valley Metro's Route 40 Apache/Main Street currently operates between the Tempe Transportation Center and the Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot. This route could potentially be rerouted at its eastern end to continue along Main Street to Apache Trail to the Apache Junction Transit Center.
  - Within Apache Junction, where most development is low density and dispersed, Flex Service could be a more effective option than local fixed-route service. Flex service would serve the area bounded by Lost Dutchman Road to the north, Idaho Road to the east, Superstition Freeway to the south, and the city line to the west (which would be most of the community). Pick-ups and drop-offs would be made anywhere within the flex-area, and all service would operate to and from the Apache Junction Transit Center where connections could be made to express bus service to Phoenix and Arterial BRT service to Mesa and Tempe. Service would operate five to six days a week, every 60 to 120 minutes.
- **Casa Grande:** Local circulator service would also be developed in Casa Grande. This service could operate similar to the two-loop system presented in the city's transit study. It would also operate to and from the Casa Grande Transit Center where connections would be provided to express and regional routes.



- **Coolidge:** As at present, local circulator service would continue to be provided in Coolidge. Service coverage would be expanded as residential areas continue to be developed around the traditional downtown area.

### **Volunteer Driver Service**

For the lower densities areas of the county that would not be served by the fixed and flex-route services described above (for example, the eastern half of the county), a countywide volunteer driver program could be established. This program could be similar to the existing Apache Junction and Casa Grande programs, but open to the general public for specific trip types (for example, medical, shopping, etc.).

### **Expanded Rideshare Program**

Transit services can be expensive to operate, and require significant public subsidies. By contrast, vanpools typically involve very low public subsidies. Furthermore, carpools and vanpools can effectively provide transportation to small groups, whereas effective public transit requires much larger groups.

As such, in many areas, an expanded countywide ridesharing program could provide more cost-effective transportation options, as well as options in areas where public transit would not be feasible. An expanded vanpool could consist of:

- **Capital Assistance for Vanpools:** Financial assistance for the purchase or lease of vans for vanpools. For example, rather than provide a 50% subsidy only to county employees, the subsidy could be provided to all county residents.
- **Short-Term Subsidies:** Financial support will cover the cost of vacant seats for new vanpools during start-up operations, and for established vanpools that have temporary vacancies.
- **Guaranteed Ride Home:** The provision of Guaranteed Ride Home services to provide free taxi or rental car transportation to registered commuters who use alternative modes and have a personal emergency during the workday.
- **Carpool and Vanpool Incentives:** Rewards and incentives for carpools.
- **Marketing:** Expanded marketing efforts promoting ridesharing.
- **Vanpool Driver Incentives** to attract new drivers and retain existing drivers for vanpools.

## **POTENTIAL LONG-TERM TRANSIT IMPROVEMENTS**

Through 2025, Pinal County's population will grow to nearly one million, and as it grows, many areas will change significantly. Casa Grande, Apache Junction, and Eloy, will grow to medium size cities that will also be regional employment centers. Undeveloped areas between Apache Junction and San Tan Valley will be developed, and in many respects, will become an eastern extension of Maricopa County. Most of the western half of the county between the Gila River Indian Community and the Ak-Chin Indian Community to the north and the Tohono O'odham Indian Community to the south will be developed and largely centered on Casa Grande and Eloy. Maricopa will continue to grow, and travel will continue to be highly oriented toward Maricopa County, but also with higher levels of travel to Casa Grande. In general, there will be an arc of development around the eastern and southern sides of the Gila River Indian



Community and along I-10 between Casa Grande and Eloy. To the east, the county will also grow, but to a much lesser extent and will remain overwhelmingly rural.

With this growth, there will also be significantly increased demand for transit service. This section presents potential transit services that could be designed to provide attractive transit choices in 2025, based on the growth that is expected through that time and the county's land use plan. More specifically, the long-term transit services were developed to serve:

- Areas with the highest population and employment densities as determined in the market analysis.
- Major travel flows as determined in the market analysis.
- The proposed major activity centers presented in the Pinal County Comprehensive Plan.

In most cases, the services that would be provided in 2025 would be in addition to the services that could be implemented in the short-term, with the timing for introduction of the new services dependent upon when growth and the development of new infrastructure actually occurs (see Figure 6-4). In other cases, some services and facilities would be replaced by other services and facilities, or upgraded to meet increased demands—for example, a relatively simple park and ride lot would be upgraded to a transit center.

### **Transit Centers**

In addition to the transit centers in Apache Junction, Coolidge, and Casa Grande that would be developed in the near-term scenario, over the longer-term, new transit centers could also be developed Florence, Maricopa, and Eloy:

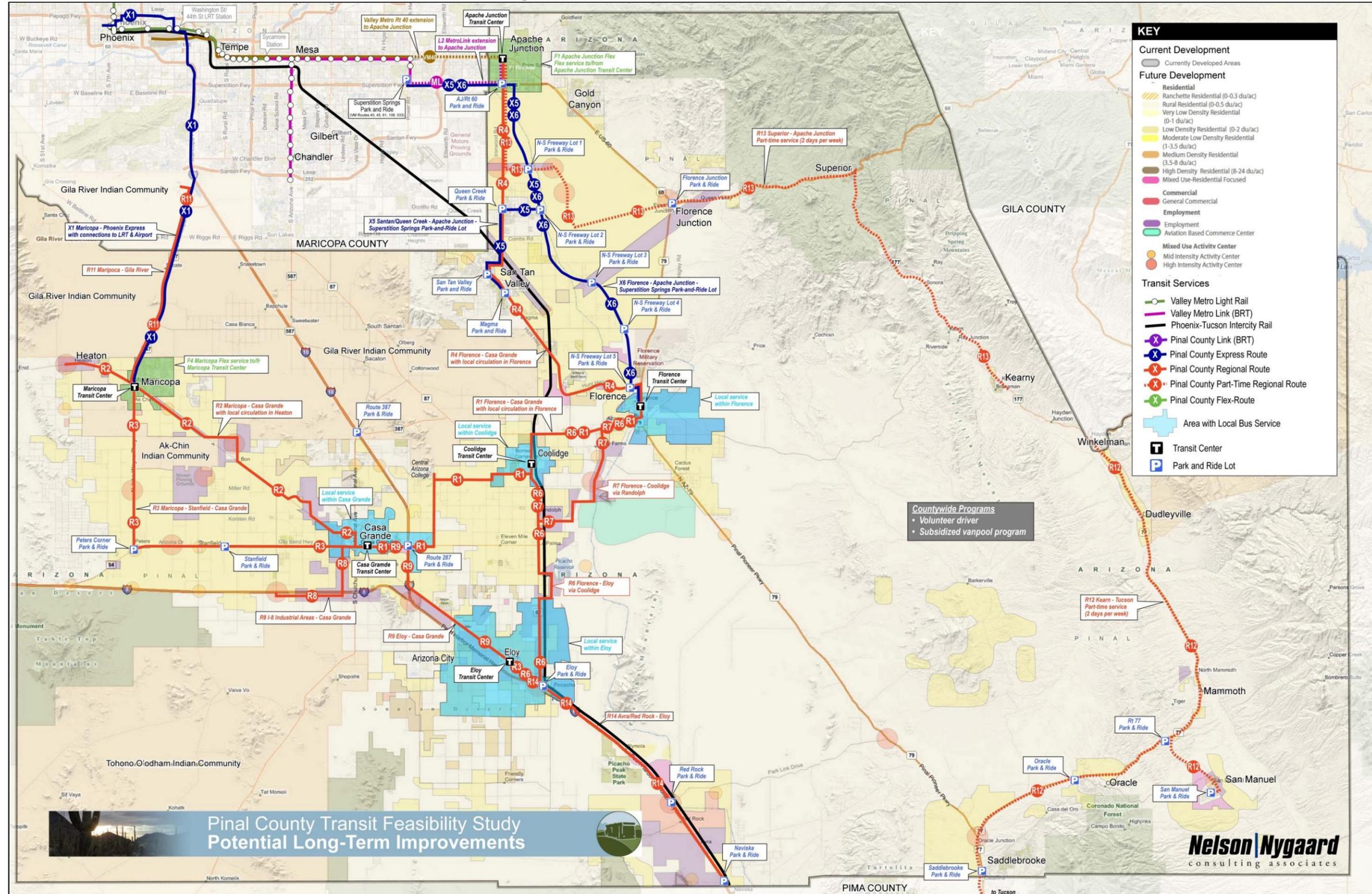
- **Florence:** A transit center in the vicinity of the County Administrative Complex would provide a terminal for regional routes to Apache Junction, Coolidge, and Eloy, and express service to Phoenix via the proposed North-South Freeway.
- **Maricopa:** As the Maricopa area grows, the Maricopa park and ride lot could be upgraded to a transit center. This transit center would be the terminal point for regional services to Casa Grande via Route 387 and via Stanfield, and express service to Phoenix. It would also be the terminal point for Maricopa Flex service (as described below).
- **Eloy:** As Eloy develops into a medium-sized city, a transit center would act as a focal point for local services and as a terminal or stop for regional services to Casa Grande, Coolidge, Florence, and part-time service to Red Rock, Saddlebrooke, Oracle, San Manuel, and Mammoth.

### **Park and Ride Lots**

In addition to the park and ride lots described for the short-term improvements, additional park and ride lots would be developed to serve new residential communities:

- **North-South Freeway:** It is currently envisioned that a North-South Freeway would be developed to accommodate large-scale growth in the northern part of the county east of the Maricopa County line between Apache Junction and Florence. Park and ride lots along this freeway at major interchanges could serve express bus riders, carpoolers, and vanpoolers.

Figure 6-4: Potential 2025 Transit Improvements



Pinal County Transit Feasibility Study  
Potential Long-Term Improvements

**Nelson Nygaard**  
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- **Florence Junction:** A park and ride lot in Florence Junction would serve commuters in this area, as well as from Superior, and would be served by regional service to Apache Junction.
- **Magma:** With continued growth in the San Tan Valley area, express service could be extended further southward along Hunt Highway to a new park and ride in the Magma area.
- **Eloy:** A park and ride lot near the intersection of Routes 84 and 87 could serve Eloy area commuters traveling to Coolidge, Florence, and Casa Grande.
- **I-10:** Park and ride lots along I-10 south of Eloy could serve those traveling in the I-10 corridor, including to Phoenix and Tucson, and users of regional bus service to Eloy and Casa Grande.
- **Route 77:** Park and ride lots along Route 77 could serve travels in the southeastern part of Pinal County, including Mammoth, San Manuel, Oracle, and Saddlebrooke.
- **Stanfield:** A park and ride lot in Stanfield along Arizona Drive could serve Hidden Valley commuters traveling to Maricopa and Casa Grande.
- **Peters Corner:** A park and ride lot at Peters Corner near the intersection of John Wayne Drive and Arizona Drive could serve Hidden Valley commuters traveling to Maricopa and Casa Grande.

### **Commuter Rail/Intercity Rail**

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG) are examining the feasibility of commuter rail in southeastern Maricopa County and north Pinal County (see Figure 6-5):

- Tempe Branch to Maricopa
- Chandler Branch to Coolidge
- Hassayampa/Hidden Valley

These potential projects are in very early stages of development, and as a result, it is not yet known how each could fit into Pinal County's long-term transit program. However, each of these services could provide commuter service to Phoenix to different parts of Pinal County, as well as potential service between Pinal County communities. In addition, future implementation of Amtrak service to Phoenix could also provide rail service between Pinal County and Maricopa County.

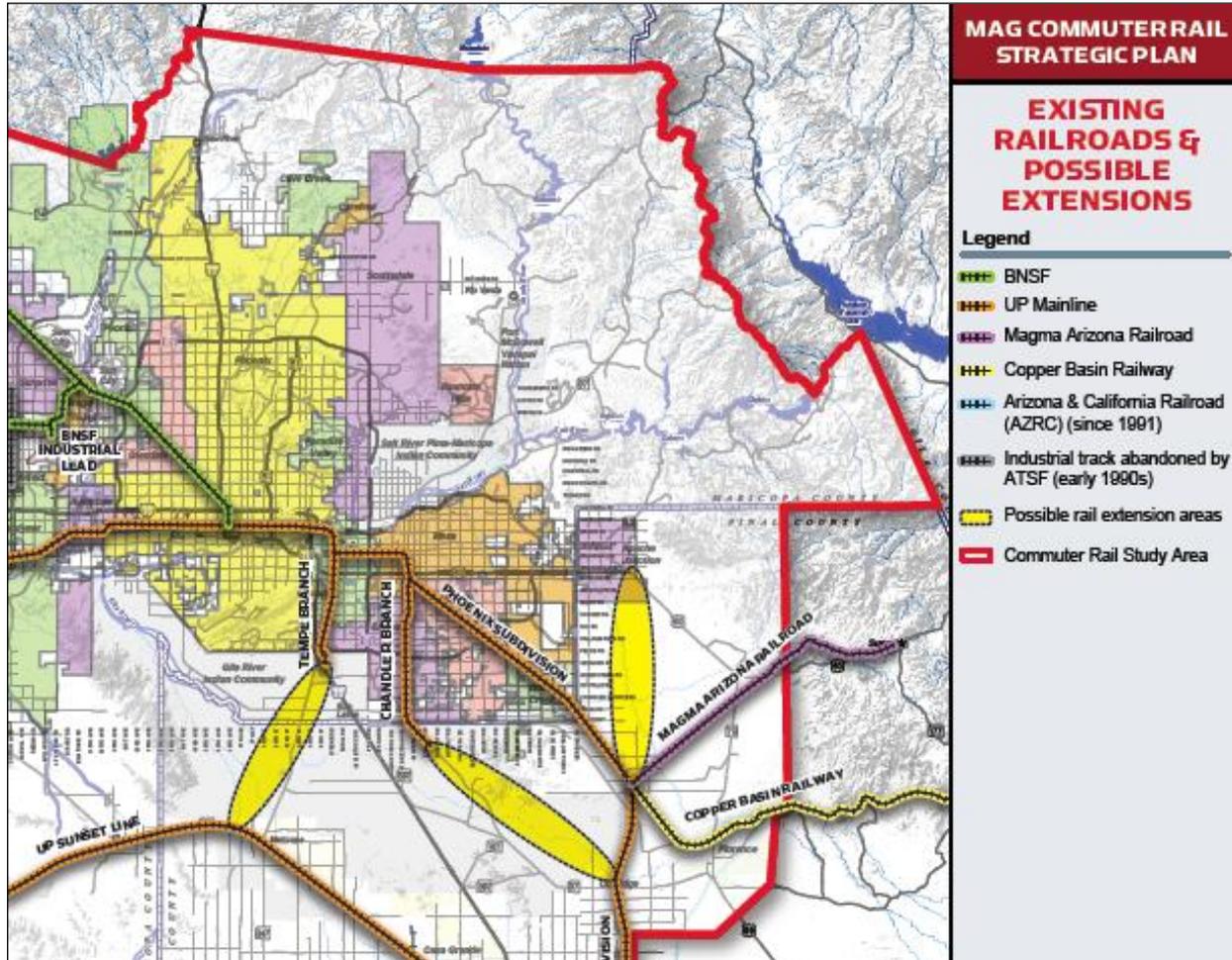
### **Express Bus**

Extensive growth in the area surrounding the southwest corner of Maricopa County will significantly increase the demand for commuter services to the East Valley and Phoenix. In addition to the X1 Maricopa – Phoenix Express and X5 San Tan Valley - Superstition Springs routes described as short-term improvements, longer-term express bus opportunities include:

- **Reroute X5 San Tan San Tan Valley – Superstition Springs Express:** This route, implemented as part of a short-term change, would be reconfigured to operate via the new North-South Freeway.
- **X6 San Tan Valley – Apache Junction – Superstition Springs Express:** This route would operate between Florence and the Superstition Spring Park and Ride Lot largely via the North-South Freeway and Route 60/Superstition Freeway. It would begin service



Figure 6-5: Potential Commuter Rail Service to Pinal County



at the Florence Transit Center, stop at the four park and ride lots along the North-South Freeway and the Apache Junction Transit Center, and then operate to the Superstition Springs Park and Ride Lot, where connections to be made to Arterial BRT and express service to Mesa, Tempe, and Phoenix.

