



## Executive Director's Report

During our last meeting of the year, we celebrated a number of successes made possible through great staff work, some of which took years to achieve. One example was the recent placement of a Department of Public Safety officer at the Arizona Department of Transportation Traffic Operations Center, a program jointly funded by MAG. This achievement came after years of advocacy and effort by MAG Intelligent Transportation Systems and Safety Program Manager Sarath Joshua. Another example cited at the meeting was MAG's selection for a *2014 Piper Trust Encore Prize for Exceptional Organizations* for its work in connecting older adults to people of all ages. Establishing an age-friendly network in our region has also taken years of work, led by MAG's Human Services and Special Projects Manager Amy St. Peter. These are just two examples of MAG employees combining passion with perseverance to achieve long-term goals.

Psychologist Angela Lee Duckworth has identified the word "grit" to describe this type of long-term success. I would submit that this trait applies to MAG as supported by our member agencies. It is a trait that permeates everything we do, such as that seen in the agenda item on potential streamlining of the MAG 208 Water Quality Management Plan process. This issue has led to broader discussions with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality to examine the process from beginning to end, with a goal of identifying best practices that lead to more efficient processes to enable developments to be built without unnecessary delay. A final example of long-term commitment discussed at the meeting was support of a resolution encouraging ADOT to accelerate the State Route 189 project to enhance international commerce.

Certainly, as a planning organization, it is necessary to identify long-term goals that often fall well into the future. Maintaining a level of passion for these projects over many years takes commitment and that exceptional quality called grit.

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

## Meeting Report for Wednesday, December 3, 2014

### Action Items

#### Council Approves Major Amendment for Light Rail Project

The MAG Regional Council approved a proposed major amendment to the Regional Transportation Plan to add a five-mile light rail transit extension on Central Avenue



from Washington/Jefferson to Baseline Road. The action amends the Regional Transportation Plan subject to the necessary air quality conformity analysis. Staff noted that the action marks the second of three steps in approving a major amendment to the MAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The first was to initiate the major amendment process by requesting formal comment on the amendment by the State Transportation Board, Regional Public Transportation Authority, and the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, as required by state statute. All three agencies recommended approval of the amendment. The second step is the action taken by the Regional Council during this agenda item to approve the amendment to the RTP for air quality conformity analysis. The third and final MAG Committee step will be in the spring of 2015 for final approval when the air quality conformity analysis is complete.

**For more information, contact Eileen Yazzie, MAG Transportation Planning Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

### **MAG 208 Water Quality Management Plan Amendment for the West Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility**

The MAG Regional Council approved a MAG 208 Water Quality Management Plan Amendment for the West Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility, specifically noting EPCOR Water Arizona, Inc.'s commitment to zero impact to Luke Air Force Base. The city of Glendale and Maricopa County requested that the MAG 208 Water Quality Management Plan be amended to include the West Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility, with an ultimate capacity of eight million gallons per day. The facility would be located in the Glendale Municipal Planning Area and serve a portion of the area that includes unincorporated areas of Maricopa County. Reclaimed water from the proposed facility would be disposed of through reuse, recharge, and a potential Arizona Pollutant Discharge Elimination System Permit discharge to Bullard Wash south of Litchfield Park via a below-ground pipeline; Roosevelt Irrigation District Canal south of Litchfield Park via a below-ground pipeline; and/or to the Agua Fria River via existing concrete lined stormwater channels.

Once the West Valley Regional Water Reclamation Facility becomes operational, flows currently sent to the existing Russell Ranch Water Reclamation Facility, also located in the Glendale Municipal Planning Area, would be redirected to the new facility. The Russell Ranch Facility would then be retired. However, if there is an unforeseen delay in the construction of the West Valley Regional Facility, short-term treatment capacity improvements may be implemented at the Russell Ranch Facility as an interim treatment solution for initial development. The capacity of the Russell Ranch Water Reclamation Facility would not exceed the 400,000 gallons per day ultimate capacity currently identified in the MAG 208 Plan.

The project is located within three miles of the cities of Avondale, Buckeye, El Mirage, Goodyear, Litchfield Park, Surprise, as well as the town of Youngtown

and Luke Air Force Base. EPCOR has made commitments regarding nuisance impacts, bird abatement, initial start-up procedures, sludge disposal, and effluent management to address concerns. The jurisdictions and Luke Air Force Base have indicated no objections based on certain considerations and commitments made by EPCOR.

**For more information, contact Julie Hoffman, MAG Environmental Planning Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Resolution of Support for Acceleration of the SR-189 Project**

The MAG Regional Council approved a resolution of support to advocate for the acceleration of a project to reduce a bottleneck on State Route (SR) 189 near the Mexican border. The resolution requests the respective Regional Planning Agencies to jointly advocate to the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), the Federal Highway Administration, the State Transportation Board, Arizona's Congressional Delegation, the Arizona Legislature, and other public and private stakeholders to explore additional funding, creative financing, and additional statutory flexibility in order to advance the construction of the preferred build alternative for State Route 189 into the ADOT Five-Year Transportation Facilities Construction Program. The resolution also asks that this be done while holding harmless those projects currently funded in the program.

