

Deep Cuts to Transit Services Anticipated

Cities and towns across the Valley are warning that they will be forced to cut transit services in the wake of the loss of a key source of revenue known as the Local Transportation Assistance Fund, or LTAF.

In March, in order to help balance a \$3 billion deficit, the State Legislature approved a state budget that permanently strips \$33.9 million in LTAF funds—\$23.9 of which were dedicated specifically for transit operations. Arizona becomes one of only five states with no state support for transit services.

The Maricopa County portion of the cuts equates to more than \$21 million. As a result, cities across the region are preparing for dramatic reductions in transit services.

“Due to state cuts in the Local Transportation Assistance Fund share of the State Lottery revenue—which will become a permanent change and will result in significant changes and hardships for residents that utilize transit services across the Valley—we have a draft list that is nearly a dozen pages in length of potential cuts to routes throughout the Valley,” said Phoenix Councilmember Michael Johnson, who chairs the Regional Public Transportation Authority’s (RPTA) board of directors. “There is simply no way that we are going to avoid some of the most drastic cuts to transit services this region has ever seen.”

In Glendale, entire routes face potential elimination.

“LTAF monies have been used to support local transit



services for 30 years, allowing cities to expand transit options and accessibility across the state,” said Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs. “The permanent repeal of the only state funding for public transit will force cities to cut transit services at a time when the struggling economy is forcing more and more residents to rely on those services,” she said.

Avondale Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers also noted that Avondale—historically an underserved area for transit—suffered tremendous losses due to the impact of the economy on the routes in the regional transit plan.

“Our residents who rely on transit for their livelihood will continue to endure further hardship due to the funding cuts made in the last month by the Arizona State Legislature. These cuts, amounting to more than \$400,000, will have an immediate and



Councilmember Michael Johnson
City of Phoenix



Mayor Elaine Scruggs
City of Glendale

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Message From the Chair



**Councilmember
Peggy Neely**
City of Phoenix

In June, I will be completing my term as MAG chair. I want to thank my fellow Regional Council members for their support, encouragement and counsel throughout my tenure.

Over the past year and a half, I have come to realize that MAG is a very special organization. Unlike other metropolitan planning organizations around the country, we are small enough to sit around a single table and make decisions that are in the best interest of the region. We are also extremely fortunate to have had the support of Maricopa County taxpayers in funding our transportation system, providing \$5 billion in sales tax funds since 1985 to help build the vital infrastructure we need. We are one of a very few regions in the United States that enjoys this level of voter support. Below are just a few of our most recent accomplishments.

We have taken steps to balance a \$6.6 billion deficit in the Freeway/Highway portion of the 20-year Regional Transportation Plan. We met all deadlines for committing economic stimulus dollars to transportation and transit projects as required under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—providing money and jobs to Arizona and putting us in line for unused funding from other states. We completed a number of important framework studies that provide strategic planning direction well into the future. We

successfully consolidated and clarified the transit planning and programming roles and responsibilities of MAG and its partner agencies. We undertook a major review of all of MAG's business practices to ensure they are easily understood by member agencies. We have addressed challenges in the human services arena caused by funding cuts, and we are performing cutting edge work in air quality to address PM-10 pollution.

One accomplishment of which I am especially proud is the creation of the Joint Planning Advisory Council (see page 7). The JPAC was created among MAG, the Pima Association of Governments (PAG), and the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG) to provide guidance and possible technical assistance in planning for growth in the megaregion known as the Sun Corridor. This partnership represents an unprecedented multiregional cooperative planning process that could serve as a model for the nation. The formation of the JPAC was an outgrowth of previous cooperative planning efforts and provides a platform for all of us to create a globally competitive economic corridor.

I will continue to represent Phoenix on the Regional Council and continue my service on the Executive Committee. I look forward to working with the newly elected officers and pledge my support and assistance in the year ahead. 



MAGAZine is a quarterly newsletter of the Maricopa Association of Governments. It focuses on the issues and concerns of the cities, towns and tribal communities of Maricopa County. If you know of a friend or colleague who would like to receive MAGAZine, please call the MAG office, (602) 254-6300.

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www.mag.maricopa.gov/members.cms

Expect a Knock on Your Door

If you neglected to mail back your 2010 Census questionnaire by mid-April, chances are you will soon be getting a knock on your door by an enumerator.