The amount of service provided on the express routes would be determined by demand. As described in the Short-Term Improvements section, initially, the express routes would provide three to four inbound trips in the morning and three to four outbound trips in the afternoon/evening. However, as the areas the routes serve become increasingly developed, service levels would also be increased.

**Arterial BRT**

Through 2025, Arterial BRT service between Apache Junction and Tempe would be adjusted based on demand levels and changes to Valley Metro Rail service. For example, with an extension of Valley Metro Rail to Mesa, Arterial BRT service would be shortened to operate to the new Mesa terminal. With increases in ridership, service levels would be increased.



## Regional Routes

As new parts of the county become developed, new regional routes would be developed. In addition to Route R1 Florence – Casa Grande route described in the short-term improvements, changes and new routes would be as follows:

- **R2 Heaton – Maricopa – Casa Grande:** As described in the Short-Term Improvements section, this route would initially be implemented to operate between Maricopa and Casa Grande. However, as the Heaton area becomes developed, the route would be extended westward to Heaton. The route would provide local circulation in Heaton then operate to Maricopa and the Maricopa Transit Center, and then to the Casa Grande Transit Center along Route 238. This route would operate every 60 minutes from early morning until early evening.
- **R3 Maricopa – Casa Grande via Peters Corner:** This route would operate between Maricopa and Casa Grande generally via John Wayne Boulevard and Arizona Drive. It would serve new activity centers in the Hidden Valley and provide connections for Hidden Valley residents to express bus service to Phoenix and other regional routes at the Maricopa Transit Center, and to local and regional routes at the Casa Grande Transit Center. Service would operate approximately every 60 minutes.
- **R4 Florence – Apache Junction:** This route would operate between Florence and Apache Junction, generally along Hunt Highway and Ironwood Drive. From Florence, it would start service at the Florence Transit Center, serve the Magma and San Tan Valley Park and Ride lots, and terminate at the Apache Junction Transit Center. Service would operate approximately every 60 minutes.
- **R6 Florence – Eloy via Coolidge:** This route would operate between the Florence Transit Center and the Eloy Transit Center via Coolidge and would serve commercial areas in Florence, Coolidge, and Eloy, as well as new residential areas between those areas. Service would operate largely along Routes 87 and 287, and would operate every 60 minutes.
- **R7 Florence – Coolidge:** This route would operate between the Florence Transit Center and the Coolidge Transit Center via new commercial areas adjacent to the proposed North-South Freeway. Service would operate from Florence along new arterial roadways constructed in the vicinity of the North-South Freeway to Randolph, and then along Route 87 to Coolidge. Service would operate approximately every 60 minutes.
- **R8 I-8 Industrial Areas – Casa Grande:** This route would operate between commercial and industrial areas that are expected to develop south of Casa Grande along I-8. The route would operate along new roadways that would be built as part of those developments, and would operate to and from the Casa Grande Transit Center. Service would operate every 30 to 60 minutes.
- **R9 Eloy – Casa Grande:** This route would operate between Eloy and Casa Grande generally along Route 84/Casa Grande Picacho Highway and would connect what are projected to become Pinal County's two largest cities. In Eloy, it would begin service at the Eloy Park and Ride Lot, and then operate via the Eloy Transit Center to the Casa Grande Transit Center. Service would operate every 30 to 60 minutes.
- **R11 Maricopa – Gila River:** This route would operate between Maricopa and the Gila River Indian Community's Wild Horse Pass Boulevard area's developments. The route would operate primarily along Route 387 and would be designed to serve work trips. Service would operate every 60 minutes.



- **R12 Winkelman – Tucson:** This route would provide part-time service (two days per week) that would serve Winkelman, Dudleyville, Mammoth, San Manuel, Oracle, and Saddlebrooke along Route 77. Service would be provided to serve medical, shopping, and other occasional trips from the eastern communities, and would operate every 120 minutes.
- **R13 Kearney – Apache Junction:** This route would provide part-time service (two days a week) between Kearney and Apache Junction via Superior and Florence Junction and Apache Junction along Route 177, Route 60, and new roadways that would be developed as the area is developed. Service would be provided to serve medical, shopping, and other occasional trips from the eastern communities, and would operate every 120 minutes.
- **R14 Avra/Red Rock – Eloy:** This route would operate between the Pinal/Pima County Line and Eloy along Casa Grande Highway and would be designed to serve new development along I-10. Service would operate every 60 minutes.

### Local Service

As Pinal County's small communities grow to medium sized cities, demands for local service will increase significantly, and could be served by a variety of community-based services.

- **Apache Junction:** Apache Junction could continue to be served with an extension of Valley Metro's Route 40 Apache/Main Street service and Flex service to and from the Apache Junction Transit Center, with service levels increased as demand increases.
- **Maricopa:** As Maricopa grows, there will be increased demand for local transit service. Much of this would be served by the regional routes that would operate to and from the Maricopa Transit Center. Flex service could also be provided in other developed areas, and this service would operate to and from the Maricopa Transit Center where riders could make connections to express and regional routes. Flex services could operate every 60 to 120 minutes.
- **Coolidge:** As Coolidge grows, its local service will need to be expanded. With outward growth, it will likely be desirable to supplement the existing loops with new local line haul routes that would provide connections at the Coolidge Transit Center.
- **Florence:** By 2025, Florence is expected to grow and to approximately 30,000 residents. With this growth, there will be demand for limited local transit service, which would be similar to that currently provided in Coolidge. Local routes would operate every 60 to 120 minutes.
- **Casa Grande:** Casa Grande is expected to grow to a medium sized city of nearly 100,000 people. As it does, it will outgrow the limited loop system that is now being planned. Cities of 100,000 people generally have upwards of 10 routes that provide service to most developed areas. Furthermore, as Casa Grande continues to grow into a major regional center, local services will be needed to provide local connections from regional bus routes. Local routes would operate every 30 to 60 minutes.
- **Eloy:** Eloy is expected to grow to over 90,000 people, and its transit needs will likely be similar to those in Casa Grande, which is involve the development of a multi-route local bus system to provide local service and connections from regional routes. Local routes would operate every 30 to 60 minutes.



### **Volunteer Driver**

As in the short-term, volunteer driver services would be provided in areas of the county that would not be served by the fixed and flex-route services described above. The size of the area where volunteer driver service would be provided would shrink as other services are expanded. However, the number of participants in the areas that would continue to be served would grow as the populations of those areas increase.

### **Expanded Rideshare Program**

An expanded ridesharing program would continue to provide the same array of incentives, subsidies, and other assistance as in the short-term, but the size of the program would grow significantly. The growth would be driven by population growth, but would exceed that level as greater densities of people and jobs will increase the opportunities for ridesharing.

## **RIDERSHIP, COSTS, AND PRODUCTIVITY**

The development of a regional transit system would involve significant costs, both to develop the system, and to operate it. These costs would be shared among partners in a manner that would need to be determined as services are developed, and could be funded from a number of sources as described in Appendix A. The productivity of a regional system would be relatively good, and in line with or better than in other rural areas in Arizona and elsewhere.

### **Operating Assumptions**

Both operating and capital costs are directly related to the amount of service that would be provided—for example, more frequent service would cost more to operate than less frequent service, and also require more vehicles. For the purposes of these operating and capital cost estimates, the following operating assumptions were used:

- Arterial BRT would operate 7 days a week, every 30 to 60 minutes, from 5 am to 10 pm.
- Full-time Regional routes would operate 6 days a week (Monday through Saturday), every 60 minutes from 6 am to 6 pm.
- Part-time Regional routes would operate two days per week, every 120 minutes from 6 am to 6 pm.
- Local and Flex routes would operate six days a week, every 60 minutes from 6 am to 6 pm.

Cost estimates for new or expanded Valley Metro bus services were developed using their existing cost basis, which for FY 2010 was \$5.65 per vehicle mile. Operating costs for Pinal County bus services were estimated at \$80 per vehicle hour, which is a typical cost for services in rural areas.

Finally, note that the cost estimates presented herein represent the total cost for all of the described services, including existing services (Coolidge Cotton Express and Maricopa Xpress) as they are intended to illustrate the total costs for a countywide system.



**Short-Term (2015)**

**Ridership and Operating Costs**

The short-term transit and ridesharing improvements would serve nearly 5.7 users per year, of whom 920,000 would be transit riders, 56,000 would be volunteer driver users, and 4.7 million would be carpoolers and vanpoolers (see Table 6-1). Total operating costs (not including fares) would be \$8.9 million per year, of which \$7.3 million would be for transit service, \$0.7 million for volunteer driver service, and \$0.9 million for ridesharing coordination and marketing.

**Table 6-1: Short-Term Ridership and Operating Costs**

	Annual Ridership	Annual Operating Cost (millions)	Operating Cost/ Passenger
Arterial BRT	230,000	\$1.4	\$6.00
Express Service	170,000	\$1.6	\$9.40
Regional Service	290,000	\$1.8	\$6.20
Local Service	330,000	\$2.5	\$7.50
Transit Total	920,000	\$7.3	\$7.10
Volunteer Driver	56,000	\$0.7	\$12.50
Ridesharing	4,700,000	\$0.9	\$0.20
Total	5,680,000	\$8.9	\$1.50

Operating costs per passenger would be \$7.10 for transit service, \$12.50 for volunteer driver service, and 20¢ per carpool/vanpool user. Operating costs per user would be lowest for ridesharing activities, because, whereas significant operating cost subsidies would be required for transit and volunteer driver services, rideshare users pay their own direct operating costs and thus program costs are generally limited to coordination and marketing.

**Productivity**

A common measure of productivity is the number of passengers that are carried per vehicle service hour. Arterial BRT would carry the most passengers per revenue vehicle hour, with an annual average of 18.9 (see Table 6-2). Regional Service would carry the next highest numbers, at 12.9. The productivity of local service would vary significantly, ranging from 5.0 for the Apache Junction Flex service to 16.1 for the Valley Metro Route 40 service (and both of which are within Apache Junction). Other services would be between those levels. Overall, these productivity levels would be relatively good for what is still a largely rural county.

**Capital Costs**

The development of new transit service would entail significant capital costs for the purchase of vehicles and the development the required facilities. Total costs would be approximately \$24 million, of which \$7.8 million would be for vehicles, \$4.0 million would be for transit centers, and \$4.5 million would be for bus stop facilities (see Table 6-3).



**Table 6-2: Short-Term Productivity (Passengers/Revenue Vehicle Hour)**

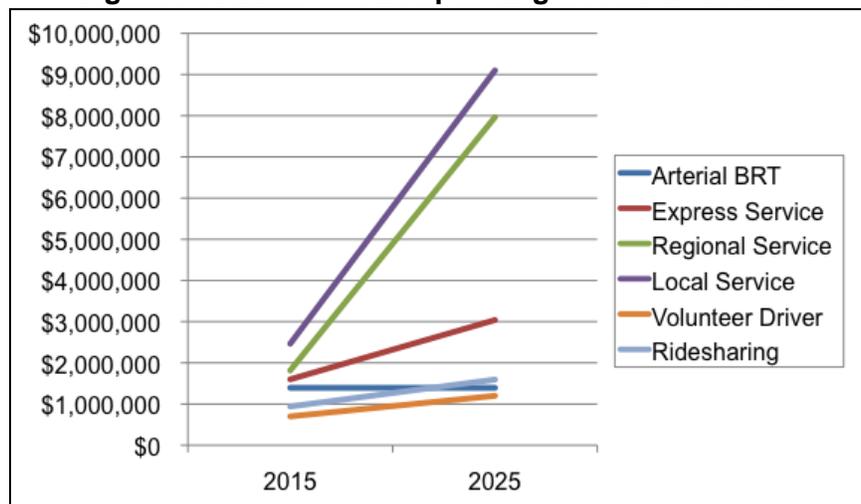
	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Annual Average
<b>Arterial BRT</b>	20.0	15.0	15.0	18.9
<b>Express Service</b>				
X1 Maricopa	7.0	--	--	7.0
X5 San Tan	10.0	--	--	10.0
Express Total				8.5
<b>Regional Service</b>				
R1 Florence	9.9	7.5	--	9.5
R2 Maricopa	16.0	12.0	--	15.3
R9 Eloy	14.4	10.8	--	13.8
Regional Total				12.9
<b>Local Service</b>				11.4
Apache Junction				12.8
Valley Metro Rt 40	18.4	13.8	--	16.1
Apache Junction Flex	5.0	5.0	--	5.0
Casa Grande	13.4	10.1	--	12.9
Coolidge	8.0	-	--	8.0
Local Total				11.4

**Long-term - 2025**

**Ridership and Operating Costs**

Over the long-term, with continued growth in Pinal County, and the provision of additional transit services, transit and ridesharing use would grow from 5.7 million trips per year to 11.4 million (see Table 6-4). Total operating costs would increase to \$24.3 million per year, of which \$21.5 million would be for transit service, \$1.2 million for volunteer driver service, and \$0.9 million for ridesharing coordination and marketing. The largest increases would be for local service, as new local systems would be developed in a number of communities throughout the county, and for regional services, as connections between communities are improved (see Figure 6-6).

**Figure 6-6: Increases in Operating Costs: 2015-2025**





**Table 6-3: Short-Term Capital Costs (2015)**

	Number	Total Cost (millions)
<b>Vehicles</b>		
Arterial BRT Rapid Bus Vehicles	2	\$2.0
Express Service Commuter Coaches	9	\$4.5
Regional Service 30' Transit Bus 16 Passenger Body on Chassis (BOC) Bus	6	\$0.4
Local Service 30' Transit Bus 16 Passenger Body on Chassis (BOC) Bus	12	\$0.8
Total		\$7.8
<b>Facilities</b>		
Transit Centers	2	\$4.0
Park and Ride Lots Large (approx 100 spaces) Medium (approx 50 spaces)	3 2	\$3.0 \$1.0
Bus Stop Facilities Rapid Bus Stops Other Stops	40	\$4.0 \$2.5
Total		\$10.5
<b>Miscellaneous</b>		
AVL Control System Hardware & Software	1	\$0.2
Real-Time Passenger Information Displays	5	\$0.1
<b>Contingency</b>		
Contingency (30%)		\$5.6
<b>Total</b>		
Total		\$24.1

**Table 6-4: Long-Term Ridership and Operating Costs**

	Annual Ridership	Annual Operating Cost (millions)	Operating Cost/ Passenger
Arterial BRT	230,000	\$1.4	\$6.00
Express Service	410,000	\$3.0	\$7.50
Regional Service	1,000,000	\$8.0	\$7.60
Local Service	1,600,000	\$9.1	\$5.90
Transit Total	3,200,000	\$21.5	\$6.60
Volunteer Driver	160,000	\$1.2	\$7.50
Ridesharing	4,700,000	\$1.6	\$0.20
Total	11,400,000	\$24.3	\$2.10



### Productivity

Over the longer term with growth in development, population, and employment, the productivity of transit service would generally increase (see Table 6-5). The only exception would be that the overall productivity of Regional services would decline somewhat as new services are extended into the eastern part of the county and through more rural areas.