In October, Arizona celebrated the opening of the new Mariposa Port of Entry, which is located immediately north of the city of Nogales, Arizona. The completed reconstruction of the Port is estimated at \$225 million. Traffic volumes at the port are expected to increase from the current average of 1,600 trucks per day to more than 3,000 trucks per day by the peak of produce season in January 2015. SR-189 serves as a bypass for commercial truck traffic to and from Mexico and provides a critical international commerce connection from the Mariposa Port of Entry to Interstate 19. With the opening of the port, the increased traffic will encounter a bottleneck north of the port. ADOT has conducted a design concept report of the interchange configuration needed to fix the bottleneck, estimated at approximately \$64 million. ADOT has allocated \$2 million in FY 2016 for environmental work and \$4 million in FY 2018 for final design. The draft resolution to support the acceleration is being considered by the regional planning organizations in Arizona.

**For more information, please contact Bob Hazlett, MAG Senior Engineering Project Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

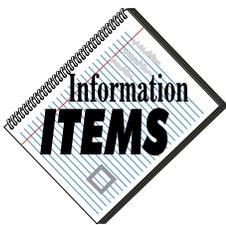
### **Solicitation of Nominations for Business Representatives on the Transportation Policy Committee**

The MAG Regional Council approved having the chair forward the names of three individuals for two available business seats on the Transportation Policy Committee to the President of the Arizona Senate for consideration. Proposition 400 authorizes the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives to

appoint six business members to the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC). State law also provides that the chair of the Regional Planning Agency may submit names to the President and Speaker for consideration.

The terms of two of the TPC business members will expire on December 31, 2014. On October 2, 2014, a memorandum was sent to Regional Council members requesting names for the business representatives. One of the business members must represent construction interests, which is defined in state law as “a company whose primary function consists of building freeways, highways or major arterial streets.” The other business member would represent regionwide business, which is defined in state law as “a company that provides goods or services throughout the county.” State law provides that members serve six-year terms of office, and that members may be reappointed. Three letters were submitted to the Transportation Policy Committee for consideration. The Regional Council recommended that all three names be forwarded for consideration: Steve Gervais with Land Advisors Organization for the regionwide business seat, and Todd F. Kinney of Okland Construction and Doug DeClusin of Sunland Asphalt for consideration for the construction seat.

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



## **Information Items**

### **Census Test 2015**

The Regional Council received an update by U.S. Census Bureau staff on the 2015 Census Test. The Census Bureau has selected portions of the MAG region to conduct tests of collection technologies and sampling methods for the 2020 Census, with the goal of improving Census 2020. The MAG region is the only place in the nation selected for this type of testing in 2015. Testing will take place in selected areas around the region between April and July 2015. Staff noted that the test will produce no official data and is not part of any special mid-decade count.

Staff reported that the Census Bureau is testing a variety of census activities, including looking at ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of non-response follow up procedures, in which census takers must go to addresses where no response was received from the household. The test will also include computer-based training, real-time caseload management, smartphone data collection methods (including whether it makes sense for census workers to use their personal cell phone devices), a new field management structure, and the potential use of existing government data, such as IRS or birth/death records to assist in the count.

The Census Bureau staff reported that Maricopa County was selected for the test because of its diversity, low response rates in certain geographic areas, and the close

proximity of urban, suburban and rural areas. The test will include approximately 1.6 million housing units in portions of Phoenix, Mesa, Chandler and Wickenburg. The Census Bureau will be hiring a number of census office workers and field positions. The jobs phone line is 800-361-6891.

Several cities in the Valley are planning to conduct a special mid-decade census, which is an actual door-to-door count that will also take place in 2015. The Census Bureau says it will work with MAG and its member agencies to try to eliminate confusion between the test and the cities' mid-decade census activities.

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

### **Streamlining the 208 Water Quality Management Plan Process**

The Regional Council received an update on efforts by the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to streamline the 208 Water Quality Management Plan Process. ADEQ has proposed a streamlining approach that would result in the issuance of permits for wastewater treatment facilities without first going through the MAG 208 Process and receiving Regional Council approval. Following a briefing in September, several members of the Regional Council expressed concern on the ADEQ streamlining approach.

Following the Regional Council meeting, MAG staff held a constructive, face-to-face meeting with ADEQ in October. At the meeting, MAG staff conveyed that the MAG member agencies do not want to jeopardize the integrity of the MAG 208 Water Quality Management Plan process. ADEQ indicated that it has committed to reducing permitting time by 50 percent. ADEQ is trying to be more responsive to its customers, the regulated community. There was also some common ground discussed at the meeting, such as the importance of economic development. MAG staff agreed to work with ADEQ on identifying streamlining options.

In November, ADEQ conducted a strategy meeting with MAG and brought in a representative from the Governor's Government Transformation Office to discuss using the "Lean" approach in streamlining the 208 Process. The state has been using Lean to streamline various processes. ADEQ indicated that they streamlined the Aquifer Protection Permit Process in 2012 and met the five-year goal of reducing permitting time by 50 percent in the first year. ADEQ acknowledged that applying Lean to the MAG process would be the first time it applied Lean to an organization other than its own. MAG noted at the meeting that it takes an average of three months for 208 amendments to go through the MAG process.

Following the November meeting, MAG staff contacted ADEQ and indicated that, given the discussion at the strategy meeting, MAG will be streamlining its 208 Process

to make it more efficient. Staff reported that MAG envisions bringing together a small group of cities and towns, Maricopa County, a private utility representative, a homebuilder representative, and ADEQ to identify recommendations for streamlining the process. MAG will also invite the representative from the Governor's office to the meeting. The process is expected to begin after the first of the year.

**For more information, contact Julie Hoffman, MAG Environmental Planning Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the MAG Regional Council will be Wednesday, January 28, 2015, at 11:30 a.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix, second floor, Saguaro Room. Agenda items are pending.

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