United States Census 2010

The 2010 Census efforts have moved into what is known as the "Non-Response Follow Up" phase, in which census takers employed by the U.S. Census Bureau will visit households that did not return the form by mail. Enumerators will return to a residence up to six times to attempt to collect the information; if they can't get it from the people residing in the home, they will try to collect it from neighbors. The U.S. Constitution mandates a count of everyone living in the United States every 10 years.

Census data are used to apportion Congressional and legislative seats and to distribute more than \$400 billion in federal funding to states and communities. In Arizona, MAG estimates that each resident counted equates to approximately \$1,550 per year in funding for local communities. In Maricopa County, approximately 10,000 enumerators have been hired to help conduct the Non-Response Follow Up.

If a census taker does come to your door, it will likely be someone who lives in the same neighborhood as you. Enumerators are hired to work in the same zip codes where they live.

"We understand that although the Census is a national count, it is conducted locally," said Regional Director Cathy L. Lacy, who oversees the U.S. Census Bureau's Denver Region, which includes Arizona. "We have worked hard to recruit our Census workforce from cities, towns and neighborhoods throughout our region, so that they can go to work counting their own neighbors—a best practice that makes it more likely that residents complete their questionnaires. All of this effort has gone into convincing residents to do something very easy—take 10 minutes to answer just 10 questions. The few minutes it will take to fill out the form will be felt by your community, state and nation throughout the next decade."

Census takers who come to your home should have proper identification that includes the Department of Commerce watermark, and they will be able to provide you with a contact phone number to verify their identity. They will not ask to enter your home and will not ask for your social security number, credit card number, or financial account information. All census workers must take a confidentiality oath—for life—to protect the information that they collect.

"Opening your door to a census taker opens doors for our community," said Phoenix Councilwoman and MAG Chair Peggy Neely. "Being counted means bringing federal and state funding back to our community for roads, hospitals, schools and more. We strongly encourage residents to participate in the census, which ultimately impacts individuals and families as well as communities," she said. 

For more information, visit www.MAGcensus.com.



Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport is fast becoming a business and transportation epicenter for development and job growth for the East Valley community. Passengers can enjoy easy, hassle-free travel on Allegiant Airlines to 21 cities throughout the Midwest and western U.S. The airport has more than 100 acres of land available for development, as well as a variety of facilities currently available for sale or lease, including office space, warehouses, hangars and business parks. Significant investment incentives are available to businesses making Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport their home. Visit www.phxmesagateway.org for more information about the exciting opportunities at the airport!

— Queen Creek Mayor Art Sanders, who also serves as chairman of the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport Authority Board of Directors



Chandler has been recognized as one of the nation's most transparent local governments on the Web. The city recently received an "A" grade by the Sunshine Review for providing comprehensive public information on its website, www.chandleraz.gov. Regionally, I believe all Valley governments work vigorously to perform their missions in an open and honest way, giving residents reassurance and trust in their elected officials.

— Chandler Mayor Boyd Dunn



At the Regional Council, I believe we should be advocating for a regional approach to transportation system planning. While corridor level planning is best left to local decision-makers who are closest to the people they represent, coordinating system level planning helps to increase efficiencies and enhance service across city borders, which is even more important as all of our communities face budget challenges.

— Tempe Mayor Hugh Hallman



I am pleased that we have moved forward with the alignment of the South Mountain Freeway. It was a tough decision involving the community of Ahwatukee. We continue our discussions with the Gila River Indian Community, but I am glad to say that we have moved ahead with the planning of the freeway.

— Maricopa County Supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox

Regional Profile: Mayor Kelly Blunt

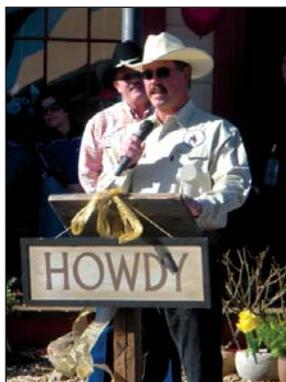
Former Firefighter Finds New Role Fulfilling



Mayor Kelly Blunt
Town of
Wickenburg



Mayor Blunt
addresses the
crowd at the
opening ceremonies
of Gold Rush
Days 2009.



He has balanced his town's budget and implemented an ordinance to stop the destructive levelling of scenic hilltops. Wickenburg Mayor Kelly Blunt says he has loved every minute of his first two years in office.