**Table 6-5: Long-Term Productivity (Passengers/Revenue Vehicle Hour)**

	Weekday	Saturday	Sunday	Annual Average	2015-2025 Change
<b>Arterial BRT</b>	20	15	15	18.9	0.0
<b>Express Service</b>					
X1 Maricopa	7.0	-	-	7.0	0.0
X5 San Tan	10.4	-	-	10.4	+0.4
X6 Florence*	15.0	-	-	15.0	15.0
Express Total				8.5	+2.2
<b>Regional Service</b>					
R1 Florence	13.9	10.4	-	13.3	+3.8
R2 Heaton-Maricopa	16.6	12.5	-	15.9	+0.6
R3 Maricopa-Casa Grande	8.3	6.2	-	8.0	+8.0
R4 Florence-AJ	10.0	7.5	-	9.6	+9.6
R6 Florence-Eloy	13.3	10.0	-	12.8	+12.8
R7 Florence-Coolidge	4.8	3.6	-	4.6	+4.6
R8 I-8 Industrial Areas	6.1	4.5	-	5.8	+5.8
R9 Eloy-Casa Grande	26.0	19.5	-	24.9	+11.1
R11 Maricopa-Gila River	13.6	10.2	-	13.0	+13.0
R12 Winkelman-Tucson	2.3	-	-	2.3	+2.3
R13 Kearney-AJ	3.1	-	-	3.1	+3.1
R14 Avra/Red Rock-Eloy	4.7	3.5	-	4.5	+4.5
Regional Total				10.5	-2.4
<b>Local Service</b>					
Apache Junction				12.8	0.0
Valley Metro Rt. 40	18.4	13.8	-	16.1	0.0
Apache Junction Flex	5.0	5.0	-	5.0	0.0
Maricopa Flex	5.0	5.0	-	5.0	+5.0
Casa Grande	15.0	11.3	-	14.4	+1.5
Florence/Coolidge	15.0	11.3	-	14.4	+6.4
Eloy	15.0	11.3	-	14.4	+14.4
Local Total				13.9	+2.5
<b>Transit Total</b>				12.4	+0.2

### Capital Costs

The development of a much more robust system between 2015 and 2025 would cost approximately \$72.6 million (see Table 6-6). The largest increases would be for the development of regional and local services and associated facilities.

Because transit ridership increases would be greater than cost increases, transit operating costs per passenger would decline. Operating costs per passenger for volunteer driver trips would



**Table 6-6: Long-Term Capital Costs (2025)**

	2025		2015 to 2025	
	Number	Total Cost (millions)	Number	Increase
<b>Vehicles</b>				
Arterial BRT Rapid Bus Vehicles	2	\$2.0		\$0.0
Express Service Commuter Coaches	18	\$4.5	9	\$4.5
Regional Service 30' Transit Bus	30	\$15.0	30	\$15.0
16 passenger bus	0	\$0.0	-6	
Local Service 30' Transit Bus	29	\$14.5	29	\$14.5
16 passenger bus	0	\$0.0	-12	
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$7.8</b>		<b>\$34.0</b>
<b>Facilities</b>				
Transit Centers	5	\$10.0	3	\$6.0
Park and Ride Lots				
Large (≈ 100 spaces)	3	\$3.0		
Medium (≈ 50 spaces)	9	\$4.5	7	\$3.5
Small (≈ 25 spaces)	8	\$2.0	8	\$2.0
Bus Stop Facilities				
Rapid Bus Stops	40	\$4.0	0	\$0.0
Other Stops	1,669	\$12.7	1,337	\$10.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$32.2</b>		<b>\$21.7</b>
<b>Miscellaneous</b>				
AVL Control System	1	\$0.2	0	\$0.0
Real-Time Passenger Info	25	\$0.1	20	\$0.1
<b>Contingency</b>				
Contingency (30%)		\$21.9		\$16.7
<b>Total</b>				
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$95.0</b>		<b>\$72.6</b>

also decline, largely because with future development, the county would have more services and thus trip lengths would be shorter. However, the total cost per user for all programs would increase (from \$1.50 to \$2.10) because transit trips would comprise a larger proportion of all trips.



## Chapter 7

# Governance Options

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One of the challenges in developing an effective countywide transportation system, especially in rapidly growing areas, is to first develop an institutional structure under which this can be done. In virtually all rural counties, the historical focus has been on developing and expanding the roadway network. However, as growth occurs, the need for other transportation options increases dramatically. In addition, growth creates higher volumes of regional travel and, in turn, the need for more regional solutions.

Transit policy and service can be set and provided by a number of different types of organizations, ranging from city or county departments to full-fledged regional transit authorities (RTAs) with multijurisdictional powers. The “right” solution represents a combination of what is legally permissible and what best balances the priorities and financial capabilities of the entities that will be involved in the provision of transit service. This document describes the options that are available to Pinal County, its cities, its Indian communities, and other potential partners.

Each option is described in terms of:

- Representation, or the composition of the policy board.
- Powers and responsibilities, in terms of whether the transit entity would have the powers needed to provide transit service, which generally consist of the ability to:
  - Construct, acquire, and operate transportation facilities and services.
  - Enter into contracts and agreements.
  - Apply for and receive grants of money, property, and loans.
  - Issue bonds.
  - Regulate fares and determine schedules and routes.
  - Provide operating and capital funding for services operated by others.
  - Acquire land through purchase, lease, gift, condemnation, or otherwise, either for its own use or on behalf of other agencies.
- Legal standing, in terms of whether the organization would be a legal entity in its own right or as a subset of another entity.
- Eligibility for existing grants and funding, in terms of whether the organization would be eligible for available transit funding.
- New funding opportunities, in terms of and whether the option would be able to leverage additional funding.
- The steps required for implementation.
- Advantages and disadvantages.
- Issues that would need to be resolved before implementation, if any.
- Examples of where and how the option is or has been used elsewhere in Arizona.

### **GOVERNANCE OPTIONS**

Throughout Arizona and the country, transit service is provided by many different types of organizations that use a wide variety of governance structures. The most common include:



- County and city-operated systems that provide transit service as a departmental function governed by the county board or city council.
- Regional transportation or transit authorities that operate independently of the governments of the areas that they serve (although usually with board level representation from those governments).
- Joint Powers Agencies (JPAs) created by multiple government agencies to provide service using the powers of the member governments, and that are governed by representatives appointed by the member governments. (In Arizona, JPAs are called “Joint Powers Organizations,” or JPOs.)
- Provision of service through intergovernmental agreements, where the agreements are approved by the governing boards of the participating parties.

In all areas, the available options are determined by state law and local policies. Arizona law provides for seven different options that could be used in Pinal County:

- Operation by individual jurisdictions and social service agencies (which is the status quo).
- Stronger county transit policy role.
- County-operated transit service.
- Regional Transportation Authority (RTA).
- Joint Powers Organization (JPO)
- Provision of transit through intergovernmental agreements (IGAs).
- Development of an Urban Mass Transportation System (UMTS).

Note also that combinations of these approaches are also possible, and frequently used. For example, Maricopa and Pima Counties have developed transportation authorities, but in both counties, many individual jurisdictions still provide or contract for their own services (most notably, Phoenix and Tucson). Also, Coconino and Yavapai Counties have developed a transit authority, but individual communities, and Northern Arizona University, determine the transit services that the transit authority provides on their behalf.

### **Status Quo**

At present, all parties in Pinal County that desire transit service (the county, cities, Indian communities, and social service agencies) develop and implement their own services according to needs and abilities. To date, the City of Maricopa has instituted Maricopa Xpress commuter service to Maricopa County and Coolidge provides Cotton Express service. As described in the Existing Transit Services chapter, other communities and social service agencies have developed services for older residents and persons with disabilities.

The Status Quo can be characterized as summarized in Table 7-1 and described below.

**Responsibilities and Powers:** In Arizona, all counties, cities, and Indian communities have all of the powers needed to develop and operate transit service. As desired, these jurisdictions can also provide transit service on behalf of other public and private entities. For example, the county, cities, and Indian communities could provide service to and from adjoining areas, on either a reimbursement or non-reimbursement basis.



**Table 7-1: Status Quo**

<p><b>Description</b>  <i>All parties involved in transit (county, cities, Indian communities, and social service agencies) develop and implement their own services according to need and ability.</i></p> <p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each party represents its own interests; there is no regional body to address countywide transit issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>Powers and Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County, cities, and Indian communities have all powers necessary to develop and operate transit services.</li> <li>Social service agencies have <u>most</u> powers necessary to develop and operate transit service.</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing Grants and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County and cities are eligible recipients of all transit-related grants.</li> <li>County and cities can apply for many grants on behalf of social service agencies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential New Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be possible to extend use of excise tax funds to transit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Steps Required to Implement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If expansion of use of excise tax to fund transit is desired, voter approval would be required.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each party can choose its own approach.</li> <li>May be possible to extend use of excise tax funds to transit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Duplication of functions and associated costs.</li> <li>Lack of lead agency to drive of regional transit policy/development.</li> <li>No forum/mechanism to determine role of transit within overall transportation system.</li> <li>No forum/mechanism for regional transit coordination.</li> <li>Over time, could lead to fragmented system.</li> <li>Would likely lead to greater mismatches between services and demand than with regional models.</li> <li>Small systems are often only as good as the individuals that operate them, which often results in significant differences in service quality.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should use of excise tax be expanded to transit?</li> <li>Will the county’s transit needs outgrow the abilities of individual jurisdictions to provide service?</li> </ul>
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Social services agencies have most, but not all of the necessary powers. The most significant exceptions are that they cannot obtain land through eminent domain, and they are not eligible recipients for some types of federal transit funding. However, for those types of funding, the county or the cities that they serve can apply for the funding on their behalf.

**Representation:** At present, all parties that provide transit service represent their own interests, and are governed by their own policy boards. For Maricopa and Coolidge, this means that transit service policy is set by the respective city councils. For social service agencies, policy is set by the policy boards of those agencies. For the county, if it were to begin providing transit service, policy would be set by the county board of supervisors.

**Legal Standing:** At present, the legal status of existing transit providers varies by type of agency. Typically, when cities and counties provide transit service, it is provided by either



the Department of Public Works or by a separate city or county department. At present, much of the transportation for elderly and disabled residents is provided by private non-profit agencies, but these types of service could be provided by the cities and/or county as well.

**Eligibility for Existing Grants and Funding:** The county and cities are eligible recipients for all transit-related grants. As described above, social service agencies are ineligible to directly receive funds from some sources, but the county and cities can apply for most of those grants on behalf of social service agencies.

**New Funding Opportunities:** If desired by the county and the cities, it may be possible to extend the use of the existing countywide excise tax to transit. Under Arizona law, counties with populations of fewer than 400,000 residents can enact a transportation excise tax of up to 0.5% for “highway purposes or for transportation projects included in the regional transportation plan of the county as prepared by the county regional planning agency.”<sup>1</sup> The imposition of the tax requires advance specification of how the funds will be spent and voter approval.

Under this law, the residents of Pinal County voted in 1986 to pass a half-cent sales tax to provide additional funding for the “construction, reconstruction, maintenance, repair and roadside development of County, city and town roads, streets and bridges.” The publicity pamphlet that accompanied the 1986 ballot measure specified that the funding was to be used “solely for highway and street purposes,” with the funds to be distributed between the county and the cities on the basis of population. In a November 2005 special election, Pinal County voters reauthorized the excise tax for an additional 20 years, beginning in January 2007 and continuing through 2026. The extension of the excise tax is projected to generate \$836 million through 2025.<sup>2</sup>

As described above, while Arizona state law authorizes the imposition of the tax for “highway purposes or for transportation projects included in the regional transportation plan,” the Pinal County ballot measure specified that the funding was to be used “solely for highway and street purposes.” However, with voter approval, it would be possible to expand the current authorization to include the use of excise tax revenues for transit purposes. In this case, the vote would not be for an additional tax, but instead the expansion of permitted uses for an existing tax. In addition, funding would continued to be allocated between the county and the cities on the same basis as at present. Thus, each jurisdiction would receive the same amount of funds as under the current authorization, but would be able to use some of those funds for transit if they so desired.

**Advantages and Disadvantages:** The major advantage of the Status Quo is that all parties are able to choose their own approach to transit based on their own priorities and funding abilities.

However, there are a number of disadvantages to the Status Quo. These include:

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<sup>1</sup> §42-6107.

<sup>2</sup> The original estimate was \$962 million; the revised figure is from the Pinal County/ Rural Transportation Summit 2009.



- As the county grows, its communities are becoming more intertwined, and as a result, the need for regional transit is growing. The status quo does not provide an effective mechanism to address regional needs.
- The Status Quo does not provide for a “champion” for transit service to drive transit policy and ensure that transit needs are effectively addressed within the context of the overall transportation system.
- Without better coordination, as more jurisdictions develop transit, services could become fragmented.
- As more communities begin to develop transit service, it is likely that many communities will duplicate functions.
- Small systems are often only as good as the individuals that operate them, which often results in significant differences in service quality. (At NAIPTA, which provides service in Coconino and Yavapai Counties, the provision of service through a professionally run organization was cited as a major driver for the development of the regional authority.)
- Since different jurisdictions have different financial capabilities, as transit grows, a continuation of the Status Quo would likely lead to greater mismatches between services and demand than regional models.

**Implementation:** No specific actions would be required to maintain the Status Quo. However, if the county and cities desire to expand the use of the transportation excise tax to transit, voter approval would be required.

**Issues:** The major issue related to this option would be whether the county and cities desire to expand the use of the existing excise tax to transit.

**Arizona Examples:** In most of Arizona’s rural counties, transit service decisions are made by individual jurisdictions in the same manner as in Pinal County. In Pinal County, Coolidge provides its own service, and elsewhere, the cities of Bisbee, Blythe, Bullhead City, Kingman, Lake Havasu City, Quartzite, and Sierra Vista also provide their own transit services. The Navajo Nation and Hopi Tribe provide transit services within their communities.

### **Stronger County Policy Role**

With the exception of transit, Pinal County plays a strong lead role in the development of most aspects of the county’s transportation system, both for elements for which it will be responsible, as well as elements that the cities will handle. In a similar manner as for roadways, the county could assume a stronger role in the development of regional policies (and could also provide regional service). Otherwise, all parties involved in transit (county, cities, and others) would continue to develop and implement their own services according to need and ability, similar to the Status Quo. This could be done as summarized in Table 7-2 and described below.

**Responsibilities and Powers:** With this option, the county would assume the responsibility working with individual jurisdictions and social service agencies to develop countywide transit policy. This could be done in a manner that would be similar to the county’s development of the Comprehensive Plan and the Regionally Significant Routes for Safety and Mobility plan. Otherwise, all parties would have the same powers and authorities as they do today, and as described for the Status Quo.



**Table 7-2: Stronger County Policy Role**

<p><b>Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County would assume a stronger role in developing regional transit services (for example, similar to development of Comp Plan).</li> <li>Otherwise, all parties involved in transit (county, cities, and others) would continue to develop and implement their own services according to need and ability.</li> </ul> <p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Pinal County Board of Supervisors would set transit policy with input from local jurisdictions.</li> <li>Other parties would represent their own interests.</li> </ul> <p><b>Powers and Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each party would continue to represent the interests of its own constituents.</li> <li>Individual parties would have no formal policy level control over regional services or services outside of its boundaries or service area.</li> <li>However, county could create a regional advisory body to address city/county or city/city transit issues and develop countywide approaches.</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing Grants and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County and cities are eligible recipients of all transit-related grants.</li> <li>County and cities can apply for many grants on behalf of social service agencies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential New Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be possible to extend use of excise tax funds to transit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Steps Required to Implement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County would need to work with cities and Indian communities to develop mutually acceptable forums and processes to address issues and develop transportation plans.</li> <li>If expansion of use of excise tax to transit is desired, voter approval would be required.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides improved mechanism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To address regional needs.</li> <li>For regional transit coordination.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Maintains high level of local control; each jurisdiction still free to choose its own approach.</li> <li>Could provide source of funding for transit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Would likely lead to greater mismatches between services and demand than other regional models.</li> <li>Could lead to similar duplication of functions and costs as with Status Quo.</li> <li>Small systems are often only as good as the individuals that operate them, which often results in significant differences in service quality.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should use of excise tax be expanded to transit?</li> <li>Will the county's transit needs outgrow the abilities of individual jurisdictions to provide service?</li> </ul>
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**Representation:** As at present, all parties that would provide transit service would continue to represent their own interests, and which would be governed by their own policy boards. However, the county, working with local jurisdictions, would set countywide transit policy on how and where service should be provided. Unless the county was to begin to provide funding, this policy would be advisory as individual jurisdictions and agencies would continue to make the ultimate decision on which services were provided and where. However, county policy would likely be given significant weight as part of ADOT's decision-making process for the allocation of transit funding. As desired, the county could also provide regional transit services.

