



## Executive Director's Report

At the December Regional Council meeting we received an update on the status of the freeway component of the Regional Transportation Plan. The tentative deficit is estimated to exceed \$5 billion. Numerous strategies were discussed to balance the Plan and these will be further reviewed in January. One strategy that is especially timely for this region and the state is for Arizona to receive its fair share of federal funds. Federal stimulus legislation is being discussed and we have been working for Arizona to receive an equitable share of the funds.

The purpose of the proposed infrastructure legislation is to quickly fund and implement infrastructure projects to stimulate the current economy. The stimulus package is expected to include funding for infrastructure projects, including transportation and other public works related projects. Due to the urgency of the situation, national organizations are requesting projects for consideration by Congress that could begin construction almost immediately – within days or a few months upon receipt of federal funds.

MAG is coordinating our efforts to prepare project lists with other entities within the state and region, including the Arizona Department of Transportation, Regional Public Transportation Authority, Valley Metro Rail, and other Councils of Governments. This list will be sent to the members of the Arizona delegation. National reports have stated that there are approximately \$136 billion worth of infrastructure projects ready to go if financing is secured. Governors meeting with president-elect Barack Obama recently projected that for every \$1 billion spent on infrastructure, 40,000 jobs would be created. Preliminary projects submitted for our region total approximately \$6 billion. We expect this legislation could have a significant benefit to the region in protecting and creating jobs and invigorating our regional economy.

For the stimulus package to be effective, Congress is urged to examine and reform the federal approval process and consider streamlining some of its time-consuming requirements for getting projects into the pipeline. The longer it takes to move a project to construction, the greater the cost of the project due to inflation. Streamlining the process could save projects millions of dollars.

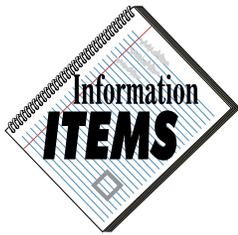
Although a list of projects for the proposed stimulus legislation is being prepared, we anticipate that the purpose of the list will be to provide an order of magnitude of funding that could be used in Arizona. The mechanism for providing funding to the states and regions is yet to be determined. Federal requirements for projects are unknown and how projects will be selected is still to be determined.

We would like to thank the MAG member agencies for participating in this effort. The legislative discussion continues to evolve and we believe our region will be prepared in the event a stimulus package is passed. We will continue to monitor the progress of the federal economic stimulus legislation and keep you updated.

**For more information, please contact Dennis Smith, MAG Executive Director, (602) 254-6300.**

## **Regional Council Meeting Report for Wednesday, December 3, 2008**

### **Information Items**



#### **Regional Council Receives Transportation Planning Update**

The Regional Council received an updated report on the financial outlook for the Regional Freeway Program. Due to the decline in sales tax revenues and increased construction costs, revised revenue projections indicate a deficit as high as \$5.5 billion in the program, even greater than the \$4.5 billion deficit that had been predicted last month. Staff also discussed the pros and cons of four program strategies, including staying the course; developing alternative facilities; policy and value-engineering; and reprioritization. Next steps will include reviewing the bond program in light of revised revenues and financial markets; analyzing future right-of-way and construction cost inflation; and analyzing project options such as interim, staging, or reducing scopes. The Transportation Policy Committee will continue holding policy discussions on balancing the Regional Transportation Plan and provide guidance on program options, which are expected to be presented in early 2009.

**For more information, please contact Eric Anderson, MAG Transportation Director (602) 254-6300.**

#### **METRO Light Rail Update**

The new 20-mile light rail system (METRO) will begin service later this month, marking the culmination of many years of work by METRO and others to bring a new mode of travel to this region. The grand opening of METRO light rail is scheduled to take place Saturday and Sunday, December 27 and 28, 2008. Station celebrations, including free train rides, will be held Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. along the entire 20-mile METRO alignment. There will be music, activities and exhibits at many park-and-ride and light rail station locations. Because of the large numbers expected to join in the historic celebration, METRO will also have shuttle buses to get participants back to their cars if the trains get crowded. Rides will run from 10 a.m. to 8 p.m. On Sunday, riders will have additional opportunity to explore the METRO system, its stations and the Valley's light rail destinations. Rides are still free from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. Passengers can keep riding free right through 2008 during METRO's regular service hours. Fares are required beginning January 1, 2009.

**For more information, contact Kelly Taft, MAG Communications Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Outdoor Light Pollution**

Members of Arizona's astronomy community presented information to the MAG Regional Council regarding concerns over outdoor light pollution. It was reported that outdoor light pollution creates a significant waste of electricity and money and degrades the visibility of our night skies. Arizona is home to world class observatories with an estimated \$250 million annual benefit to the state's economy. The local astronomy community would like the counties, municipalities and tribal nations to consider revisiting the adequacy and enforcement of their respective lighting ordinances in an effort to reduce light pollution associated with population growth. The goal is to provide quality lighting to improve visibility, save energy, and protect dark skies.

**For more information, please contact Heidi Pahl, MAG Regional Planner, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Defining a Citizen's Agenda for Arizona**

The Center for the Future of Arizona presented information to the Regional Council regarding a Gallup Poll that it will conduct. The group will conduct two polls of about 3,600 Arizonans. The purpose of the poll is to build a citizen's agenda that reflects what Arizonans are thinking and identifies a set of clear, measurable goals that describe the "Arizona We Want" in authentic language that is meaningful to citizens. From the input received from the poll, the Center will produce a set of goals, scorecards, and "how-to" strategies that citizens would be willing to support.

**For more information, contact Dennis Smith, MAG Executive Director, (602) 254-6300.**

### **MAG Introduces Faster Information Delivery**

In an effort to make information delivery faster, MAG has implemented an e-mail notification system that will make it easier to receive documents such as agendas, minutes and reports. Through a free subscription service called GovDelivery, MAG member agencies and the public now have better access to information that is posted on the MAG Web site. The subscription service monitors specific Web pages for changes, and when a change is detected, the service sends an e-mail to subscribers notifying them of the change.

There are about 130 monitored pages on the MAG Web site. Users can choose to subscribe to as many of the pages as they wish. In addition to the notice being sent to those who have subscribed to the page, e-mail notifications will also be sent to anyone who is on the regular MAG mail list for receiving minutes and agendas electronically.

Subscribers have the ability to choose not only what information they receive, but how often they receive it. To subscribe, users can simply click on the link on the page that says "subscribe to e-mail update." Users can also click on a Quick

Subscribe link on the main page to automatically see a full list and subscribe to any of the MAG pages.

**For more information, please contact Audrey Skidmore, Information Technology Manager, (602) 254-6300.**



## **Action Items**

### **Approval of Population Updates**

The Regional Council approved the July 1, 2008 Maricopa County and Municipality Resident Population Updates. The updates are used to allocate \$23 million in lottery funds to local jurisdictions, prepare budgets and set expenditure limitations. They were prepared using the 2005 Census Survey as the base and housing unit data supplied and verified by MAG member agencies. Because there may be changes to the Maricopa County control total by the Arizona Department of Commerce, the approval is contingent on the Maricopa County control total being within one percent of the final control total.

**For more information, please contact Rita Walton, MAG Information Services Manager, (602) 254-6300.**



### **Next Regional Council Meeting**

The next meeting of the MAG Regional Council is scheduled for Wednesday, January 28, 2009, at 5:00 p.m. in the Saguaro Room, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix. Agenda items are pending.

**For more information, please contact Dennis Smith, MAG Executive Director, (602) 254-6300.**