"I have found that I kind of like politics. I like to be able to convey the people's wishes and do what they want me to do. But boy, I hate public speaking," laughs Mayor Blunt. "Other than that, I enjoy the work, I really do."

Still, Mayor Blunt has no trouble finding the words to describe his community.

"The best thing we have going for us is the people who live here. You've never been to a friendlier place, I guarantee you. Everybody here takes care of one another, and we take care of strangers—that's the beauty of Wickenburg."

The mayor describes recent beautification and historic preservation efforts, which have enhanced the western character of the town. A new truck bypass is also helping preserve the town's laid-back ambience.

"Now that we have the bypass in place, it has actually slowed down traffic in town so much that it is much more pedestrian friendly.

People can actually get out and go to the shops and go to the restaurants and walk around and look at the history," says Mayor Blunt.

While the recession has posed challenges for a town that relies primarily on tourism, Blunt says the town's efforts to become

a "destination" place have paid off. He cites signature events such as the Gold Rush Days and Desert Caballeros (DC) Trail Ride as major economic draws. He also credits Town Manager Gary Edwards with helping steer the community through its tough times.

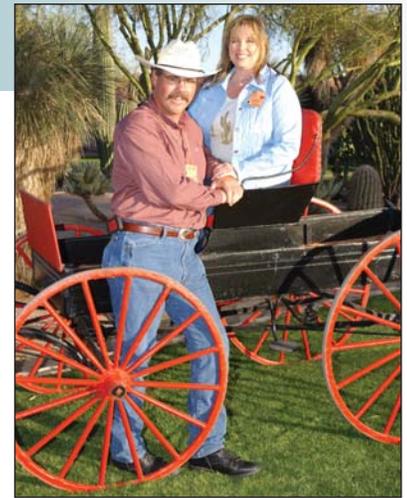
"We are lucky to have an awesome town manager," Blunt says. "We've taken a hit on construction and new homes, but we don't rely on it like other communities do...We're actually not sitting too shabby here in town. It's going to be difficult for a couple more years, but I think as long as we plan ahead, we'll pull through this."

Blunt spent 13 years as a volunteer firefighter, followed by four years in Wickenburg's Public Works Department. He currently serves as a construction technician for Southwest Gas, and believes his background helps him bring a fresh approach to the mayoral office.

"Most mayors and council people are business people," he says. "But government and business are two completely different animals. I think it has helped to have a different perspective on some of the decisions that are being made. I think it helps because I have been in the trenches, I know what we have to do on a daily basis to make things happen."

When asked to describe his years as a volunteer firefighter, Blunt says job duties ran the gamut.

"We did a lot of car accidents, a lot of extrications, brush fires, working house fires, industrial fires, plane crashes—you name it, we were doing it," he recalls.



Mayor Kelly Blunt and his wife, Debbie, prepare for the Desert Caballeros Trail Ride.

As physically demanding as the job was, the emotional toll was harder. "When you're doing the firefighter thing, you've got to be able to look at it from a distance, you can't really get involved. But in a small town like this, I'll tell you what, I've seen a lot of my friends get hurt. I've seen some of my friends die. At that point, the mental part became difficult for me to deal with. I had to step away, it was just too much for me," he states.

Still, his desire to serve the community where he was born and raised remained, leading Blunt to run for election. One of his first projects was to work for passage of a grading and drainage ordinance for developers. Because of its hilly topography, Blunt says Wickenburg doesn't lend itself to tract homes and large neighborhoods.

"The problem we were having was that, because of the amount of hills and the lack of flat land, they were wiping the hills out and they weren't working them into their plans. We had a couple of subdivisions go in where they really raped the land. That totally justified having a grading and drainage ordinance. So we got together with the planning and zoning department, and we hammered one out. That is in place, and I'm pretty proud of that," says Blunt.

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Region Successfully Meets ARRA Deadlines



Mayor Blunt enjoys camping outdoors with his daughters, Sierra and Savannah.

In his spare time, Blunt, his wife, Debbie, and their daughters, ages 6 and 8, can be found just about anywhere, as long as it is under the open sky.

“We like camping, hunting, fishing—anything outdoors. We’ll get in the jeep and drive out to Box Canyon on the Hassayampa River and play in the water all day and come home. Anything that we can do outside, that’s what we do,” he says.