**Legal Standing:** As at present, the legal status of existing transit providers would continue to vary by type of agency, and would be the same as with the Status Quo.

**Eligibility for Existing Grants and Funding:** As with the Status Quo, the county and cities are eligible recipients for all transit-related grants. Social service agencies are ineligible to directly receive funds from some sources, but the county and cities can apply for most of those grants on their behalf.

**New Funding Opportunities:** As with the Status Quo, and as described in that section, it may be possible to extend the use of the existing transportation excise tax to transit. In that case, each jurisdiction would receive the same amount of funds as under the current authorization, but could use those funds for transit to the extent that they desired.

**Advantages and Disadvantages:** As with the Status Quo, all parties would continue to be able to choose their own approach to transit based on their own priorities and funding abilities. In addition:

- There would be a lead party (the county) to address regional needs, to develop countywide transit policy, and to address coordination issues.
- The expansion of the transportation excise tax to transit could provide the funding needed to develop regional and local transit services.

A strong county role could eliminate many of the disadvantages of the Status Quo. However, some would remain:

- As more communities begin to develop transit service, it is likely that many communities will duplicate functions.
- Small systems are often only as good as the individuals that operate them, which can result in significant differences in service quality.
- Since different jurisdictions have different financial capabilities, as transit grows there would likely be greater mismatches between services and demand than there would be with regional models.

**Implementation:** To implement this option, the county would need to work with cities to develop mutually acceptable forums and processes to address issues and develop transportation policies and plans. In addition, if the county and cities desire to expand the use of the transportation excise tax to transit, voter approval would be required.



**Issues:** The major issue related to this option would be whether the county and cities desire to work together in this manner. In addition, the county and cities would need to determine whether they desire to expand the use of the existing excise tax to transit.

### **County-Operated Transit Service**

Pinal County has all of the powers necessary to provide transit service, and could do so either throughout the county, to provide regional services, and/or to fill gaps in services provided by others. This could be done as summarized in Table 7-3 and described below.

**Responsibilities and Powers:** The County has all powers necessary to perform all transit service-related functions. As desired, the county could also provide transit service on behalf of other public and private entities, and use county powers to provide that service. For example, the county could provide service for Pinal County's cities, Indian communities, and/or social service agencies, on either a reimbursement or non-reimbursement basis.

**Representation:** With a county-operated transit system, the Pinal County Board of Supervisors would act as the transit policy board and set transit policy for county transit services the same manner that it does for other county functions. Other jurisdictions or parties that provide transit service would represent their own interests, and there would be no regional body to address regional issues.

**Legal Standing:** County transit service would be a part of county government, and the county could exercise all of its powers to provide the transit service.

**Eligibility for Existing Grants and Funding:** The County is an eligible recipient for all transit-related grants.

**New Funding Opportunities:** As with many other options, and as described in the Status Quo section, it may be possible to extend the use of the existing transportation excise tax to transit. In that case, the county could use those funds to provide transit service.

**Advantages and Disadvantages:** As described in the introduction, one of the problems with the Status Quo is that there is no effective mechanism for the development of new transit services. With this option, and especially if the county would be willing to provide service on behalf of others, this option could provide that mechanism. At the same time, this option would also maintain a high level of local control.

In the event that the county decided to provide transit service, but largely to serve unincorporated areas and to provide regional services, the regional routes would necessarily service unincorporated areas and cities. In this case, the responsibility, both in terms of who should provide and who should pay for the service may not be clear. Also, as with the previous two options, with shared responsibilities for the provision of transit service, there would likely be greater mismatches between services and demand than there would be with regional models.

**Implementation:** The Pinal County Board of Supervisors has authority to provide transit service, and would need to make a policy decision to do so. It would also need to determine the extent to which it desires to provide transit service (for example, only primarily on behalf of residents in unincorporated areas, regional routes, on behalf of others, etc.) Once those



**Table 7-3: County-Operated Transit Service**

<p><b>Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County would provide transit services, either throughout the county, to provide regional services and/or to fill gaps in services provided by others (for example, the cities).</li> </ul> <p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Pinal County Board of Supervisors would set transit policy for county transit services in the same manner that it does for other county functions.</li> <li>Other parties would represent their own interests.</li> <li>There would be no regional body to address countywide transit issues.</li> </ul> <p><b>Powers and Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County has all powers necessary to develop and operate transit services.</li> <li>The provision of transit service could become a new function of the Public Works Department or a new county department.</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing Grants and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County is eligible recipient of all transit-related grants.</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential New Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May be possible to extend use of excise tax funds to transit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Steps Required to Implement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pinal County Board of Supervisors has authority to decide to provide transit service, and would need to make a policy decision to do so.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides direct mechanism for county to provide service in unincorporated areas and between cities and Indian communities.</li> <li>Maintains high level of local control; all transit interests would still be able to choose their own transit approaches.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Many transit routes would serve regional and local needs; responsibility for some services may not be clear.</li> <li>Would likely lead to greater mismatches between services and demand than other regional models.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Does the county want to become a transit provider?</li> <li>Should use of roadway excise tax be expanded to transit?</li> </ul>
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decisions were made, the county would then need to develop the capability to provide the service.

**Issues:** The major issue related to this option would be whether the county desires to be a transit provider. In addition, the county and cities would need to determine whether they desire to expand the use of the existing excise tax to transit.

**Arizona Examples:** Pima County provides fixed route transit service to residents living in rural areas of Pima County. The routes are designed to transport residents to jobs, major



shopping centers, and medical facilities in the Tucson metro area and provide connections to Sun Tran at major transfer centers. In addition, La Paz County operates a number of part-time routes (limited days per week) that are designed to provide shopping and medical trips primarily to seniors and persons with disabilities, but also to the general public. Finally, Coconino County provided Flagstaff's Mountain Line service until 2006 when operating responsibility was shifted to a newly established transit authority.

### **Regional Transportation Authority**

Regional Transportation Authorities, or RTAs, are intended to provide a structure under which counties can work collaboratively with cities and Indian communities to determine regional needs, weigh and balance the relative merits of different transportation modes, set priorities, and fund and implement programs and projects. Under ARS Title 48, Chapter 30, RTAs can be developed in counties with between 200,000 and 1.2 million residents (and is the approach that has been taken by Pima County).<sup>3</sup>

The powers and responsibilities of RTAs are summarized in Table 7-4 and described below:

**Responsibilities and Powers:** RTAs have responsibilities that go significantly beyond development of an effective way to provide transit service. RTAs are designed to lead all regional transportation planning and development efforts, including roads, transit, walking, biking, and ridesharing with the intent of ensuring the development of a balanced transportation system. Specific roles and responsibilities include:

1. Drive countywide transportation policy.
2. Develop and implement a regional transportation program that consists of roads, transit, human services transportation, ridesharing, walking, and biking.
3. Program projects.
4. Ensure appropriate financial contributions from involved parties.
5. Develop financial plans to fund and implement projects.
6. Foster collaboration between the county, cities, and Indian communities.
7. Provide appropriate representation to important stakeholders.

RTAs are required to develop a 20-year Regional Transportation Plan that describes proposed transportation elements and projects, funding, and implementation schedules. The 20-year plan must be approved by the voters. For Pinal County, the elements that would be contained in such a plan would likely be similar to those included in Pima County's Regional Transportation Plan (see: [www.rtamobility.com](http://www.rtamobility.com)).

The legislation also stipulates that the Regional Transportation Plan be financed, in part, through a countywide transportation excise (sales) tax of up to 0.5%. This tax must also be approved by the voters. However, as described in more detail in the New Funding

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<sup>3</sup> Counties with fewer than 200,000 residents can develop Intergovernmental Public Transit Authorities (IPTAs), which is what Coconino and Yavapai Counties have done, and counties with over 1.2 million residents (only Maricopa County), can develop a Regional Public Transportation Authority" (RPTA).



**Table 7-4: Regional Transportation Authority**

<p><b>Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County would establish an RTA that would be responsible for the development of a balanced regional transportation system that would include all appropriate transportation modes, including transit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The RTA board would be the same as the Regional Council of Governments board (CAAG) (one member from each county, city, and Indian community in Pinal and Gila Counties).</li> <li>(Enabling legislation likely did not consider cases in which a council of governments represented multiple counties, and thus “technical” changes would be desirable).</li> </ul> <p><b>Powers and Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RTA would have all powers necessary to develop and operate transit services.</li> <li>RTA would also program and fund other types of transportation projects (that would be constructed and maintained by individual jurisdictions).</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing Grants and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>RTAs are eligible recipients of all available transportation-related grants.</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential New Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The existing “roadway” excise tax would be replaced by a “transportation” excise tax that could be used to fund all modes (change would require voter approval).</li> <li>RTA would maintain and administer a “Regional Transportation Fund” that would be used to fund transportation projects.</li> </ul> <p><b>Steps Required to Implement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County has authority to establish an RTA.</li> <li>As a practical matter, would need consent and agreement with cities, Indian communities, and CAAG.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides a very strong focus on development of a balanced regional transportation system.</li> <li>Provides mechanism for county, cities, Indian communities, and other parties to work together on transportation issues in a collaborative manner.</li> <li>Provides mechanism for the development of a “seamless” countywide system.</li> <li>Would provide funding for transit and other alternative transportation modes (since “roadway” excise tax would be replaced by “transportation” excise tax).</li> <li>Would provide a single point of contact for regional coordination with Maricopa and Pima Counties.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Requires development of 20-year Regional Transportation Plan that would provide less programming flexibility than other options.</li> <li>Lower level of control for county on transportation issues due to shifting of many responsibilities to RTA.</li> <li>Potential for less local control for cities and Indian communities due to increased regional focus.</li> <li>Would reduce amount of funding directly available to county and cities (because RTA excise tax would replace transportation excise tax).</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do county and cities want to transfer transportation responsibilities to an RTA?</li> <li>Would need legislation to address Gila County board issue.</li> <li>Would require that existing roadway excise tax be replaced with RTA transportation excise tax.</li> <li>Excise tax change would require voter approval.</li> </ul>
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Opportunities section, for Pinal County, this tax would be in lieu of the county’s existing roadway excise tax, and not in addition to that tax.



RTAs have a variety of powers. For public transportation, RTAs can construct and acquire facilities and equipment, and operate or contract for the operation of service. RTAs can also acquire existing transit systems. For roadways, bike paths, and pedestrian facilities, RTAs provide funding to the county and cities that then construct and subsequently maintain the facilities.

RTAs fund the Regional Transportation Plan through a Regional Transportation Fund that includes excise tax revenues and other transportation funds appropriated by cities and received from other public and private sources (including state and federal funds). RTAs also have bonding authority.

RTAs do not have eminent domain powers, but the county and cities can exercise their eminent domain powers on behalf of the RTA.

**Legal Standing:** An RTA would be an independent authority with the powers authorized by ARS Title 48, Chapter 30.

**Membership/Representation:** The membership of RTAs consists of each municipality in the county, the county, and any other members of the regional council of governments, which in the case of Pinal County would be the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG). Since CAAG represents both Pinal and Gila Counties, according to the legislation, CAAG's Gila County members would also be Pinal County RTA members. However, it is unlikely that this was the intent of the legislation, and would likely need to be changed. Assuming that the legislation could be changed to include only Pinal County members, then RTA membership would consist of:

- Pinal County
- City of Apache Junction
- City of Globe
- City of Casa Grande
- Ak-Chin Indian Community
- City of Coolidge
- City of Eloy
- Town of Florence
- Gila River Indian Community
- Town of Hayden
- Town of Kearny
- City of Maricopa
- Town of Queen Creek
- San Carlos Apache Tribe
- Town of Superior
- Town of Winkelman
- Town of Mammoth

**Board of Directors/Executive Director:** RTAs are governed by a board of directors that is comprised of one representative for each member. Since membership in the RTA would be the same as for the CAAG (presumably the Pinal County members), the same individuals could provide representation on both boards (which is the case in Pima County). Each member has one vote.



When an RTA is first formed, the executive director of the regional council of governments acts as the executive director of the authority. At the discretion of the RTA board, the executive director of the regional council of governments can act as the executive director of the RTA on a permanent basis or a separate executive director can be selected. (In Pima County, the same individual is the Executive Director of the Council of Governments and the RTA.)

**Eligibility for Existing Grants and Funding:** RTAs are eligible recipients for all transit-related grants.

**New Funding Opportunities:** RTAs are required to submit an RTA excise tax to the voters for approval. However, in counties with fewer than 400,000 residents, the RTA sales tax cannot be enacted in addition to a county transportation excise tax for roads.<sup>4</sup> Thus, if Pinal County were to pursue an RTA, the RTA excise tax would have to replace the countywide road excise tax approved in 2005.<sup>5</sup> This would require voter approval.

The RTA excise tax revenue could still be used for roadway purposes, and in the same manner as currently authorized. In addition, RTA excise tax revenues could also be used for other transportation purposes. However, whereas the current roadway excise tax revenue can be used for as yet unspecified purposes, the uses of the RTA excise tax funds would need to be specified in the 20-Year Regional Transportation Plan that would be presented to voters for approval at the same time as the excise tax proposal. In addition, the RTA excise tax would be controlled by the RTA, and not allocated between the county and cities as is the case with the existing excise tax.

**Advantages and Disadvantages:** The RTA option has a large number of advantages and disadvantages. The advantages are that an RTA would provide:

- A very strong focus on development of a balanced regional transportation system.
- A mechanism for county, cities, Indian communities, and other parties to work together on transportation issues in a collaborative manner.
- A mechanism for the development of a “seamless” countywide system.
- Funding for transit and other alternative transportation modes (since the “roadway” excise tax would be replaced by “transportation” excise tax).

The disadvantages would be that an RTA would:

- Require development of 20-year Regional Transportation Plan that would provide less programming flexibility than now or with alternative options.
- Reduce the level of control for the county on transportation issues due to shifting of many responsibilities to RTA.
- Provide less local control for cities and Indian communities due to increased regional focus.
- Reduce amount of funding directly available to the county and cities (because the RTA excise tax would replace the existing transportation excise and would be controlled by the RTA).

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<sup>4</sup> §42-6106 & 42-6107.

<sup>5</sup> Resolution 070605-TET.



**Implementation:** The Pinal County Board of Supervisors has the authority to establish an RTA. As a practical matter, it would need the consent of and agreement with the cities, Indian communities, and CAAG. In addition, technical changes to the enabling legislation would be needed to provide representation only to Pinal County jurisdictions.

**Issues:** The major issue related to the establishment on an RTA is whether the county, cities, and Indian communities desire to transfer many transportation responsibilities, and control of associated funding, to an RTA. In addition, legislation would be needed to address the Gila County representation issue, and a vote would be required to replace the existing transportation excise tax with an RTA excise tax.

**Arizona Examples:** Pima County has developed an RTA to lead its transportation activities. There, much of the county's transit service is still provided by individual jurisdictions (most notably, Tucson's Sun Tran), but discussions are underway on the possible shifting of operational responsibilities to the RTA.

Three other counties use transportation or transit authorities that are similar to RTAs. In Maricopa County, the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) sets transit policy and provides much of the county's transit service. However, even with the RPTA, some communities, most notably Phoenix and Scottsdale, provide or contract for the operation of their own service. Coconino and Yavapai Counties have established an Intergovernmental Public Transit Authority (IPTA) to provide service in those counties.<sup>6</sup>

### **Joint Powers Organization**

Under ARS Title 11, Chapter 7, counties, cities, Indian communities, and other political subdivisions can form separate legal entities that can exercise all of the powers of their member agencies. These Joint Powers Organizations, or JPOs, provide a large degree of flexibility in that they can be comprised of only the organizations that desire to participate, and only to perform the functions and duties that their member organizations desire them to perform.

