

PHOENIX Business Journal

September 9, 2011

Statewide group looking to take 'Arizona Forward'

BY PATRICK O'GRADY

Phoenix Business Journal

Valley Forward Association has launched the first endeavor from its Arizona Forward project as the group looks to make a larger impression beyond the Phoenix area.



Brossart

That means getting buy-in from communities all along the "Sun Corridor," the stretch of freeway running from Tucson through Phoenix and connecting Prescott and Flagstaff. It long has been a corridor of regional fights but is home to the vast majority of the state's population.

"Timing is everything, and people are ready for a shift," said Diane Brossart, president of Valley Forward.

The idea for a statewide group that would focus on environmental and business issues has been tossed around at Valley Forward for several years. An \$85,000 grant the group received earlier this year kick-started the effort as Brossart lined up nine companies as charter members of Arizona Forward.

The group's first effort as Arizona Forward was to examine the economic impact of Arizona's parks and recreation infrastructure, including everything from state

SEE FORWARD | 39

FORWARD: Organization aims to unite Ariz. regions in common goal

FROM PAGE 3

lands to federal parks.

The study, conducted with local, state and federal help, found that Arizona gets about \$380 million in state tax revenue from parks and recreation and about \$5 billion is spent on retail services on 82,000 jobs that benefit.

Arizona Forward remains part of Valley Forward for the time being as it builds momentum. Along with the nine charter members, Brossart said about 15 other companies have signed up to be part of the organization's efforts.

The goal is to broaden Valley Forward's focus and present a better image for the state and its economy, Brossart said.

"It'll be a lot of the same issues Valley Forward wants to focus on, but on the state-wide and federal level," she said.

Arizona has numerous regional groups focusing on making different parts of the state into more viable communities. Until now, there has been nothing to unite them, and rivalries between the various cities and regions often have kept cooperation to a minimum.

That attitude is changing, Brossart said.

"There are like-minded people in the state," she said. "Phoenix and Tucson need to work together, along with Prescott and Coconino County, to present a unified image of Arizona. It's not Phoenix and Tucson competing. It's New Mexico and California and Utah that we're competing with."

Of the first members, many have presences in two or three of the state's biggest cities, and those in Tucson believe the state must unite behind regional issues.

"We all have to look for that common ground," said Mike Wall, a member of Arizona Forward's advisory board and Southern Arizona area manager for Total Transit Inc. "We're all in the state of Arizona."

Total Transit, which is the parent company of Discount Cab in Phoenix and Tucson, has been involved in Valley Forward and sees a template for expanding those issues statewide. At the same time, it offers the chance to bring to the table all the regional groups already working on those issues, Wall said.

Growth along Interstate 10 between Phoenix and Tucson, as well as growth along Interstate 17, are starting to tie together the central core of the state. That Sun Corridor is expected to be one of the large regional areas in the country during the next 50 years. Along with that growth comes people, such as Wall, who moved to the state and didn't know about the regional differences.

"The population is growing and bridging the gap," he said.

Rob Wanless, director of business development for Tucson-based Solon Corp., said the business connections between the state's two major cities are growing. Solon, for instance, is building a solar facility in

ARIZONA FORWARD

WHAT: A statewide group started by Valley Forward Association that brings together the various cities and businesses along the Sun Corridor to look at ways to grow the state's renewable energy sector

PRESIDENT: Diane Brossart

CHARTER MEMBERS: Arizona Community Foundation, First Solar Inc., Freeport-McMoRan Copper & Gold Inc., National Bank of Arizona, Solon Corp., Sundt Construction, the Nature Conservancy, Total Transit, Wells Fargo & Co.

FOUNDING MEMBERS: Adolfsen & Peterson, Arizona Public Service Co., Arizona Heritage Alliance, Arizona Investment Council, Arizona State University Global Institute of Sustainability, Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona, Fennemore Craig PC, Gabor Lorant Architects, Gammage & Burnham PLC, Godec Randall & Associates, Intellectual Energy LLC, Jones Studio, RSP Architects, Salt River Project, University of Phoenix

'It's not Phoenix and Tucson competing. It's New Mexico and California and Utah that we're competing with.'

Diane Brossart
Arizona Forward

Gila Bend for Arizona Public Service Co. "I hope it really breaks down those barriers," he said.

Craig Robb, senior vice president at National Bank of Arizona and an Arizona Forward advisory board member, said he

believes the timing is right to bring together the various regions of the state.

"If you look at that from what the Valley is going to do economically without Tucson, that's myopic," he said.

Brossart said Arizona Forward likely will remain part of Valley Forward for at least the next year to 18 months. During that time, the group will focus on developing statewide programs similar to those of Valley Forward. They will focus on the economic im-

impact of the environment, such as the parks study, as well as looking at transportation and the renewable energy sector.

"There are a lot of folks working on the energy issue, and we want to support that any way we can," she said.

The biggest challenge may be the same one Valley Forward runs into: educating people about the connections between the economy and the environment, Brossart said.

"We haven't done a good job communicating that message (at the state level)," she said.



Robb

Connect with **Patrick O'Grady** at pogrady@bizjournals.com or on Twitter at [@pogrady](https://twitter.com/pogrady).