Perhaps it’s no surprise that Blunt has turned down numerous opportunities to relocate to more urban areas, choosing instead to stick close to his roots. “The city life is not for me. I chose to raise my family here. In fact, I live across the street and one door down from where I grew up. I’m raising my children in the same neighborhood that I was raised in,” he notes.

Another hobby the mayor enjoys is cooking. He considers meat, especially rib-eye steak, his specialty. “My love of cooking would probably surprise most people,” he says. “A lot of people look at it as more of a task. I actually enjoy it. I turn on my radio and I kick back and I cook and I love doing it. It is really, really relaxing to me.”

While relaxing these days might be a bit harder to come by due to a full time job plus his mayoral duties—overall, it has been worth it.

“I’ve had to make some pretty tough decisions, but I still love it. I love every minute of it.

“Except for the public speaking part.” 

All Transportation Funds Committed; Arizona Becomes Eligible for Additional Dollars

The Maricopa region met all federal deadlines for committing economic stimulus dollars to transportation and transit projects as required under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009—meaning that all economic stimulus funds allocated to Arizona will be spent and putting Arizona in line for any leftover funding from other states.

“This is a testament to the hard work that has been done at the federal, state, regional and local levels,” said Phoenix Councilwoman Peggy Neely, who serves as chair of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Regional Council. “Our overriding goal throughout the process has been to utilize the economic recovery funds to jump-start important transportation projects and create thousands of jobs in the region,” she said.

On February 17, 2009, President Obama signed the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA), which included funding for national highway infrastructure and transit investments. Arizona received \$521 million for highway infrastructure projects, with \$129.4 million directed for highway projects in the MAG region and another \$104.6 million for local transportation projects. On the

transit side, the region received \$66.4 million of stimulus funds for the regional transit portion of the ARRA funds. Finally, approximately \$5.2 million was allocated in transportation enhancement projects.



Transportation Policy Committee Chair

Marie Lopez Rogers

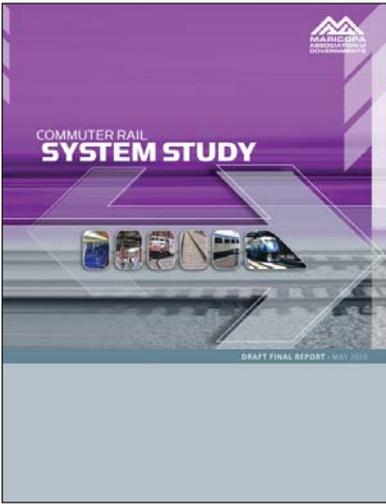
noted that under the “use it or lose it” provisions of the legislation, all highway projects had to be obligated (funds committed and the project approved by the Federal Highway Administration) by March 2, 2010, in order for Arizona to be eligible to receive funding from other states that are unable to obligate their funds. All transit projects had to be obligated (funds committed and approved by the Federal Transit Administration) by March 5, 2010. The MAG region obligated all of its projects by the respective deadlines.



“We recognized the importance of working together to ensure that all projects would be obligated by the deadline so

that we could utilize every penny available to us and guarantee that we were in line for any additional funding that is left on the table,” said Mayor Rogers. 

For a listing of ARRA projects in the MAG region, please visit www.mag.maricopa.gov/detail.cms?item=9615



Commuter Rail Study Complete

Many consider commuter rail to be the missing tool in the Valley's transportation toolbox. Now, a two-year MAG study spells out just what it would take to implement commuter rail in the region.

The MAG Commuter Rail System Study was completed in April. Findings and recommendations of the study will go before the MAG Regional Council in May. The study examined factors such as

existing freight operations and potential opportunities for operating commuter rail in existing rights of way. The study also evaluated ridership potential and capital and operating costs.



Other commuter rail systems, such as the Rail Runner Express commuter train in Albuquerque, New Mexico, are shown as peer examples in the study.

from Central Phoenix to Queen Creek be implemented as the initial starter segment, followed by the Grand Avenue Corridor from Phoenix northwest to Witmann.



Councilmember Sharon Wolcott
City of Surprise

“This study marks the first comprehensive analysis to define an optimized network of commuter rail corridors and the elements needed to implement a regional commuter rail system,” said Surprise Councilmember Sharon Wolcott, who represents the city on the MAG Regional Council and who is a strong proponent of commuter rail. “The study not only defines corridors but addresses the next steps needed before a system can be built. One of the key issues remaining will be identifying funding opportunities that would allow us to take those next steps,” she said.