Major characteristics of JPOs are summarized in Table 7-5 and described below. Relevant Arizona statutes that define these powers and authorities are in Appendix B.

**Responsibilities and Powers:** A JPO could have any or all of the powers of its members, as desired by its member organizations. Thus, a JPO could have all of the powers necessary to provide transit service. Specific responsibilities and powers would be determined by its member organizations.

**Legal Standing:** A JPO would be a nonprofit corporation, with powers as defined in ARS Title 11, Chapter 7. This generally allows the nonprofit corporation to exercise the powers of its member agencies, and to pool property and liability.

**Eligibility for Existing Grants and Funding:** A JPO whose members included the county, cities, and/or Indian communities would be eligible to receive all transit-related grants.

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<sup>6</sup> Arizona law prescribes different types of authorities based on county population size, which is why there are different types of authorities in different counties.



**Table 7-5: Joint Powers Organization**

<p><b>Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counties, cities, and Indian communities can form separate legal entities that can exercise all of the powers of the member agencies.</li> </ul> <p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A JPO would be directed by a board of directors that would be composed as determined by its members.</li> <li>Board of directors' voting shares/procedures would be as determined by its members.</li> </ul> <p><b>Powers and Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>JPO would have all of the powers of its members, which would include all powers necessary to develop and operate transit services.</li> <li>JPO members could limit the powers of the JPO as desired.</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing Grants and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A JPO whose members included the county, cities and/or Indian communities would be eligible to receive all transit-related grants.</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential New Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A JPO would be funded by its members and would not leverage any major new revenue source.</li> <li>However, with voter approval, the use of the county excise tax could be extended to transit.</li> </ul> <p><b>Steps Required to Implement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County, cities, and Indian communities have authority to establish a JPO.</li> <li>Participating jurisdictions would need to negotiate specific terms, and then legislative bodies would approve.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops an organization that would be focused on the provision of transit service, and if desired, other alternative modes.</li> <li>Provides mechanism for county, cities, Indian communities, and other parties to work together on transit issues in a collaborative manner.</li> <li>Provides mechanism for the development of a "seamless" countywide transit system.</li> <li>Can include all political subdivisions, including Indian communities, and colleges and universities.</li> <li>Provides large amount of flexibility in determining makeup, roles, and mission.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential for less local control for county, cities and Indian communities due to increased regional focus.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do Pinal County's jurisdictions desire to join together to jointly provide transit service?</li> <li>Should use of roadway excise tax be expanded to transit?</li> </ul>
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**New Funding Opportunities:** A JPO would be funded by its members and would not leverage any major new revenue source. However, if desired by the county and the cities, it may be possible to extend the use of the existing countywide excise tax to transit. In this case, funding would continue to be allocated between the county and the cities on the same basis as at present. Each jurisdiction would receive the same amount of funds as under the



current authorization, but would be able to use some of those funds to pay for transit services provided by the JPO.

**Membership:** Eligible members of JPOs include the county, cities, Indian communities, and any other political subdivisions, and a transit JPO would be comprised of the eligible parties that desired to participate. The JPO would be directed by a board of directors that would be composed as determined by its members. The board of directors' voting shares/procedures would also be as determined by its members.

**Advantages and Disadvantages:** Because a JPO provides large amount of flexibility in determining makeup, roles, and mission, it could effectively be whatever its members want it to be. As a result, this option provides many advantages, and few disadvantages. Major advantages are that a JPO would provide:

- The opportunity to develop a professional agency that would be focused on developing and providing transit service, but that would maintain a strong level of local control. For example, membership in the JPO could be voluntary, participating jurisdictions could determine the levels of local transit service that they desire, and mutually agreeable cost-sharing arrangements could be developed for transit routes that serve multiple jurisdictions.
- A mechanism for county, cities, Indian communities, and other parties to work together on transit issues in a collaborative manner.
- A mechanism for the development of a "seamless" countywide transit system.

Furthermore, if the use of the excise tax were expanded to transit, then local jurisdictions would also have the flexibility to use a portion of those funds to fund the local share of costs for the transit service it receives.

**Implementation:** County, cities, Indian communities, and other political subdivisions all have the authority to establish a JPO. The jurisdictions that desire to join together to form a JPO would need to negotiate specific terms, which their respective legislative bodies would then need to approve.

**Issues:** The major issue related to the development of a JPO would be whether enough jurisdictions desire to join together to provide transit service. In addition, the county and cities would need to determine whether they desire to expand the use of the existing excise tax to transit if the use of excise tax revenues is desired.

**Arizona Examples:** The most recent example of a JPO for transit is in Maricopa County, where the cities of Phoenix, Tempe, Mesa, Glendale, Chandler, and Peoria formed a non-profit corporation to develop and operate Valley Metro Rail service.

In addition, another example would be the Northern Arizona Intergovernmental Transit Authority (NAIPTA), which, although it is a transit authority, operates essentially in the same manner as a JPO would operate. There, NAIPTA is a cooperative venture of Coconino and Yavapai Counties, the cities of Flagstaff, Sedona, and Cottonwood, and Northern Arizona University, and was formed to:

- Coordinate the planning of public transportation services of Coconino and Yavapai Counties.



- Improve efficiency by reducing the duplication that existed with multiple transit providers.
- Provide a professional organization with a clear focus on transit that could provide better service to the counties' communities.

Similar to the way a JPO would work, membership in NAIPTA is voluntary, and NAIPTA's members determine the services that they desire the organization to provide. NAIPTA then provides these services through intergovernmental agreements (as described in the next section).

### **Intergovernmental Agreements**

ARS Title 11, Chapter 7 also authorizes counties, cities, Indian communities, and other political subdivisions to enter into intergovernmental agreements (IGAs) in which one party acts on behalf of multiple jurisdictions. As is the case with JPOs, IGAs provide a large degree of flexibility in that they only involve organizations that desire to participate, and the agreements are only to perform mutually desirable activities.

Major characteristics of IGAs are summarized in Table 7-6 and described below. Relevant Arizona statutes that define these powers and authorities are the same as those for JPOs.

**Responsibilities and Powers:** Counties, cities, Indian communities, and any other political subdivisions can procure and provide services through IGAs, and use all of their authorized powers to do so. Since counties, cities, and Indian communities have all the powers necessary to provide transit service, all could provide transit service on behalf of each other through IGAs. The specific responsibilities of each party would be articulated in the IGA.

**Eligibility for Existing Grants and Funding:** All entities that could be party to an IGA are eligible to receive all transit-related grants.

**New Funding Opportunities:** As with most other options, it may be possible to extend the use of the existing countywide excise tax to transit. In this case, funding would continue to be allocated between the county and the cities on the same basis as at present. Each jurisdiction would receive the same amount of funds as under the current authorization, but would be able to use some of those funds to pay their share of services under an IGA.

**Advantages and Disadvantages:** The use of IGAs would provide a similar level of flexibility as the establishment of a JPO. However, the use of IGAs would mean that there would be no regional body to drive transit policy and development. As such, there would be no forum or mechanism to determine the role of transit within overall transportation system or for regional transit coordination. The lack of a lead agency would also likely mean that the development of a comprehensive regional system would require the negotiation of a large number of IGAs, which could prove unwieldy.

As with most other options, if the use of the excise tax were expanded to transit, then local jurisdictions would also have the flexibility to use a portion of those funds to fund the local share of costs for the transit service provided through IGAs.

**Implementation:** County, cities, Indian communities, and other political subdivisions all have the authority to procure and provide service through IGAs. Those that desired to do so



**Table 7-6: Intergovernmental Agreements**

<p><b>Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counties, cities, Indian communities, and other political subdivisions would develop IGAs that define respective roles and responsibilities.</li> </ul> <p><b>Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each party would represent its own interests and negotiate the terms of the IGA with other involved parties.</li> </ul> <p><b>Powers and Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The county, cities, and Indian communities have all powers necessary to implement interagency agreements for the provision of transit service, and could provide transit service on behalf of others through IGAs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing Grants and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>County, cities, and Indian communities are eligible recipients of all available grants.</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential New Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The use of IGAs would not leverage any major new revenue source.</li> <li>However, with voter approval, the use of the county excise tax could be extended to transit, and participating organizations could use those funds to pay for services provided through IGAs.</li> </ul> <p><b>Steps Required to Implement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Individual parties would negotiate agreements.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All parties can choose their own approaches and cooperative agreements.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of lead agency to drive regional transit policy/development.</li> <li>Could be difficult to develop agreements that involve three or more parties that mix local and regional issues.</li> <li>Development of comprehensive system could require large number of agreements, which could be unwieldy.</li> <li>No forum/mechanism: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To determine role of transit within overall transportation system.</li> <li>For regional transit coordination.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Would likely lead to greater mismatches between services and demand than other regional models.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there enough jurisdictions willing to join together to provide transit service to develop a regional system through IGAs?</li> <li>Should use of roadway excise tax be expanded to transit?</li> </ul>
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would need to negotiate specific terms, which their respective legislative bodies would then need to approve.

**Issues:** The major issue related to the provision of service through IGAs is whether there would be enough jurisdictions that desire to provide transit service in this manner. In addition, the county and cities would need to determine whether they desire to expand the use of the existing excise tax to transit to fund services provided through IGAs.

**Arizona Examples:** IGAs are commonly used for all types of cooperative ventures. In Pinal County, Coolidge and Florence are now providing Pinal Regional Express service to Casa Grande through an IGA. As described in the preceding section, NAIPTA in Coconino and Yavapai Counties provides service to its member agencies through IGAs.



## **Metropolitan Public Transit Authority**

ARS Title 40, Chapter 6, authorizes counties and cities (but not Indian communities) to create Metropolitan Public Transit Authorities, or MPTAs, to acquire, own, and operate public transit services in all or part of a county. If only part of the county is served, then that part must include at least 51% of the county's population. In most respects, an MPTA would be similar to a JPO, but with three key differences:

1. An MPTA can only be created by counties and cities, and not by Indian communities or other political subdivisions.
2. The jurisdiction or jurisdictions creating the MPTA must include at least 51% of the county's population (there is no population requirement for JPOs).
3. The county Board of Supervisors can levy property taxes on behalf of the MPTA.

Major characteristics of MPTAs are summarized in Table 7-7 and described below:

**Responsibilities and Powers:** MPTAs have all of the powers required to provide public transit service, including condemnation powers.

**Membership/Representation:** Initially, an MPTA would be directed by a board of directors consisting of five members who would be elected by the member jurisdictions, and who would serve until January 1 of the year following the next state general election. At that general election, and subsequently, between 5 and 11 members would be elected by popular vote to represent geographical areas.

**Legal Standing:** An MPTA would be a nonprofit corporation, with powers as defined in ARS Title 40, Chapter 6.

**Eligibility for Existing Grants and Funding:** MPTAs are eligible to receive all transit-related grants.

**New Funding Opportunities:** MPTAs can be partially funded through property taxes, which would be levied by the county Board of Supervisors on behalf of the MPTA.

In addition, as with most other options, it may be possible to extend the use of the existing countywide excise tax to transit. In this case, funding would continue to be allocated between the county and the cities on the same basis as at present. Each jurisdiction would receive the same amount of funds as under the current authorization, but would be able to use some of those funds to pay their share of services to an MPTA.

**Advantages and Disadvantages:** The establishment of an MPTA to provide transit service would be similar to the use of a JPO, but would provide less flexibility:

- Indian communities and other political subdivisions could not be included.
- The MPTA would need to include jurisdictions that include 51% of the county's population. Whereas a JPO could start small (with as few as two members) and grow as communities and demand grow, an MPTA would need to start with more members.



**Table 7-7: Metropolitan Public Transit Authority**

<p><b>Description</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Counties and cities (but not Indian communities) can create MPTAs to acquire, own, and operate public transit services.</li> </ul> <p><b>Membership and Representation</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An MPTA would be directed by a board of directors consisting of between 5 and 11 members.</li> <li>Initial board consists of 5 members, who are elected by member jurisdictions, and who serve until January 1 of the year following the next state general election.</li> <li>Subsequent board members elected by popular vote to represent geographical areas.</li> </ul> <p><b>Powers and Responsibilities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An MPTA would have all of the powers necessary to develop and operate transit services (including condemnation powers).</li> </ul> <p><b>Existing Grants and Funding</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An MPTA would be eligible to receive all transit-related grants.</li> </ul> <p><b>Potential New Funding Sources</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The county board of supervisors can levy property taxes on behalf of the MPTA.</li> <li>With voter approval, the use of the county excise tax could be extended to transit, and participating organizations could use those funds to partially fund the MPTA.</li> </ul> <p><b>Steps Required to Implement</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The participating jurisdictions would negotiate functions, roles, and terms.</li> <li>The governing bodies of the member jurisdictions can then form the MPTA by ordinance.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Advantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develops an organization that would be focused on the provision of transit service.</li> <li>Provides ability to levy property taxes to fund transit service.</li> <li>Provides mechanism for county and cities to work together on transit issues in a collaborative manner.</li> <li>Provides mechanism for the development of a “seamless” countywide transit system.</li> </ul> <p><b>Disadvantages</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less local control for county, cities and Indian communities as board of directors would be elected by popular vote.</li> <li>Cannot include Indian communities or colleges and universities as direct members.</li> </ul> <p><b>Issues</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do enough jurisdictions desire to provide transit service through an MPTA to encompass 51% of the county’s population, and do those jurisdictions desire transit to be directed by an elected rather than appointed board?</li> <li>Would property tax levies for transit be politically acceptable in transit authority area?</li> <li>Should use of roadway excise tax be expanded to transit?</li> </ul>
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In addition, with a JPO, the member jurisdictions would appoint the policy board in a mutually agreeable manner. With an MPTA, board members would be popularly elected, which would reduce the amount of direct control for the county and cities that would establish the MPTA.



**Implementation:** To establish an MPTA, the participating jurisdictions would negotiate functions, roles, and terms. Then, the governing bodies of the member jurisdictions would form the MPTA by ordinance.

**Issues:** An MPTA would provide less flexibility than other options, and the only major opportunity that an MPTA would provide that other options would not would be the ability to levy property taxes for transit. Thus the major issue would be whether the use of property taxes is desired. Secondary issues would be whether there would be enough jurisdictions that desire to provide transit service through an MPTA to encompass 51% of the county's population, and whether those jurisdictions desire transit to be directed by an elected rather than appointed board.

**Arizona Examples:** To date, no MPTAs have been established.

## **SUMMARY/CONCLUSIONS**

In Pinal County today, transit needs are still relatively limited, but are growing. Through the information collected as part of this study, it is clear that the county's long term needs will be significantly greater than, and different from, its short-term needs. In addition, as the recession has illustrated, Pinal County's growth will not be linear but instead will both slow and accelerate depending upon economic and other conditions. Furthermore, growth will not occur at the same rate in all areas, but will initially be faster in some parts of the county and then spread to others. For example, Casa Grande is currently much larger than Eloy and growing more quickly, but by 2028, both are expected to be a similar size.

Considering the magnitude of the changes that are expected to occur in Pinal County over the next 20 years, above all else, the County will need adopt an approach that will be flexible and that can evolve as needs changes. As described above, there are a number of different models though which transit can be provided. Many are similar, but others are fundamentally different (see Table 7-8). Of all of the options that are available, a Joint Powers approach appears to provide the best balance of effectiveness and flexibility, plus the ability to start small and adjust and expand as needs grow. Broadly, a JPO would be designed to:

1. Foster collaboration between the county, cities, and Indian communities.
2. Set and drive transportation policy.
3. Develop, implement, and provide transit service for member organizations.
4. Program transit projects.
5. Develop financial plans to fund and implement projects.
6. Receive and administer transit funding.
7. Ensure appropriate financial contributions from involved parties.

