



## Executive Director's Report

At our February Regional Council meeting, we heard an update on the activities of the Economic Development Committee. The EDC was formed by the Regional Council in October 2010 to foster economic development for our region with a focus on infrastructure. The EDC will help MAG expand its transportation planning focus beyond mobility and levels of service to also analyzing how those transportation facilities can help advance economic growth. By generating wealth, we can improve the quality of life for Valley residents.

We heard during the update that many exciting activities are underway by the EDC. For example, the EDC is examining the economic opportunities that may be provided by freight movements through our region. A Freight Transportation Framework Study being conducted by MAG will include a survey of shippers and their priorities, including freight brought in by ship, rail or truck. International seaport expansions in Mexico could double the amount of freight moving through western states like Arizona. The study will look at the potential for developing inland ports in the Sun Corridor to expand upon the current Arizona jobs base. The EDC also is looking to coordinate with the recently-created Arizona Commerce Authority (ACA) to ensure that infrastructure is adequate and available in the future. The ACA seeks to diversify the overall state economy by bringing in new business and create jobs.

The EDC is also exploring way to improve trade relationships with Mexico and Canada, and is monitoring the potential designation of the I-11 corridor to facilitate intermountain freight movement and international trade from Canada and Mexico. Additionally, the EDC is currently working with the Greater Phoenix Economic Council on a regional data partnership to provide economic development related information through a joint website. It is envisioned that the joint data center will have mapping and other user-friendly capabilities to communicate information about our region to prospective businesses.

All of these activities are challenging in scope and much has been accomplished in just four short months. In repairing our economy, there is no time to waste, and it is gratifying to see that this committee is living up to the expectations of the Regional Council by hitting the ground running.

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

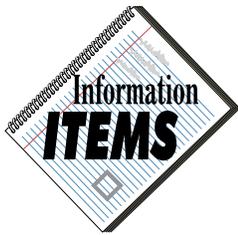
## Regional Council Meeting Report for Wednesday, February 23, 2011



### Action Items

The Regional Council approved recommendations from the MAG Human Services Coordinating Committee for Social Services Block Grant (SSBG) allocations. The committee, through a partnership with the Arizona Department of Economic Security, prioritizes services to receive \$3.8 million of locally planned SSBG dollars. Services funded by SSBG support assistance to the most vulnerable people in the region, including four target groups: Older Adults; People With Disabilities; People With Developmental Disabilities; and Adults, Families and Children. The committee proposed providing \$58,946 to the highest priority services, and the Regional Council approved the request.

For more information, please contact Amy St. Peter, MAG Human Services Manager, (602) 254-6300.



### Information Items

#### Update on Light Rail Phoenix West Alternatives Analysis

The Regional Council received an update on preliminary METRO staff recommendations for possible alignments of the Phoenix West extension of light rail. The study recommended light rail transit as the preferred technology over bus rapid transit. Based on land uses within the study area, the corridor was categorized into two distinct segments: west of I-17 and east of I-17. The section west of I-17, known as the mainline section, connects the West Valley to downtown Phoenix. The section east of I-17, the downtown section, serves as the connection between the mainline section, downtown Phoenix, and the METRO starter line.

For the mainline section from Interstate 17 to the west, staff recommended an alignment in the median to 47th Avenue. West of 47th Avenue, the alignment would cross a bridge to the north side of Interstate 10 to get closer to residential users. The section would end at the 79th Avenue park-and-ride facility.

For the downtown section, the recommendation includes a three-mile extension directly west of the 20-mile starter alignment. The alignment runs along Washington (westbound) and Jefferson (eastbound) streets for approximately one-half mile to Seventh Avenue. Just west of Seventh Avenue, the westbound guideway would transition from Washington to Jefferson, creating a double track. The two-way guideway would continue west along Jefferson Street, serving the state and county offices. West of downtown, the guideway would cross over I-17 along the I-17 southbound frontage road before transitioning to the I-10 median.

Next steps in the process include presentations to commissions, committees and neighborhood groups, a public meeting in March, City Council action in April, and

MAG Regional Council action in May. If approved as the recommended alignment, an Environmental Impact Statement would begin during the summer 2011.