The study envisions a system that would radiate from downtown Phoenix and share existing freight track along five corridors. The study provides a detailed evaluation of potential commuter rail links to the East Valley (including the Tempe, Chandler, and Southeast Corridors), and links to the West Valley informed by the findings of two companion commuter rail studies—the Grand Avenue Corridor Development Plan and Yuma West Corridor Development Plan.

Commuter rail is designed to be used in congested urban areas by providing service between suburbs and urban activity centers. Commuter rail typically differs from light rail by running less often and primarily in peak travel times, with passenger stations generally spaced five to 10 miles apart. The distance of most commuter rail corridors is also longer than that of light rail, ranging from 30 to 40 miles.

The study recommends that the Southeast Corridor

“We found that the highest ridership potential exists in eastern Maricopa County and northern Pinal County, and a Southeast Corridor alignment would provide substantial travel time savings and be cost-effective,” said Rick Pilgrim, senior vice president of the URS Corporation, which conducted the study on behalf of MAG.

Pilgrim said that modeling data prepared during the study shows the Southeast Corridor alignment would generate two to four times the number of boardings per revenue mile as all other corridors, with the second lowest capital cost per mile (approximately \$15 million). Models further project that by joining or “interlining” the Southeast and Grand Avenue corridors, ridership in the year 2030 would equal nearly 10,000 boardings per day.

Implementation steps range from identifying funding sources to coordinating with the Union Pacific Railroad and the BNSF Railway, as well as resolving governance issues and coordinating planning with the Arizona Department of Transportation and local jurisdictions.

A final opportunity for public input on the study was held in February, drawing an audience of nearly 100 people from across the Valley. The presentation took 30 minutes—about the length of time planners estimate a normal workday trip via commuter rail would take. Questions following the presentation also lasted about 30 minutes—just enough for the return trip home. 

Joint Planning Advisory Council Works to Identify Economic Engines, Future Freight and Rail Corridors

Planning for a globally competitive Sun Corridor is the focus of a number of efforts being undertaken by the Joint Planning Advisory Council (JPAC). The JPAC includes representatives from the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the Pima Association of Governments (PAG) and the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG). It was created in late 2009 to help the three agencies coordinate planning activities and cooperatively work together to foster a successful and economically viable megaregion known as the Sun Corridor.

An important priority of the group is to identify the Sun Corridor's key economic drivers. The group is receiving timely assistance in that effort, thanks to a Global Cities Initiative being conducted by AECOM, one of the world's largest engineering and architectural design firms. AECOM chose only three regions worldwide to include in the initiative: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia; Beijing, China; and the Sun Corridor (from Phoenix to Tucson) in Arizona. AECOM will study potential current and future economic opportunities and constraints, and identify potential industry clusters.

"The Global Cities Initiative will provide us with important data regarding opportunities and barriers for developing the Sun Corridor," said MAG Chair Peggy Neely. "It comes at an opportune time, as the JPAC is working to develop a joint plan for the corridor. Combined with a number of other important study efforts that are getting underway, such as the MAG Freight Framework Study, we can develop a plan that will position the corridor to take advantage of social, economic and environmental opportunities," she said.

Neely said that approximately one-third of the nation's freight passes through Arizona, but more than 62 percent of that freight simply passes through without any economic benefit to Arizona. The Freight Framework Study will be launched by MAG in the upcoming fiscal year and will develop a multimodal freight framework for Maricopa, Pinal, Pima and Yuma counties. The study will describe the movement of goods through the study area, identify possible hindrances to the safe and efficient flow of goods in the region, and propose strategies to improve an economical, safe, and efficient goods movement system that will enhance regional mobility.



**MAG Chair
Councilwoman
Peggy Neely**
City of Phoenix



**PAG Treasurer
Mayor Paul
Loomis**
Town of Oro Valley

The study will also evaluate the potential development of inland ports in the study area, with and without the anticipated freight flows from the proposed Punta Colonet deep sea port, located in Baja California, Mexico, as well as the port at Guaymas, Mexico, which is being expanded to accommodate additional container capacity.