At the outset, the JPO could be comprised of the jurisdictions that desire to participate when the JPO is formed, and those jurisdictions would determine the policy structure and specific functions of the organization (for example, whether to provide its own service or to contract for service). It would also develop a process for adding new members over time. Similar to the approach that is being used in Coconino and Yavapai Counties, member jurisdictions could determine for themselves the services that they desire the JPO to provide on their behalf, and work together on regional services through the JPO forum.



**Table 7-8: Overview of Governance Options**

	<b>Status Quo</b>	<b>Stronger County Policy Role</b>	<b>County Operated Service</b>	<b>RTA</b>	<b>Service through IGAs</b>	<b>JPO</b>	<b>MPTA</b>
Policy Board	County & Individual City Boards	County Board	County Board	CAAG	County & Local Boards	Determined by Members	Elected
Local Control	High	High	High	Medium	High	High	Low
Eligible Members	NA	NA	NA	County, Cities, Indian communities	NA	Political Subdivisions	County & Cities
Collective Clout to Develop Transit	Low	Low	Low	High	Low	High	High
Development of Regional Policy	Poor	Fair-Good	Fair-Good	Very Good	Poor	Very Good	Very Good
Development of Regional Service	Poor	Fair	Fair	Very Good	Fair	Very Good	Very Good
Dedicated Funding	Potential Excise Tax	Potential Excise Tax	Potential Excise Tax	Excise Tax	Potential Excise Tax	Potential Excise Tax	Potential Property Tax & Excise Tax
Development of Balanced Transportation System	No	Fair	Fair	Very Good	Poor	Good	Good
Programming Flexibility	Very Good	Very Good	Very Good	Fair	Very Good	Very Good	Fair



Equally important, to expand transit, local sources of funding will be needed to leverage available state and federal funding. At present, state law permits transportation excise tax revenue to be used to fund transit. However, the wording of the Pinal County's proposition appears to limit their use to roadways. With voter approval, the use of the excise tax could be changed to include transit. In this case, the county and cities would continue to receive that same amount of funding as they would otherwise, but could also have the means to fund the services that they would want the JPO to provide on their behalf.

Furthermore, since the excise tax funds are typically only programmed out for five years, the use of excise tax funds for transit starting in year 6 would not affect currently programmed roadway projects. The use of excise tax funds for transit would also allow the county and cities to begin to develop a more balanced transportation system.





## Chapter 8

# Findings and Recommendations

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### **FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS**

Between 2000 and 2007, Pinal County's incorporated areas grew by 66%, with the largest growth in Casa Grande, Apache Junction, Maricopa, and Florence. During the same period, unincorporated areas grew even faster – by 105%. San Tan Valley has become the county's largest community and the fastest growing, with a population of approximately 80,000. The community of Maricopa, which had fewer than 700 residents in 2000, is now the county's fourth largest community.

Moving forward, Pinal County will continue to grow rapidly:

- Casa Grande, Apache Junction, Eloy, and Florence will grow to medium-size cities that will also become regional employment centers.
- Undeveloped areas between Apache Junction and San Tan Valley will be developed.
- Most of the western half of the county between the Gila River Indian Community to the north and the Tohono O'Odham Indian Community to the south will be developed and largely centered on Casa Grande and Eloy.
- The City of Maricopa will continue to grow. Travel will continue to be highly oriented toward Maricopa County, but also with higher levels of travel to Casa Grande.

In general, there will be an arc of development around the eastern and southern sides of the Gila River Indian Community and along I-10 between Casa Grande and Eloy. The eastern part of the county will grow at a slower pace. There, although total transit demand will be low, there will still be a need for transportation for medical care and other critical types of trips.

With this growth, the county's long-term transit needs will be much greater and different from its short-term transit needs. Also, as the recession has illustrated, Pinal County's growth will not be linear, but will both slow and accelerate, depending on economic and other conditions. Furthermore, growth will not occur at the same rate throughout the county. Some communities may grow rapidly, while others grow moderately. Then the reverse can occur, where moderate growth communities become rapid growth communities. With the expected variability in growth levels and patterns, Pinal County will need to develop a flexible approach that can evolve as needs change.

One of the challenges in creating an effective regional transit system in a rapidly growing area is to first develop an institutional structure under which this can be done, and that structure will need to be developed in Pinal County. Throughout Arizona and the country, transit service is provided by many different types of organizations that use a wide variety of governance structures. Of all the governance options available, a Joint Powers Organization (JPO) appears to offer Pinal County the best balance of effectiveness and flexibility, plus the ability to start small and adjust and expand as needs grow.



JPOs are nonprofit corporations comprised of local governments that are created for a specific purpose—in this case to create and operate a transit system. A JPO would be designed to:

- Foster collaboration between the county, cities, towns, and Indian communities.
- Set and drive transportation policy.
- Develop, implement, and provide transit service for member organizations.
- Program transit projects.
- Develop financial plans to fund and implement.
- Receive and administer transit funding.
- Ensure appropriate financial contributions from involved parties.

A Joint Powers Organization would be governed by a board of representatives from all participating communities and would provide the needed capabilities and flexibility as the county grows. A JPO would not have taxing authority, and participating communities would only pay for the type and level of service they desire, using revenues that they would determine. As needs change, communities could also opt out of the JPO, and other communities could join.

## **NEXT STEPS/RECOMMENDATIONS**

As described above, before Pinal County can significantly improve transit, it must develop an institutional structure through which this can be accomplished, and a JPO would be the best way to accomplish this. However, a number of steps will first need to be undertaken to develop a JPO. In addition, other actions should and can be taken in the shorter-term to improve transit and to start to build a foundation for future transit improvements. These include:

- A. Initiate a Pinal County Transit Coordinating Council (TCC).
- B. Improve coordination among existing services.
- C. Improve sharing of expertise among providers.
- D. Better publicize and market existing services.
- E. Develop common branding for existing services.
- F. Explore funding opportunities.
- G. Pursue opportunities for the development of intra-county regional transit services.
- H. Explore opportunities to partner with Maricopa County's RTPA and Pima County's RTA on the development of inter-county regional services.
- I. Conduct additional work needed to develop a Pinal County JPO.
- J. Investigate zoning changes to facilitate and support transit use.
- K. Incorporate a transit opportunities assessment in county and local subdivision review processes.
- L. Incorporate transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities into new roadway projects.
- M. Further investigate development of a countywide vanpool program.
- N. Further investigate development of a countywide volunteer driver program.
- O. Conduct periodic transit plan updates.

In more detail, these next steps would entail the following:

### **A. Initiate Pinal County Transit Coordinating Council**

While Pinal County's transit needs are still relatively low, there are a significant number of existing services provided by the county, individual communities, and social service providers.



However, these existing services do not work together as a system, and there is no established mechanism through which existing operators can work together to address transit issues, develop regional services or address new needs.

A first step toward stronger transit service would be to establish a Pinal County Transit Coordinating Council (TCC) through which existing and potential transit providers could address common and interparty issues through a more regional perspective.<sup>1</sup> Participation in the TCC would be voluntary, and the TCC would serve to promote and facilitate cooperation and coordination, and provide a forum through which participants could address regional issues and share expertise. Until the development of a JPO, and possibly beyond, the TCC could take the lead role in improving coordination, sharing expertise, developing common branding, and exploring funding opportunities. A TCC could also play an important role in the development of a JPO.

The county would be the most logical party to lead development of the TCC, and this study's Transit Formulation Committee could form the initial basis for the TCC.

### **B. Improve Coordination among Pinal County's Existing Services**

As described above, there are a number existing transit services, but they do not work together as part of a system. Once formed, a major focus area of the TCC should be to lead coordination efforts.

### **C. Improve Sharing of Expertise**

There are currently a number of "similar but different" programs; especially volunteer driver programs. Another important focus area of a TTC should to compare individual practices to determine which work best and then work with individual providers to extend those practices to other services.

### **D. Better Publicize and Market Existing Services**

Existing services are not well publicized or marketed (at the beginning of this study, it was often difficult to obtain detailed information about the services). A third major focus area of the TCC should be to improve information on existing services. The TCC (or the county on behalf of the TCC) should establish a clearinghouse that provides information the availability of existing services via the Internet, phone, print media, and other methods. For example, in Maricopa

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<sup>1</sup> TCC's are used in a number of areas, including the San Francisco Bay Area and Michigan. In the San Francisco Bay Area, which has dozens of different transit operators, the RTCC is composed of the general managers of the region's largest transit operators and coordinates routes, schedules, fares, and transfers among operators, provides input to the MPO on transit policy and funding, and conducts legislative advocacy. In the La Crosse, Wisconsin/La Crescent, Minnesota area, the Transit Coordinating Council was established to study, develop, recommend, and advise the MPO on a wide range of transit-related programs and issues. That TCC is comprised of area policy board members, DOT representatives, transit managers, and transit stakeholders.

County, Valley Metro provides information on its own services as well as those provided by individual cities.

### **E. Develop Common Branding for Existing Services**

Beyond the lack of information, another reason that many residents and workers are not aware of existing services is that the many small services operate under many different names. A common branding strategy for all services – for example, the Valley Metro brand in Maricopa County, and the “Sun” brand in Pima County – could improve the awareness of existing services. The development of a common brand could also be undertaken by the TCC.

### **F. Explore Funding Opportunities**

One of the major challenges in the development of better transit services will be how to fund them. One opportunity identified as part of this study would be the use of the county’s existing transportation excise tax for transit based on local decisions by the county and the cities (in which case revenues that are now used completely for road projects would also be available for transit). More recently, HB 2627 would allow some counties, including Pinal County, to enact an additional ½ cent excise tax for transportation if approved by the voters. In this case, a TCC could work with its individual constituencies to determine how existing revenues should be used, and whether there could be support for an additional excise for transit.

### **G. Pursue Opportunities for the Development of Intra-County Regional Transit Services**

As described in this study, there is already demand for regional service, and this demand will grow. Another focus area of the TCC would be to provide a more effective forum for the development of regional services.

### **H. Explore Opportunities to Partner with Maricopa County’s RPTA and Pima County’s RTA on the Development of Inter-County Services.**

As described in this report, there is a large amount of travel between Pinal County and Maricopa and Pima Counties—for example, between Apache Junction, Queen Creek, Maricopa and Maricopa County, and between southern communities and Pima County. As the county grows, these travel volumes will also grow. Particularly in “border” communities such as Apache Junction Queen Creek, and San Tan Valley, inter-county services will represent some of the greatest needs.

This study focused on service within Pinal County and connections to existing or currently planned services in Maricopa and Pima County. However, ongoing work in Maricopa and Pima Counties may increase the need for transit between Pinal County, Maricopa County, and Pima County beyond those that were considered in this study. For example, if Queen Creek is successful in working with Maricopa County’s RPTA to extend Valley Metro service into the Maricopa County portion of Queen Creek, that would create significant new opportunities for the extension of these services into the Pinal County portion of Queen Creek. Similarly, development in the Williams Gateway area may provide opportunities to extend additional Pinal County services into Maricopa Country. Once formed, the TCC should work with Maricopa’s RPTA and Pima County’s RTA to ensure coordination on activities with inter-county travel implications and to take advantage of new transit opportunities as they arise.

### **I. Conduct Additional Work Needed to Develop a Pinal County JPO**

Initial reaction to establishing a Pinal County JPO to lead development of transit in Pinal County has been positive. However, a significant amount of additional work still needs to be undertaken to determine specific levels of interest, either at this time or in the near future, and to determine specific issues, roles, responsibilities, and authorities. The county, with the assistance of the TCC, should undertake further study to refine JPO options and determine the preferred approach.

The JPO could then take the place of the TCC, or the TCC could be maintained as an advisory committee to the JPO.

### **J. Investigate Zoning Changes to Facilitate Transit Use**

To date, the design of many new developments has hindered the provision of transit service. For example, many new developments have only one entrance and exit that prevent efficient bus circulation. They are also surrounded by walls that make it difficult for passengers to walk to and from bus stops. Similarly, in commercial developments, parking regulations often require more parking than is actually needed, especially in mixed-use developments where parking can be shared, and the large parking areas then result in long walks from bus stops to commercial activities. Many areas across the country have addressed these issues by revising their zoning regulations to facilitate the development of a more transit-friendly environment. Pinal County should review its zoning regulations to determine appropriate changes. The county could also develop model zoning regulations for transit-supportive development to for use by the county's communities.

### **K. Incorporate a Transit Opportunities Assessment in County And Local Subdivision Review Processes**

As has been the case with recent residential growth, much future growth will consist of large subdivisions. Often, these subdivisions are designed without consideration to transit. The county should develop a process to explicitly consider transit opportunities that could include the use of dedicated open space for transit facilities, the development of bus stops at entrances to subdivisions, dedicated pedestrian connections between subdivisions and major arterials, and roadway designs that would provide for effective transit circulation. The county should incorporate a transit opportunities assessment into its subdivision review process and encourage the cities to do the same.

### **L. Incorporate Transit, Pedestrian, and Bicycle Facilities Into New Roadway Projects**

In many cases, the development of new roadways will precede the development of new transit services. However, the subsequent development of transit can be facilitated if those roadway projects are designed in a manner that anticipates those services—for example:

- Bus stops and pedestrian and bicycle ways to and from the stops.
- Queue jump lanes at major intersections on new arterials and parkways.
- Park and ride lots in corridors that will be served by major regional and commuter bus services.

In many cases, those facilities could be constructed later, but the initial designs should facilitate their subsequent development and right-of-way acquisition for the roadway projects should include the land necessary for associated transit facilities. The county should incorporate these practices into its own design requirements and land acquisition activities and encourage ADOT and the county's communities to do the same.

#### **M. Investigate Development of a Countywide Vanpool Program**

At the present time and over the short-term, travel volumes between many areas are relatively high, but not high enough to support bus service (for example, to and from county and prison jobs in Florence). However, these markets could support much higher levels of vanpool usage. The county should investigate the expansion of its vanpool program countywide to provide ridesharing opportunities between areas where there are no transit options.

#### **N. Further Investigate Development of a Countywide Volunteer Driver Program**

Some communities, most notably Apache Junction and Casa Grande, have developed very effective volunteer driver programs to provide transportation to residents without other options. The county should investigate the development of a countywide volunteer driver program.

#### **O. Conduct Periodic Transit Plan Updates**

This document presents a snapshot of future needs based on what is known and expected at this time. However, as evidenced by the recent recession, growth will not be linear and will also be impacted by events that cannot be foreseen at this time, and it will occur in different parts of the county at different times.

For these reasons, to reflect future changes, this plan should be updated on a periodic basis of every three to five years. Until the JPO is established, the county should work together with the TCC to develop these updates. In the longer term, once the JPO has been established with a critical mass of membership, the JPO should develop these updates.

### **IMPLEMENTATION RESPONSIBILITIES**

The development of a strong countywide transit system will require partnerships between the county, individual city, Indian communities, and social service providers. Initially, the county would be the logical lead for many initial activities, which would include (see also Table 8-1):

- A. Initiate a Pinal County Transit Coordinating Council (TCC).
  - I. Pursue development of a Pinal County JPO.
  - J. Investigate zoning changes to facilitate transit use.
  - K. Incorporate a transit opportunities assessment in county and local subdivision review processes.
  - L. Incorporate transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities into the design of roadway projects.
  - M. Further investigate development of a countywide vanpool program.
  - N. Further investigate development of a countywide volunteer driver program.
  - O. Conduct periodic transit plan updates.



However, with the development of a Transit Coordinating Council and until development of the JPO, the TCC could then take over the lead for many activities, and these would be:

- B. Improve coordination among existing services.
- C. Improve sharing of expertise among providers.
- D. Better publicize and market existing services.

