



Applying *Expediting Project Delivery* (C19) in the Intermountain West Region

SHRP2 CASE STUDY



Multi-Jurisdictional Collaboration on Transportation and Economic Development Improves Project Delivery in the Intermountain West Region



Photos Maricopa Assn of Governments

Overcoming challenges in coordinating across nine states

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) is located in the fast-growing area in and around Phoenix, AZ. With more than 4.4 million people living in 27 cities and towns, three Indian communities, and two counties, delivering transportation projects in a timely manner can be a significant challenge. Through the FHWA/AASHTO SHRP2 Implementation Assistance Program, MAG is implementing two *Expediting Project Delivery* strategies.

- Facilitation to Align Expectations Upfront
- Coordinated and Responsive Agency Involvement

In coordination with its members and other neighboring states – referred to as the Intermountain West (IMW) MAG developed solid solutions to meet multiple objectives. The group developed four goals to promote coordination and encourage public engagement:

- Create a common GIS platform,
- Align expectations upfront,
- Develop a risk register, and
- Conduct stakeholder outreach

MAG's implementation activities result in collaborative and leveraged efforts

Conducting stakeholder outreach to identify needs and gaps. The most critical phase of the project was conducting outreach to metropolitan planning organizations (MPOs), transportation management areas (TMAs), state departments of transportation (DOTs), and other key stakeholders. These agencies identified needs and potential gaps related to transportation and data resources. This part of the project focused on building new relationships, strengthening existing ones, and creating awareness among stakeholders to expedite planning and environmental reviews of key transportation projects within the IMW.

Developing a common GIS operating vision/platform to better support planning efforts. Key technical input formed the basis in developing a common data sharing platform, a GIS resource used to streamline data sharing between and among planning agencies. This tool will increase the efficiency of inter-/intra-state and regional collaboration, particularly those that cross geopolitical boundaries or involve multiple planning areas. The diversity of data across IMW and the data gap were

Expediting Project Delivery (C19)

Speeding up the delivery of transportation projects is high on everyone's agenda. *Expediting Project Delivery* (C19) was developed through the second Strategic Highway Research Program (SHRP2) to provide innovative approaches to the planning process to produce better projects and environmental outcomes while addressing the common constraints encountered during project implementation.

These strategies save time, reduce the need for rework, reduce the risk of unanticipated permitting and mitigation costs, and provide a framework for resolving disputes.

The C19 framework includes 24 proven and effective strategies that focus on planning, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), and permitting phases of project development and delivery. These strategies address 16 common obstacles to meeting project schedule, reducing risk, and building strong collaboration.

Twelve agencies are now implementing *Expediting Project Delivery* through the SHRP2 Implementation Assistance Program. This case study documents activities underway in the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) to maximize efficiency throughout the project cycle.



challenges. Recognizing this issue, the project team conducted two surveys of datasets and analyses used by stakeholders. As a result, a phased approach was undertaken that included: developing documentation on the data collected for the IMW region; creating look-up tables to make data consistent across the region; building relationships and partnering with regional and local agencies; and building an online interactive story map to display and distribute the data.

Developing risk register to serve as proof of concept. The risks and considerations in any given project are assumed to differ, but the general process developed in the risk register will be useful as a means of risk management. The risk register identifies potential risks to transportation projects in the initial focus region outlined in the Interstate 11 and Intermountain West Corridor Study (IWCS) (Nogales to Las Vegas via Phoenix). The risk register was tailored to gather relevant information, provide awareness at a very broad scale of the potential constraints and opportunities, and improve communication. Despite limiting the risk register to a high-level proof of concept, it will prove to be a useful starting point for future transportation projects throughout the IMW, whether improving existing multimodal transportation or developing new transportation projects.

Aligning expectations up front. Collaboration among the various stakeholders on this project has shown that it is possible and mutually beneficial to engage in dialogue to align expectations of the regional transportation network. This project examined and developed



Collecting stakeholder priorities and establishing a shared GIS planning platform can improve communication amongst many partners to resolve transportation planning conflicts.

a regional transportation vision, aligning expectations to focus on the movement of people and freight, provide decision makers with better situational awareness of the region, and build upon existing collaborative efforts to best leverage resources and eliminate redundancies. For example, environmental issues are certain to be encountered in a project of any size given the considerable open space in the region. By aligning the vision within the region, however, mitigation efforts also may be more effectively planned. Habitats have no regard for jurisdictional lines, and it is critical for planners to be able to know about mitigation needs and opportunities outside their own planning region. A joint Regional environmental analysis framework will help to plan and consolidate mitigation efforts across jurisdictions.

Lessons Learned During Implementation

Throughout the process, several key “lessons” arose that will enable future collaboration and beneficial partnerships. They were:

- Create a common language for geospatial data collection – including land use – so that stakeholders from diverse agencies are better able to proceed with decision making.
- Amplify benefits by integrating economic development into transportation planning.
- Recognize when stakeholders solely have technical expertise and complement this with transportation experts.

Benefits of *Expediting Project Delivery*

Speeding up the delivery of transportation projects is high on everyone’s agenda and provides significant benefits. Several benefits have come out of the MAG’s SHRP2 project.

- Increased understanding of data resources in the Intermountain West region.
- Increased communication and improved relationships among partner agencies.
- Transferrable data collection process.
- Significant Intermountain West information developed.

For more information on MAG’s effort to implement *Expediting Project Delivery*, contact **Denise McClafferty** at DMcClafferty@azmag.gov or call 602.452.5033.

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View MAG’s website at: <http://www.azmag.gov/Programs/Economic-Development/SHRP2-Expediting-Project-Delivery-Grant>