Long range planning will include examining the impact of the proposed Interstate 11 from Phoenix to Las Vegas on freight activities and economic development. Study partners include members of the JPAC, the Yuma Metropolitan Planning Organization, the CANAMEX Corridor Coalition, the Arizona-Mexico Commission, the Arizona Department of Transportation, and potentially the Arizona State Land Department.

As with the AECOM study, the timing of the Freight Framework Study is critical. Mexico is already moving forward with identifying an international railway crossing at the border with the United States to handle freight from Punta Colonet.

"We need to identify the opportunities and the costs associated with developing what can be a vital economic corridor," said Oro Valley Mayor Paul Loomis, who serves as PAG treasurer. "It is tough to talk about revenue generation in these economic times, but we need to think seriously about how we can fund the infrastructure development to become a globally competitive megaregion," he said.

Jack Tomasik, regional planning director for CAAG, noted that there is currently a large imbalance between population growth and projected job availability in Pinal County.

"The development of an inland port in the Sun Corridor would result in entire new industry clusters and create a new source of jobs in the region," he said. "We need to continue to explore every opportunity for urban and regional progress. I think the efforts of the JPAC can have significant payoffs for the economic vitality of not only our region and our state, but for the entire Southwest."

At its next meeting, the JPAC will hear results from the AECOM study and invite the BNSF and Union Pacific railroads to join in the planning discussions. 

MAG Celebrates Native American Participation, Contributions to Region

MAG's membership includes three Native American Indian Communities: the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and the Gila River Indian Community. The leaders of these tribal nations serve on the MAG Regional Council and bring the voices of their communities to the regional table. To celebrate their continued contributions to our region, MAG is presenting the final profile in a three-part series, this time focusing on the Gila River Indian Community.



**Governor
William Rhodes**
Gila River Indian
Community



Gila River Indian Community

The Gila River Indian Community (the "Community") is located on 372,000 acres in south-central Arizona and is home to two separate and culturally distinct people: the Akimel O'otham ("River People" or Pima) and the Pee Posh ("People" or Maricopa). The Pee Posh are a Yuman-speaking people who originally lived along the Colorado River and are related to the Mohave, Quechan, and other Yuman tribes of western Arizona.

Our Pee Posh neighbors began arriving in central Arizona in the early 1800s, when they confederated with the Akimel O'otham. Together we agreed to provide for our mutual defense and prosperity. The Akimel O'otham have lived in the Gila and Salt River valleys since time immemorial and are descended from the prehistoric Huhugam civilization that prospered throughout south central Arizona.



The Gila River as it once flowed in the Community's early history.

This land was once a rich environment centered on the flowing Gila River. The river and its tributaries provided a source of drinking and irrigation water. At times, especially during the heat of summer along the river, the flowing water disappeared below ground. There were once eight islands dotting the Gila River bed, some one to two miles in length. Draping the river was a thick canopy of cottonwoods and willows. The woodlands along the river were once so thick that they obscured the view of the river itself. East of our villages, the river channel was so narrow and thickly populated with cottonwoods that the trees lining either bank met in the middle and formed a canopy over the river.

In 1848, gold was discovered in California; tens of thousands of ill-prepared men, women and families streamed across America heading toward their dreams of riches. One of the primary routes was across southern Arizona; between 1849 and 1851, an estimated 60,000 travelers arrived among our peaceful people, many starving or near death from dehydration and/or wounds inflicted in battle by tribes to the east and west of our lands. Here the travelers rested and ate well, enjoying our bounty of wheat, corn, beans, pumpkins, watermelon, squash, peas and other foods. In Mormon Battalion Lt. Sylvester Mowry's 1857 journal entry, he writes in gratitude of the Akimel O'odham and Pee Posh of the Gila River that, "Their stores of wheat and

corn have supplied many a starved emigrant, and restored his broken down animals."

In 1854, the Gadsden Purchase officially made southern Arizona part of a United States Territory. In appreciation for the important role the Akimel O'otham and Pee Posh played in America's westward expansion, in 1859 Congress established the first reservation in Arizona, encompassing 372,000 acres along the Gila River. In 1862, putting our agricultural skills to work, our people grew more than one million pounds of wheat, most of which we sold. Our prospects looked good.