**Table 8-1: Implementation Responsibilities**

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Lead Party</b>
A. Initiate Pinal County Transit Coordinating Council (TCC).	County
B. Improve coordination among existing services.	TCC
C. Improve sharing of expertise among providers.	TCC
D. Better publicize and market existing services.	TCC
E. Develop common branding for existing services.	TCC
F. Explore funding opportunities.	TCC
G. Pursue opportunities for development of intra-county regional transit services.	TCC
H. Explore opportunities with Maricopa County’s RTPA and Pima County’s RTA to develop inter-county regional services.	TCC
I. Pursue development of a Pinal County JPO.	County
J. Investigate zoning changes to facilitate transit use	County
K. Incorporate transit opportunities assessment in subdivision review processes.	County
L. Incorporate transit, pedestrian, and bicycle facilities into roadway projects.	County
M. Further investigate development of a countywide vanpool program.	County
N. Further investigate development of a countywide volunteer driver program.	County
O. Conduct periodic transit plan updates.	County

- E. Develop common branding for existing services.
- F. Explore funding opportunities.
- G. Pursue opportunities for development of intra-county regional transit services.
- H. Explore opportunities with Maricopa County’s RTPA and Pima County’s RTA to develop inter-county regional services.





## Appendix A

### Existing Transit Funding Sources

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Funds for transit services are provided through a variety of sources, which typically consist of a complex allocation of federal, state, and local public and non-governmental funds. The following sections describe the funding sources that are currently available for transit in Pinal County and Arizona.

#### **FEDERAL FUNDING**

Nearly all transit systems receive substantial federal funding. Major funding programs, and their implications for transit service in Pinal County are as follows:

#### **FTA Section 5307 Urban Area Funds**

FTA Section 5307 provides funding for transit capital and operating assistance in urbanized areas and for transportation related planning. An urbanized area is an incorporated area with a population of 50,000 or more that is designated as such by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

Eligible purposes include:

- Planning, engineering design, and evaluation of transit projects and other technical transportation-related studies.
- Capital investments in bus and bus-related activities such as replacement of buses, overhaul of buses, and rebuilding of buses.
- Crime prevention and security equipment.
- Construction of maintenance and passenger facilities.
- Capital investments in new and existing fixed guideway systems including rolling stock, overhaul and rebuilding of vehicles, track, signals, communications, and computer hardware and software.
- All preventive maintenance.
- Some Americans with Disabilities Act complementary paratransit service costs.
- For urbanized areas with populations of less than 200,000, operating assistance is also an eligible expense.

FTA Section 5307 funds can be used for up to 80% of capital expenses and up to 50% of operating expenses (in small urbanized areas).

For urbanized areas with populations of 200,000 or more, funds are apportioned and flow directly to a designated recipient selected locally to apply for and receive Federal funds. These funds are apportioned using a formula that is based on a number of population and service-based factors. In the Phoenix-Mesa area, which includes parts of Apache Junction, the City of Phoenix is the designated-recipient.



For urbanized areas under 200,000 in population, the funds are apportioned to the Governor of each state for distribution. In Arizona, ADOT's Multimodal Planning Division (MPD) administers these and all other FTA funds that are distributed to states. These funds are apportioned based on population and population density.

To be eligible to receive these funds, a community or area must be part of a US Census Bureau designated urbanized area, and these designations are set and/or modified following each decennial census. As described above, part of Apache Junction is within the Phoenix-Mesa urbanized area. This means that transit capital projects in Apache Junction (for example, a transit center) would be eligible for Section 5307 projects. To obtain these funds, the city and/or the county would need the cooperation and consent of the City of Phoenix, which is the urbanized area's designated-recipient, and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), which programs the federal funding for the Phoenix-Mesa urbanized area.

Based on the 2000 US Census, no other part of Pinal County is considered to be part of an urbanized area. For 2010, based on current population levels and trends, it does not appear likely that any will exceed the 50,000 population threshold for the creation of new small urbanized areas. However, it is possible that Phoenix-Mesa urbanized area could be expanded into more of Pinal County (for example Queen Creek and San Tan Valley) which could make new areas eligible for Section 5307 funding. Furthermore, over the longer-term (2020 and beyond), multiple areas, such as Casa Grande, Maricopa, and Eloy, could be designated as urbanized areas.

### **FTA Section 5309 Transit Capital Investment Program**

FTA's Section 5309 transit capital investment program provides capital assistance for three primary activities:

1. Bus and bus facilities.
2. Rail and fixed-guideway modernization.
3. New fixed guideway systems (-New Starts").

Eligible recipients for capital investment funds are public bodies and agencies (transit authorities and other state and local public bodies and agencies thereof) including states, municipalities, other political subdivisions of states, FTA Section 5309 funds can fund up to 80% of total project costs, but typically fund significantly lower proportions. *Funds for all three programs are allocated through Congressional earmarks in annual appropriations law and/or authorization acts.*

### **FTA Section 5309 Buses and Bus-Related Equipment and Facilities**

The FTA Section 5309 Buses and Bus-Related Equipment and Facilities program provides capital assistance for new and replacement buses, related equipment, and facilities. Eligible capital projects include the purchasing of buses for fleet and service expansion, bus maintenance and administrative facilities, transfer facilities, bus malls, transportation centers, intermodal terminals, park-and-ride stations, acquisition of replacement vehicles, bus rebuilds, bus preventive maintenance, passenger amenities such as passenger shelters and bus stop signs, accessory and miscellaneous equipment such as mobile radio units, supervisory vehicles, fare boxes, computers, and shop and garage equipment.



This source of funding could be used to develop many of the facilities and to purchase the buses that would be needed for the development of expanded transit services in Pinal County. To obtain these funds, Pinal County would need to develop strong political support in order to get the funds earmarked as part of the federal appropriations process.

### **FTA Section 5309 Rail and Fixed Guideway Modernization**

FTA Section 5309 Rail and Fixed Guideway Modernization funds are distributed to large urbanized areas on a formula basis for the modernization of fixed guideway transit services such as rail, ferry, cable cars, and buses operating in exclusive rights of way that are over seven years old.

For Pinal County, the seven year requirement means that there is no short-term potential to use this source to fund transit expansion. However, over the longer-term, if fixed-guideway services are extended from the Phoenix metro area to parts of Pinal County that are in the Phoenix-Mesa urbanized area (currently only parts of Apache Junction), then these funds could be used for modernization purposes as those services age.

### **FTA Section 5309 New Starts**

FTA Section 5309 New Starts are used to build new light rail, rapid rail (heavy rail), commuter rail, monorail, automated fixed guideway systems (such as a “people mover”), or a busway/high occupancy vehicle (HOV) facilities, or extensions of any of these. Projects become candidates for funding under this program by successfully completing the appropriate steps in the major capital investment planning and project development process.

Historically, Section 5309 has provided funding for major new fixed guideway projects, or major extensions of existing systems. However, there are now two new subcategories of New Starts, called “Small Starts” and “Very Small Starts,” that as the names imply, provide funding for smaller new starts projects.

**Small Starts:** To qualify as a Small Start, the total project cost must be less than \$250 million, with no greater than \$75 million in requested Section 5309 funding. In addition, a project must meet one of the following guideway criteria:

1. Be a fixed guideway for at least 50% of the project length in the peak period, and/or
2. Be a corridor-based bus project with the following minimum elements:
  - Substantial transit stations.
  - Signal priority/pre-emption (for Bus/LRT).
  - Low floor/level boarding vehicles.
  - Special branding of service.
  - Frequent service: at least 10 minutes peak/15 minutes off peak.
  - Service offered at least 14 hours per day.

None of the bus projects that are currently being considered for Pinal County would operate frequently enough to qualify for this funding.



**Very Small Starts:** Very Small Starts projects are bus, rail, or ferry projects that contain the following features:

- Transit stations.
- Signal priority/pre-emption (for Bus/LRT).
- Low floor/level boarding vehicles.
- Special branding of service.
- Frequent service: at least 10 minutes peak/15 minutes off peak.
- Service offered at least 14 hours per day.
- Existing corridor ridership exceeding 3,000/day.
- Less than \$50 million total cost.
- Less than \$3 million per mile (excluding vehicles).

For two reasons, none of the bus projects that are currently being considered for Pinal County would qualify for this funding: none would operate frequently enough, nor would they serve corridors with more than 3,000 existing riders.

### **FTA Section 5310 Elderly & Persons with Disabilities Transportation Program**

FTA Section 5310 is designed to provide capital—primarily in the form of vehicles—and coordination planning assistance in the form of “Mobility Management” awards to qualified agencies serving predominately older adults and/or persons with disabilities. Eligible recipients are private nonprofit agencies and governmental agencies in areas where there are not any nonprofit agencies that serve the transportation needs of the elderly and persons with disabilities. Funds are apportioned based on each state’s share of the country’s qualifying populations. Eligible recipients include private nonprofit and public agencies that provide transportation to these individuals.

ADOT’s Multimodal Planning Division administers the Section 5310 program, and makes funding decisions in collaboration with Councils of Governments (COGs), Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs), and social service transportation professionals. Section 5310 funds can be used for up to 90% of capital expenses. Arizona received \$3.9 million in Section 5310 funds in FY 2009. In Pinal County, these funds are currently used to support programs in Casa Grande, Coolidge, Eloy, and Florence. Going forward, Section 5310 will continue to be an important source of funding for transportation services for Pinal County’s older residents and residents with disabilities.

### **FTA Section 5311 Rural and Small Urban Areas**

FTA Section 5311 provides formula funding to states for the purpose of supporting public transportation in areas with fewer than 50,000 residents. Funds may be used for capital, operating, and administrative assistance to state agencies, local public bodies, Indian tribes, and nonprofit organizations, and operators of public transportation services. The state must use 15 percent of its annual apportionment to support intercity bus service, unless the Governor certifies, after consultation with affected intercity bus providers that these needs of the state are adequately met. Projects to meet the requirements of the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Clean Air Act, or bicycle access projects, may be funded at 90 percent Federal match. The maximum FTA share for operating assistance is 50 percent of the net operating costs.



The Section 5311 program is funded through federal apportionments to the Governor of each state based on each state's non-urbanized population and land area. ADOT's MPD administers the program in Arizona and awards funds to participating systems through an annual competitive application process.

In FY 2008, Arizona received a total of \$9.1 million in Section 5311 funding, which ADOT awarded to 18 cities, Indian communities, and social services agencies. The City of Coolidge received Section 5311 funding for Cotton Express service, as did the City of Maricopa for Maricopa Xpress service. For the future, FTA Section 5311 could be an important source of funding for new services in Pinal County.

### **FTA Section 5316 Job Access and Reverse Commute Program (JARC)**

FTA Section 5316 JARC funds are designed to assist states and localities in developing new or expanded transportation services that connect welfare recipients, other persons with low income, and others to jobs and employment related services. Job Access projects are targeted at developing new or expanded transportation services such as shuttles, vanpools, new bus routes, connector services to mass transit, and guaranteed ride home programs for welfare recipients and persons with low income. (The eligibility threshold of the "Job Access" portion of JARC is 150% of the federal poverty level or lower.) Reverse Commute projects have no such income-limiting provision and provide transportation services to suburban employment centers from urban, rural, and other suburban locations for all populations. Eligible applicants include private nonprofit organizations, state or local governmental authorities, and operators of public transportation services including private operators.

Eligible activities for Job Access grants include capital, operating and planning expenses of services, equipment, facilities, and associated capital maintenance items related to providing access to jobs. Eligible projects include, but are not limited to:

- Late night and weekend service.
- Guaranteed ride home services.
- Shuttle service.
- Expanding fixed route mass transit routes.
- Demand-responsive van service.
- Ridesharing and carpooling activities.
- Transit related aspects of bicycling.
- Transportation for jobs, interviews, and training.
- Transportation to/from day care.

Eligible expenditures also include the use of transit by workers with nontraditional work schedules, promoting the use of transit vouchers, and promoting the use of employer-provided transportation including the transit benefits. For Reverse Commute grants, operating costs, capital costs, and other costs associated with reverse commute by bus, train, carpool, vans, or other transit service are all eligible.

ADOT's MPD administers JARC funds for all rural (less than 50,000 population) and small urbanized areas (50,000 to 199,999 population). JARC funds can be used for up to 50% of operating expenses and 80% of capital expenses. In FY 2009, Arizona received approximately \$590,000 in JARC funding.



## **Section 5317 New Freedom Program**

FTA's Section 5317 New Freedom grant program is designed to support services and facility improvements that address the transportation needs of persons with disabilities that go beyond those required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). The foundation of the New Freedom program is larger fixed-route urban systems that are required to have parallel or "complementary" paratransit systems to meet the needs of disabled individuals. The stereotypical project is extended hours or days, or expansion of service area or other operating parameters not available under previous funding mechanisms. For ADOT's program, Section 5317 is distinguished from Section 5310 by its focus only on persons with disabilities and providing services not otherwise available through 5310 or other grant programs.

Eligible recipients include private nonprofit organizations, state or local governmental authorities, and operators of public transportation services including private operators of public transportation services. The types of activities that can be funded under the program include:

- Purchasing vehicles and supporting accessible taxi, ride-sharing, and vanpooling programs; including staff training, administration, and maintenance.
- Providing paratransit services beyond minimum requirements (3/4 mile to either side of a fixed route), including for routes that run seasonally.
- Making accessibility improvements to transit and intermodal stations not designated as key stations.
- Supporting voucher programs for transportation services offered by human service providers.
- Supporting mobility management and coordination programs among public transportation providers and other human service agencies providing transportation. These activities are considered a capital cost and are defined as short-range planning and management activities and projects for improving coordination among public transportation and other transportation service providers.

ADOT's Multimodal Planning Division administers JARC funds for all rural (less than 50,000 population) and small urbanized areas (50,000 to 199,999 population). New Freedom funds can be used for up to 50% of operating expenses and 80% of capital expenses. In FY 2009, Arizona received approximately \$240,000 in New Freedom funding.

## **FHWA SURFACE TRANSPORTATION PROGRAM FUNDS**

The Federal Highway Administration's Surface Transportation Program (STP) is a "flexible funding" source that allows states to shift highway funds to transit uses, and when this is done, the funds are shifted into one or more of the FTA funding programs described above. In Arizona, the State Transportation Board, which administers state highway spending, determines the amount of funds to be "flexed" to transit. For FY 2008, Arizona flexed a total of \$6.5 million to transit: \$4.1 million to FTA Section 5307, \$1.5 million to FTA Section 5310, and over \$900,000 of STP funding to FTA Section 5311.

Once "flexed," the funds are then administered by MPD in the same manner as other FTA funds. ADOT generally allocates these funds for capital uses such as vehicles and transit facilities.



### **Congestion Mitigation Air Quality Funds (CMAQ)**

The CMAQ program, which is jointly administered by the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) provides funding to State DOTs, MPOs, and transit agencies to invest in projects that reduce air pollution in areas that do not meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (nonattainment areas) and former nonattainment areas that are now in compliance (maintenance areas). Parts of Pinal County, generally those close to Maricopa County, are nonattainment areas.

Funds are distributed based on an area's population by county and the severity of its ozone and carbon monoxide problems within the nonattainment or maintenance area, with greater weight given to areas that are both carbon monoxide and ozone nonattainment/maintenance areas. CMAQ funds can be used for a wide variety of transit uses, including programs to improve public transit, High Occupancy Vehicle (HOV) facilities, Employee Trip Reduction (ETR) programs, traffic-flow improvements that reduce emissions, bicycle/pedestrian facilities, park-and-ride facilities, and programs to restrict vehicle use in areas of emission concentration. CMAQ funds can be used for capital purchases, covering up to 88.5% of the cost. Importantly, CMAQ Demonstration funds can also be used to “jump start” new services by providing operating assistance for up to three years.

The amounts of CMAQ funds that have been allocated to transit in Arizona have been decreasing in recent years, from \$16.5 million in FY 2006, \$12.5 million in FY 2007, and \$6.5 million in FY 2008 for the construction of Valley Metro rail, the purchase of buses and vans, and the construction of transit centers and park and ride lots. Similarly, the amounts allocated to shared-ride programs have also been decreasing, from \$7.8 million in FY 2006, \$2.0 million in FY 2007, to \$1.2 million in FY 2008.

