

The Sun Corridor: A Connected Economy Joint Planning and Advisory Council (JPAC)

Jan. 8, 2016

The Fresh Produce Association of the Americas attended the Jan. 8 meeting of the Joint Planning and Advisory Council (JPAC), which had the theme of “The Sun Corridor: A Connected Economy.” Representing FPAA were President Lance Jungmeyer and Board Member Sabrina Hallman. Representatives of the City of Nogales and SEAGO were on hand, as well.

Tucson Mayor Jonathan Rothschild, in his opening remarks, noted that Arizona continues to lag behind other states in infrastructure development and promoting trade. He referenced the efforts of Texas to woo away southern Arizona’s produce industry.

Rothschild said that Pima Association of Governments and Maricopa Association of Governments both support efforts to improve the bottleneck at SR-189 and I-19. He said that Victor Mendez at the U.S. Department of Transportation told him that if the state fixes the bottleneck of SR-189 then that will open up funding for I-11. This may be an opportunity for FPAA to push MAG and PAG for a more direct funding contribution to SR-189 improvements.

Sen. Bob Worsley emphasized the long-term approach to transportation and infrastructure spending. He said that driverless cars will disrupt road building. Because of the billions of dollars being poured into this, companies like Google, General Motors, Uber and others will become strong proponents for infrastructure improvements.

Worsley will be introducing a bill in the Arizona Senate to address how to solve the state’s transportation funding shortfalls. The bill would introduce a task force to consider options for the state. One consideration the task force would consider is whether to allow counties to raise gas taxes if the state is unwilling.

Sen. Steve Farley said he is pushing the state to “front-load” the SR-189 project, in order to push trade for the state. He characterized it as a “one-time investment that will continue to yield results for many years.”

Mike Hammond, from the State Transportation Board, discussed the business costs of failing to make infrastructure improvements. He referenced how UPS said that a 5 minute delay per truck per days costs the company \$100 million a year. Hammond

said the state needs to take a progressive look to balance existing and future priorities.

He noted how there are several highways that rival SR-189 in importance for the state. Widening I-10 to six total lanes between Phoenix and Tucson is also important to the I-11 corridor. Instituting a 5 cent extra gas tax would enable the state to tackle some of these improvements, but that he continued to view the environment for raising a fuel tax as difficult.

Hammond also noted how Texas has come to Nogales to promote the Durango-Mazatlan connection. He called the Port of Tucson a good example of stopping freight in Arizona, creating economic development, and sending the freight on its way.

ADOT Director John Halikowski noted that Arizona is not just competing for growth with California and Texas, but that the Arizona-Sonora megaregion is competing in the global space.

Utah Unified Transportation Plan

Representatives from Utah were invited to discuss how Utah’s Unified Transportation Plan addressed anticipated 30-year road needs.

Like Arizona, Utah is struggling with more roadways to build and maintain than it has funds to do so. As the chart below illustrates, the Unified Transportation Plan calls for getting about 20% of the state’s transportation funding from new revenue including user fees and PPP mechanisms such as local-source funding.

UTAH’S STATEWIDE TRANSPORTATION NEEDS AND REVENUES

Transportation Need	Estimated Cost
Highway Capacity Needs	\$28.0 Billion
Transit Capacity Needs	\$8.7 Billion
Highway Maintenance, Operations, Preservation	\$21.0 Billion
Transit Maintenance, Operations, Preservation	\$12.4 Billion
Total Transportation Needs	\$70.1 Billion
Transportation Revenue	
- Current Funding Sources	\$43.4 Billion
- Projected New Revenue (e.g. user fees, fuel, vehicle registration, local-option sources)	\$11.3 Billion
Unified Plan Total Revenue	\$54.7 Billion