However, our lifeblood—Gila River water—was cut off in the 1870s and 1880s by construction of upstream diversion structures and dams by non-Native farmers, and our farming was largely wiped out. From 1880 to 1920 or so, we faced mass famine and starvation. The federal government stepped in and doled out canned and processed food by the ton. The change in diet proved disastrous, leading to extremely high rates of obesity and diabetes—a condition we still face today. With almost no jobs available on the reservation, and the loss of our cash crops, our people faced widespread poverty. Alcoholism raised its ugly head, and our people experienced the loss of certain cultural and artistic traditions and rituals. It was the darkest moment in our long history.

Continued on page 9

Gila River Indian Community (continued)

We proved resilient and eked out a marginal existence for several precarious decades. Conditions finally began to improve in the 1930s, when the U.S. government completed Coolidge Dam on the upper Gila River, creating the San Carlos Reservoir. The project included a canal and pipe system to deliver some of this lake water to our reservation, restoring a portion of our farming practices. This was the beginning of a long climb out of the economic trenches. Following World War I and World War II, and with the introduction of cars making travel to booming Phoenix possible, men began to find work off the reservation. Eventually, small businesses began to appear on the reservation, launched both by the Community and individual tribal members. Schools, health centers and new housing appeared. Income levels slowly grew and famine was erased. These trends continue today as the Gila River Indian Community looks toward a promising future.

Today's Tribal Community

Over the past two decades, life has taken a definite turn for the better for our people. Respect and hope are flowing back, as has water for our precious farming fields. The overall quality of life, level of self-governance, tribal and personal income, health, housing, cultural, and artistic practices, education systems, and some intangibles like pride and dignity, are making way from the lows once seen within the Gila River Indian Community.

Breaking down barriers and coming back to the roots of the hospitality of our people, Gila River's tribal leaders today play an active role in Arizona's government. The goal of the leadership of the Community is to provide a better quality of life for future generations. As a result,

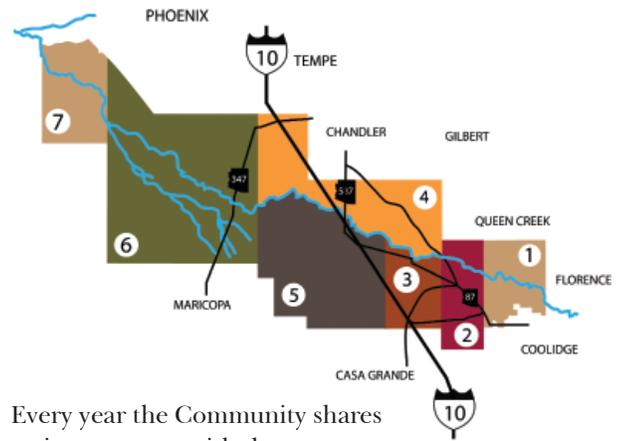
the Governor, Lieutenant Governor and the other 17 elected members of the Tribal Council continue to focus on creating a well-diversified economic base, building effective community service programs, and promoting cultural vitality.

The Executive Branch includes the Governor and Lieutenant Governor, who are elected for a three-year term. The executive office houses several factions that contribute to administrative and programmatic implementation of the Community. The Gila River Indian Community Council serves as a collective voice of the people, enacting and supporting legislation for its constituents here at home and on local, regional and national issues that face tribes today.

The Gila River Indian Community has 20 diverse business enterprises throughout the reservation, an industrial park in Chandler, and has developed a tourist destination surpassing any in the state. The Wild Horse Pass Development Authority is home to the AAA Five Diamond and Forbes Five Star Award winning destination resort and spa, the Sheraton Wild Horse Pass. Adding to the Wild Horse Pass experience is Gila River's newest addition, the Wild Horse Pass Hotel and Casino, Arizona's only Las Vegas style casino/hotel, giving the Phoenix metropolitan socialites an exciting 24/7 option for entertainment and dining.

Gila River's Philanthropy

In recent years, the Community has also been able to begin serving in a philanthropic capacity. It has provided donations to many Phoenix-area and Arizona charities and nonprofit organizations, including Boys and Girls Clubs, the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, the United Way, the Special Olympics, and the Red Cross.



Map of the Gila River Indian Community and its districts in relation to other Valley cities and towns.