For Pinal County, CMAQ funds would need to be used for projects in areas of the county that are nonattainment areas, and/or for services that operate to or from Maricopa County (also a nonattainment area) such as new express routes or the extension of Valley Metro services to Apache Junction.

### **STATE FUNDING**

The only state funding that had been available for transit was the Local Transportation Assistance Fund II (LTAF II), which was recently eliminated due to state budget shortfalls.

#### **LTAF II Funding**

Until recently, the Local Transportation Assistance Fund II (LTAF II), which was administered by ADOT's Multimodal Planning Division, provided for operating and capital assistance. Unlike many federal transit grants, LTAF II had few limitations on use (capital, operations, and planning are all permitted), as long as the funds were spent on “public” or publicly endorsed “special needs” transportation. These funds were eliminated in FY 2011 due to state budget problems, but could potentially be restored in the future.

LTAF II annual funding levels were set at the amount of total lottery revenue that exceeded \$31 million up to a total of \$18 million. Because lottery revenues varied dramatically from year-to-year, LTAF II revenues also varied dramatically from year-to-year. Actual funding amounts



ranged from zero in FY 2003 to the full \$18 million in FY 2000 and FY 2007. More recently, \$11.5 million was available in FY 2008, \$9.5 million in 2009, and \$9.9 million for FY 2010.

LTAf II funds were distributed to cities, towns, and counties based on population and could be used to assist with their transit programs' operations and capital needs, including local matching funds for federal grants. Also, while not available directly to private-nonprofit groups and Tribal Governments, these entities were able to approach their local jurisdictions to establish a partnership in order to request LTAf II distributions to provide local match for other capital grants.

## **LOCAL SOURCES**

Local sources for Pinal County would largely consist of county and city sales tax revenues.

### **County Transportation Excise Tax**

Counties with populations of fewer than 400,000 residents can enact a transportation excise tax of up to 0.5% for highway purposes or for transportation projects included in the regional transportation plan of the county as prepared by the county regional planning agency."<sup>1</sup> The imposition of the tax requires advance specification of how the funds will be spent and voter approval.

Under this law, the residents of Pinal County voted in 1986 to pass a half-cent sales tax to provide additional funding for the "construction, reconstruction, maintenance, repair and roadside development of County, city and town roads, streets and bridges." The publicity pamphlet that accompanied the 1986 ballot measure specified that the funding was to be used "solely for highway and street purposes." In a November 2005 special election, Pinal County voters reauthorized the excise tax for an additional 20 years, beginning in January 2007 and continuing through 2026. The extension of the excise tax is projected to generate \$836 million through 2025.<sup>2</sup>

As described above, while Arizona state law authorizes the imposition of the tax for "highway purposes or for transportation projects included in the regional transportation plan," the Pinal County ballot measure specified that the funding was to be used "solely for highway and street purposes." However, it would likely be possible to expand the current authorization to include the use of excise tax revenues for transit purposes.

State law also authorizes counties "with a population of more than four hundred thousand but less than one million two hundred thousand persons" to establish Regional Transportation Authorities (RTAs) that can operate and administer public transportation systems.<sup>3</sup> RTAs can also enact a countywide transportation excise tax of up to 0.5%, but only if the county has not enacted its own transportation excise tax.<sup>4</sup> Thus, a Pinal County RTA would be precluded from

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<sup>1</sup> §42-6107.

<sup>2</sup> The original estimate was \$962 million; revised figure from Pinal County/ Rural Transportation Summit 2009.

<sup>3</sup> §48-5302.

<sup>4</sup> §42-6106.



enacting its own excise tax unless it would replace the existing county transportation excise tax. As with the county transportation excise tax, the imposition of an RTA transportation excise tax would advance specification of how the funds will be spent and voter approval.

### **Local Excise Tax**

Cities may enact excise taxes for a variety of purposes, including public transportation. A number of cities, including Phoenix, Glendale, Peoria, Flagstaff, Tempe, and Scottsdale have all enacted sales taxes for transportation purposes, and generally for transit. The rates vary from a low of 0.3% in Peoria to a high of 0.6% in Flagstaff. One consideration in the setting of the transit sales tax rates is each city's total local sales tax rate relative to that of its neighbors.





## Appendix B

# Joint Powers and Intergovernmental Agreement Legislation

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### Arizona State Statutes

#### Title 11 – Counties

#### Chapter 7 INTERGOVERNMENTAL OPERATIONS

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##### 11-951. Definitions

For the purposes of this article, the term "public agency" shall include the federal government or any federal department or agency, Indian tribe, this state, any other state, all departments, agencies, boards and commissions of this state or any other state, counties, school districts, cities, towns, all municipal corporations, and any other political subdivisions of this state or any other state.

##### 11-952. Intergovernmental agreements and contracts

A. If authorized by their legislative or other governing bodies, two or more public agencies or public procurement units by direct contract or agreement may contract for services or jointly exercise any powers common to the contracting parties and may enter into agreements with one another for joint or cooperative action or may form a separate legal entity, including a nonprofit corporation, to contract for or perform some or all of the services specified in the contract or agreement or exercise those powers jointly held by the contracting parties.

B. Any such contract or agreement shall specify the following:

1. Its duration.
2. Its purpose or purposes.
3. The manner of financing the joint or cooperative undertaking and of establishing and maintaining a budget therefore.
4. The permissible method or methods to be employed in accomplishing the partial or complete termination of the agreement and for disposing of property on such partial or complete termination.
5. If a separate legal entity is formed pursuant to subsection A, the precise organization, composition, title and nature of the entity.
6. Any other necessary and proper matters.

C. No agreement made pursuant to this article shall relieve any public agency of any obligation or responsibility imposed on it by law.

D. Except as provided in subsection E, every agreement or contract involving any public agency, board or commission made pursuant to this article, before its execution, shall be submitted to the attorney for each such public agency, board or commission, who shall determine whether the agreement is in proper form and is within the powers and authority granted under the laws of this state to such public agency, board or commission.

E. A federal department or agency that is a party to an agreement or contract made pursuant to this article is not required to submit the agreement or contract to the attorney for the federal department or agency unless required under federal law.

F. Appropriate action by ordinance or resolution or otherwise pursuant to the laws applicable to the governing bodies of the participating agencies approving or extending the duration of the



agreement or contract shall be necessary before any such agreement, contract or extension may be filed or become effective.

G. An agreement or contract may be extended as many times as is desirable, but each extension may not exceed the duration of the previous agreement.

H. Payment for services under this section shall not be made unless pursuant to a fully approved written contract.

I. A person who authorizes payment of any monies in violation of this section is liable for the monies paid plus twenty per cent of such amount and legal interest from the date of payment.

J. Notwithstanding any other provision of law, public agencies may enter into a contract or agreement pursuant to this section with the superior court, justice courts and police courts for related services and facilities of such courts for a term not to exceed ten years, with the approval of such contract or agreement by the presiding judge of the superior court in the county in which the court or courts that provide the facilities or services are located.

11-952.01. Public agency pooling of property, fidelity, liability, workers' compensation, life, health, accident and disability coverage; exemptions; board of trustees; contract; termination; audit; insolvency; definition

A. In addition to other authority granted pursuant to this title, two or more public agencies may enter into contracts or agreements pursuant to this article for the joint purchasing of insurance, including prepaid legal insurance or reinsurance, or to pool retention of their risks for property, fidelity and liability losses and to provide for the payment of such property loss, fidelity loss, prepaid legal insurance or claim of liability made against any member of the pool, including any elected or appointed official, officer or employee covered by the pool, on a cooperative or contract basis with one another or may jointly form a nonprofit corporation or enter into a trust agreement to carry out this section in their behalf directly or by contract with a private party.

B. In addition to other authority granted pursuant to this title, two or more public agencies may enter into contracts or agreements pursuant to this article to establish a workers' compensation pool to provide for the payment of workers' compensation claims pursuant to title 23, chapter 6 on a cooperative or contract basis with one another or may jointly form a nonprofit corporation or enter into a trust agreement to carry out this section in their behalf directly or by contract with a private party. A workers' compensation pool established pursuant to this subsection may provide coverage for workers' compensation, employers' liability and occupational disease claims. A workers' compensation pool is subject to approval as a self-insurer by the industrial commission pursuant to section 23-961, subsection A, paragraph 2 and is subject to title 23, chapter 6 and rules adopted pursuant to that chapter in addition to the requirements of this section. The industrial commission, by rule, resolution or order, may adopt requirements for the administration of a workers' compensation pool under this subsection, including separation or commingling of funds, accounting, auditing, reporting, actuarial standards and procedures.

C. In addition to other authority granted pursuant to this title, two or more public agencies may enter into contracts or agreements for the joint purchase of life insurance, disability insurance, accident insurance or health benefits plan insurance or may pool retention of their risks of loss for life, disability, health or accident claims made against any public agency member of the pool or to jointly provide the health and medical services authorized in section 36-2907. Public agencies may establish pools for the purposes of this subsection by any of the following methods:

1. On a cooperative or contract basis.
2. By the formation of a nonprofit corporation.
3. By contracts or intergovernmental agreements with the Arizona health care cost containment



system administration.

4. By the execution of a trust agreement directly by the agencies or by contracting with a third party.

D. In addition to other authority granted pursuant to this title, two or more public agencies may enter into contracts or agreements pursuant to this article for the joint purchasing of insurance for property, liability or workers' compensation losses or to pool retention of their risks for property and liability loss to cover the public agency, its elected officials and employees and the contractor and subcontractor of every tier engaged in the performance of a construction project for the public agency. Public agencies may establish pools for the purpose of this subsection by any of the following methods:

1. On a cooperative or contract basis.
2. By the formation of a nonprofit corporation.
3. By the execution of a trust agreement directly by the agencies or by contracting with a third party.

E. Section 10-11301 does not apply to nonprofit corporations formed pursuant to this section.

F. Title 41, chapter 23 does not apply to the procurement of insurance or reinsurance, or to the procurement of the services provided for in subsection K, paragraph 8 of this section, by any pool established pursuant to this section.

G. Title 43 does not apply to any pool established pursuant to this section. Any pool established pursuant to this section is exempt from taxation under title 43.

H. Each pool shall be operated by a board of trustees consisting of at least three persons who are elected officials or employees of public entities within this state. The board of trustees shall notify the director of the department of insurance of the existence of the pool and shall file with the director and with the attorney general a copy of the intergovernmental agreement or contract. The attorney general shall file a copy of the agreement or contract with the secretary of state as required by section 11-952. The board of trustees of each group shall do all of the following:

1. Establish terms and conditions of coverage within the pool, including exclusions of coverage.
2. Ensure that all claims are paid promptly.
3. Take all necessary precautions to safeguard the assets of the group.
4. Maintain minutes of its meetings.
5. Designate an administrator to carry out the policies established by the board of trustees and to provide day-to-day management of the group and delineate in the written minutes of its meetings the areas of authority it delegates to the administrator.
6. If the pool is a workers' compensation pool, file a copy of the agreement with the director of the industrial commission.

I. If the pool includes private, nonprofit educational institutions, each private, nonprofit educational institution shall post a bond, cash deposit or other comparable financial security in an amount that is equal to at least one and one-half times the amount of the private, nonprofit educational institution's annual premium to ensure payment of the school's or institution's legal liabilities and other obligations if the pool is determined to be insolvent or is otherwise found to be unable to discharge the pool's legal liabilities and other obligations pursuant to subsection N of this section.

J. The board of trustees shall not:

1. Extend credit to individual members for payment of a premium, except pursuant to payment plans established by the board.
2. Borrow any monies from the group or in the name of the group except in the ordinary course of business.



K. In addition to the requirements of section 11-952, a contract or agreement made pursuant to this section shall contain the following:

1. A provision for a system or program of loss control.
2. A provision for termination of membership, including either:
  - (a) Cancellation of individual members of the pool by the pool.
  - (b) Election by an individual member of the pool to terminate its participation.
3. A provision requiring the pool to pay all claims for which each member incurs liability during each member's period of membership.
4. A provision stating that each member is not relieved of its liability incurred during the member's period of membership except through the payment of losses by the pool or by the member.
5. A provision for the maintenance of claim reserves equal to known incurred losses and an estimate of incurred but not reported claims.
6. A provision for a final accounting and settlement of the obligations of or refunds to a terminating member to occur when all incurred claims are concluded, settled or paid.
7. A provision that the pool may establish offices where necessary in this state and employ necessary staff to carry out the purposes of the pool.
8. A provision that the pool may retain legal counsel, actuaries, auditors, engineers, private consultants and advisors.
9. A provision that the pool may make and alter bylaws and rules pertaining to the exercise of its purpose and powers.
10. A provision that the pool may purchase, lease or rent real and personal property it deems necessary.
11. A provision that the pool may enter into financial services agreements with banks and other financial institutions, that it may issue checks in its own name and that it may invest its monies in equity securities, mutual funds and investment funds registered with the United States securities and exchange commission, debt obligations and any eligible investment permitted by section 35-323.

L. A pool or a terminating member shall provide at least ninety days' written notice of the termination or cancellation. A workers' compensation pool shall notify the industrial commission of the termination or cancellation of a member thirty days before the termination or cancellation of the member.

M. The pool shall be audited annually at the expense of the pool by a certified public accountant, with a copy of the report submitted to the governing body or chief executive officer of each member of the pool and to the director of the department of insurance. The board of trustees of the pool shall obtain an appropriate actuarial evaluation of the claim reserves of the pool, including an estimate of the incurred but not reported claims. The department of insurance shall examine each public agency pool once every five years. The director of the department of insurance may examine a public agency pool sooner than five years from the preceding examination if the director has reason to believe that the pool is insolvent. The costs of any examination shall be paid by the pool subject to the examination.

N. If, as a result of the annual audit or an examination by the director of the department of insurance, it appears that the assets of the pool are insufficient to enable the pool to discharge its legal liabilities and other obligations, the director of the department of insurance shall notify the administrator and the board of trustees of the pool of the deficiency and the director's list of recommendations to abate the deficiency, including a recommendation not to add any new members until the deficiency is abated. If the pool fails to comply with the recommendations within sixty days after the date of the notice, the director shall notify the chief executive officer or



the governing bodies, if any, of the members of the pool, the governor, the president of the senate and the speaker of the house of representatives that the pool has failed to comply with the recommendations of the director.

O. If a pool is determined to be insolvent or is otherwise found to be unable to discharge its legal liabilities and other obligations, each agreement or contract shall provide that the members of the pool shall be assessed on a pro rata basis as calculated by the amount of each member's annual contribution in order to satisfy the amount of deficiency. The assessment shall not exceed the amount of each member's annual contribution to the pool.

P. A pool established pursuant to this section may make available programs providing for insurance coverages described in subsections A, B and C of this section to those charter schools governed by section 15-183, subsection M and, except for a workers' compensation pool, to private, nonprofit educational institutions.

Q. In addition to the authority set forth in this title, a pool established pursuant to this section may invest public monies on behalf of pool members, but any such investments shall be limited to those permitted by section 35-323, except as provided in section 15-1225, subsection G. A pool established pursuant to this section may not invest monies that are required by law to be deposited with a county treasurer.

R. A pool established pursuant to this section, by the adoption of a resolution of continuing effect, may authorize and request the state treasurer to invest funds for the pool pursuant to section 35-326.

S. For the purposes of this section, "health benefits plan" means a hospital or medical service corporation policy or certificate, a health care services corporation contract, a multiple employer welfare arrangement or any other arrangement under which health and medical benefits and services are provided to two or more persons.

#### 11-953. Appropriations

Any public agency entering into an agreement or contract pursuant to this article may appropriate funds and may sell, lease, give or otherwise supply for the benefit of the joint or cooperative undertaking such services or personnel as may be within its legal power to furnish.

#### 11-954. Limitation of powers

Except for the right of joint exercise of powers granted in this article, the provisions of this article shall be cumulative and supplemental and nothing contained in this article shall be so construed as to authorize any public agency to exercise any power or engage in any business or enterprise that such public agency is not authorized to exercise or engage in pursuant to other provisions of law.

