



## Executive Director's Report

Our January meeting was an abbreviated meeting focused on recent developments in the air quality arena. Due to the limited agenda, we held the meeting via audioconference through the MAG Regional Videoconferencing System. This technology is a great resource for our member agencies that makes more efficient use of time and resources in our current economic climate.

The use of technology is an important way for MAG member agencies to participate in MAG. We recently used the videoconferencing technology in multiple meetings with officials from the Environmental Protection Agency, members from the Arizona Congressional Delegation and MAG member agencies. This technology was invaluable in keeping MAG nimble and able to address an issue that involved agencies throughout the United States.

The videoconferencing system is just one of the ways MAG is utilizing technology to assist member agencies. We have also invested in the Regional Community Network, a fiber-optic based network that allows transportation data to be shared among traffic management centers. Traffic engineers can view real-time images of vehicles coming their way from neighboring communities, helping local traffic managers see potential problems early and to make adjustments to traffic signals and other control systems based on current conditions.

MAG is also exploring a pilot project that would create a web-based portal known as "SharePoint" to enable MAG member agencies to collaborate and pool knowledge with stakeholders, consultants and each other in a process known as "communities of practice." This is another way of harnessing the talent throughout the region to address the challenges we face. A report on the "communities of practice" will be made at the February Regional Council meeting.

These technology-driven ideas are just a few of many examples where MAG is working to fulfill the Articles of Incorporation included in the MAG By-Laws: "Ensure, through cooperation and the pooling of common resources, maximum efficiency and economy in governmental operations, which will provide every citizen with the utmost value for every dollar."

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

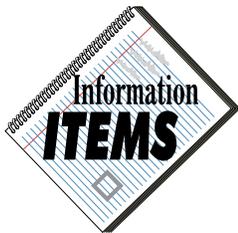
## Regional Council Meeting Report for Wednesday, January 26, 2011



### Action Items

By consent, the Regional Council approved a number of action items, including the following: that the Northern Parkway/Loop 303 interim connection be included in the Loop 303 construction budget at a cost of \$2.5 million; ratification of the appointment of Goodyear Vice Mayor Joe Pizzillo to fill the unexpired portion of the geographic balance seat on the Transportation Policy Committee (expiring in June 2012); approval of a prioritized list of proposed PM-10 certified street sweeper projects for fiscal year 2011 funding utilizing Congestion Management and Air Quality (CMAQ) funds; and acceptance of the audit opinion issued on the MAG Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Single Audit Report for the year ended June 30, 2010.

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



### Information Items

#### Air Quality Update

The Regional Council received an update on the recent withdrawal of the MAG Five Percent Plan for PM-10. On January 25, 2011, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) voluntarily withdrew the 2007 plan from any further action or consideration by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The plan was facing a partial disapproval action by the EPA on January 28, 2011, based on a timetable established in a consent decree that was entered into by EPA to settle a lawsuit filed by a public interest group. Staff reported that the withdrawal allows for the use of new paved road dust factors provided by the EPA to improve the plan. The new dust factors will also be used in testing transportation projects to ensure they do not contribute to air quality violations, a process known as “conformity.”

Staff reported that all of the stringent measures contained in the plan will continue to be implemented to protect public health.

Due to the withdrawal, on January 31, 2011, a notice of Finding of Failure to Submit a Plan was signed by EPA, which triggered the 18-month sanctions clock for tighter controls on industry and the 24-month clock for the loss of the federal highway funds. Staff noted that the clocks will stop when a new plan is submitted and the EPA determines it is complete. Imposition of a federal implementation plan would only be imposed if EPA does not take final action to approve the plan within two years of the EPA finding of failure to submit.

In withdrawing the plan, the ADEQ stated its contention that the 2007 plan has been effective in reducing dust throughout the county and should have been approved. ADEQ Acting Director Henry Darwin noted that the annual average

concentration of PM-10 within the region has declined approximately 25 percent since 1990 as a direct result of the region's air quality plans. However, Darwin noted that there are always "opportunities to improve upon past submissions and this move will allow us to take advantage of new information that will improve the plan."

Staff reported that the withdrawal will also give EPA additional time to fix the many problems that exist with its flawed "Exceptional Events Rule," which has been at the heart of the dispute with the EPA over the MAG plan. The Clean Air Act allows regions to be excused from penalties for exceptional events such as high winds. The EPA has admitted that the Exceptional Events Rule is flawed, and many states are concerned about inconsistencies in how it is administered. The rule is being questioned not only by Arizona, but also by 14 other western states that must frequently contend with dust storms, wildfires and forest fires.

**For more information, please contact Lindy Bauer, MAG Environmental Director, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Next Regional Council Meeting**

The next meeting of the MAG Regional Council is scheduled for Wednesday, February 23, 2011, at 5:00 p.m. in the Saguaro Room, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix. Agenda items are expected to include an update and discussion of the Phoenix West Alternatives Analysis and Operating Plan; input on a potential multimodal transit system tour of MAG region peer cities; update on the withdrawal of the MAG Five Percent Plan for PM-10; update on the activities of the MAG Economic Development Committee; and discussion about a technology-based pilot project to enable Communities of Practice. Additional agenda items are pending.

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