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MAG Commuter Rail Strategic Plan Purpose and Key Issues

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Overall Purpose: To identify priorities and develop an implementation strategy for commuter rail service in Maricopa County and northern Pinal County. The overall goal is to prepare a Commuter Rail Strategic Plan for adoption by the MAG Regional Council.

Key Reasons to Consider Commuter Rail Service

- Growth of population and employment in all parts of the metropolitan area.
- Travel demand growth and increasing congestion in the primary travel corridors of the region.
- Need to provide multimodal transportation opportunities in the primary travel corridors.
- Desire to reinforce local and regional land use plans and development opportunities.
- Potential availability of existing railroad alignments in the primary travel corridors.
- Increase in the cost of fuel and travel.
- Potential to promote sustainability.

Critical Challenges to Implementation of Commuter Rail Service

- Possible conflicts with current and planned freight railroad operations.
- Rapid development of land uses foreclosing opportunities for alignments and stations.
- Physical and geographic constraints limit locations for new alignments.
- Coordination with jurisdictional interests and policies.
- Availability and competition for regional, state and federal funding and resources.

Requirements for Successful Implementation of Commuter Rail Service

- Determine where commuter rail would be cost-effective to serve peak regional travel demand.
- Define options for shared and joint use of railway corridors and infrastructure.
- Develop working relationships and agreements with railroad owners and operators for alignments, stations and operations.
- Identify potential risk exposure from environmental issues and safety/ownership/liability issues.
- Develop system to integrate with other transportation system elements; LRT system; Bus and BRT system; highway and road network.
- Generate public and agency support for commuter rail service.
- Develop political support and leadership.
- Identify potential funding options and necessary legislative measures.
- Define an acceptable operating, administration and governance organization.