**For more information, please contact Kevin Wallace, MAG Transit Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Western High Speed Rail Alliance/State Rail Plan Update**

In December, the MAG Regional Council requested that a report be provided on how the State Rail Plan will coordinate with the Western High Speed Rail Alliance (WHSRA) initiatives.

The Nevada Department of Transportation and the Regional Transportation Commission of Southern Nevada (Las Vegas), which are members of WHSRA, have made progress in working with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) on the pending high speed rail studies. Funding was allocated by the FRA in late 2010 for high speed rail corridor studies between Phoenix, Los Angeles and Las Vegas, also known as the Golden Triangle. MAG is also coordinating with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to assist in implementing the MAG region's goals and objectives as identified within the new Arizona State Rail Plan. The State Rail Plan is the next step in implementing the Statewide Rail Framework for passenger and freight rail transportation in Arizona. Building on the Statewide Rail Framework, the plan will achieve the following objectives:

- Identify 20-year rail projects and initiatives.
- Prioritize rail investments that need to be made to achieve Arizona's vision and goals.
- Develop the decision-making process for rail investments.

A completed State Rail Plan is a federal requirement for federal funding participation in state rail studies. The final draft of the State Rail Plan was presented to the State Transportation Board in January, and comments and suggestion are being incorporated into the document. A final draft will be submitted to the FRA in the spring/summer 2011, with a concurrent public release. The FRA has encouraged that the plan be updated and revised annually by ADOT.

**For more information, please contact Marc Pearsall, MAG Transit Planner, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Multimodal Transit System Tour**

MAG staff reported that MAG has been exploring the possibility of a multimodal transit tour of a peer region city. The purpose of the onsite tour would be for leaders from the MAG region to gather information and investigate the benefits of the connectivity between commuter rail, light rail and bus transit. Staff reported that, after researching the request, the Utah Transit Authority appears to be a good fit as an example of daily multimodal connectivity in the Intermountain West. UTA has offered to host a tour for the MAG leaders. The Management Committee

recommended moving the timing of the tour from the spring to the fall and that costs be explored. That information will be brought forward in April for further recommendation.

**For more information, please contact Marc Pearsall, MAG Transit Planner, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Withdrawal of the MAG Five Percent Plan for PM-10**

The Regional Council received an update on activities following 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. The withdrawal will enable the use of the new EPA paved road dust factors to improve the plan. The factors will also help the region demonstrate that its transportation plan meets air quality conformity requirements under the previous approved motor vehicle emissions budget, which is the budget that must be used now that the plan has been withdrawn.

On February 14, 2011, a notice of Finding of Failure to Submit a Plan was published by EPA, which triggered the 18-month sanctions clock for tighter controls on industry, and the 24-month clock for the loss of federal highway funds and the imposition of a federal plan. Staff reported that the sanctions clocks will stop once MAG submits a new plan 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.

MAG staff reported that the region needs three years of clean data at the monitors to be found in attainment of dust standards. EPA has indicated informally that 2009 may be a clean year. In 2010, there were no violations of the standard. If 2011 remains clean, it may be possible for EPA to issue an attainment finding. Under the EPA Clean Data Policy, the region would then be relieved of some of the Clean Air Act requirements, such as reasonable further progress (five percent reduction in emissions per year), attainment demonstration, and contingency measures. Therefore, it is critical to prevent any windblown exceedances. MAG is encouraging input from cities to help prevent exceedances when high winds are anticipated.

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

### **Enabling Communities of Practice Through Technology Pilot Project**

An update was provided on a MAG pilot project to enable Communities of Practice through technology. The project will create a SharePoint portal for MAG member agencies to use a web application to collaborate and pool knowledge with stakeholders, consultants, and each other. A survey will be conducted at the end of the pilot project to determine participant satisfaction.

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

### **Next Regional Council Meeting**

The next meeting of the MAG Regional Council is scheduled for Wednesday, March 30, 2011, at 5:00 p.m. in the Saguaro Room, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix. Agenda items are expected to include a report on the Arterial Life Cycle Program deficit and scenarios for balancing the program; a Freight Transportation Framework Study update; an update on the Five Percent Plan for PM-10; and guidance of the development of the fiscal year (FY) 2012 MAG Unified Work Program and Annual Budget.

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