Every year the Community shares casino revenues with the state of Arizona. Under the gaming compact, Proposition 202 allows tribes to retain 12 percent of their annual state contributions and to distribute these funds directly to cities, towns and counties of their choice. The remaining 88 percent is paid directly to the state. The State Shared Gaming Revenue program began in 2003; to date Gila River has awarded more than \$12 million to various municipalities across Arizona.

More than 48 percent of the proposals have been selected to fund cities, towns and counties, primarily in the Phoenix metropolitan area. These donations to the surrounding municipalities range from \$9,000 for the town of Coolidge's Senior Center to \$1 million to assist in the construction of the Mercy Gilbert Medical Center. The Community's priorities of funding are: public safety, transportation facilities, health care services, economic development, and education.

The Gila River Indian Community reinvests 100 percent of all net gaming revenue into programs, services and investments to benefit its 19,000+ enrolled members. The Community also makes annual contributions to surrounding cities, towns and counties for governmental services that benefit the general public, including public safety, mitigation of impacts of gaming, promotion of commerce and economic development. 

Homeless Street Count Finds More Families, Youth on Streets

More than 2,700 people can be found living on the streets of Maricopa County, according to a recent homeless street count conducted by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) on January 26. The number is a decrease of about six percent from the 2,918 homeless individuals counted last year. While the overall number of homeless people decreased, the count also recorded some disturbing trends in the numbers of families and youth who are now on the streets.

The point-in-time Homeless Street Count was conducted by volunteer street count coordinators in the region. The group counted a total of 2,729 homeless people living on the streets in Maricopa County. The number of homeless families jumped from 37 families in 2009 to 47 families in 2010, an increase of 27 percent. The number of homeless youth-on-their-own grew from 139 in 2009 to 181 in 2010, an increase of 30 percent.



Vice Mayor
Shana Ellis
City of Tempe

“It is a good news/bad news scenario,” said Vice Mayor Shana Ellis, chair of the MAG Continuum of Care Regional Committee on Homelessness. “The decrease in the overall homeless population is encouraging, but there are troubling trends in what can be described as the ‘new’ homeless: families with children as well as youth who are living alone without any familial support.

2010 Homeless Street Count Results

Population	2010	2009	Percent Change (+/-)
Street Count Total	2,729	2,918	-6 percent
Adults	2,493	2,698	-8 percent
Children (under the age of 18)	236	220	+7 percent
Non-Chronic Individuals	1,791	1,925	-7 percent
Chronic Individuals	615	624	-1 percent
Families	47	37	+27 percent
People in Families	142	230	-38 percent
Youth on Their Own	181	139	+30 percent

“Many service agencies report a large increase in people seeking assistance who have never needed help before. More than 30 percent of people in shelter report being homeless for the first time.”

Ellis noted that the decrease in the total homeless population this year may be attributed to new local programs for chronically homeless individuals and federal funding to prevent homelessness and rapidly re-house homeless people across the region.

The count is part of a national effort to identify the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Councilmember Joanne Osborne, vice chair of the MAG Continuum of Care Regional Committee on Homelessness, said the region’s findings mirror national trends.

“Families and youth are the country’s fastest growing homeless population. This is especially true for the MAG region, considering the impact of the recession and high foreclosure rates,” she said. “Many shelter providers, outreach workers, and schools have expressed concerns for a visibly growing number of homeless families and youth.”

The homeless street count is a snapshot of the number of people sleeping on the streets and does not incorporate the number of people in shelters (4,971 in 2009; 2010 numbers are pending). 

Additional information about the number of homeless people in each city or town can be found on the MAG website at www.mag.maricopa.gov.

MAG Moment



Human Services Program Manager Brande Mead speaks to a man identifying himself as “Sampson” during the homeless street count.

Declining Revenues (continued from page 1)

long-term impact to Avondale residents,” she said. “We are particularly concerned for students trying to get to Estrella Mountain Community College and transit dependent riders getting to and from work. Because of the elimination of the LTAF funding source, Avondale will have to completely eliminate Route 29A, which means only three local routes will remain to serve the area. Decisions are being made for us without consideration for the people most affected by them.”

In Chandler, the LTAF reduction represents a \$1.2 million impact, with local and express bus services potentially on the chopping block.

“For many people in the Chandler community, public transit is the primary means of transportation,” said Chandler Mayor Boyd Dunn. “It is unfortunate that the loss of more than a million dollars annually in LTAF funding could potentially affect the daily lives of so many people. We would hope that the state reconsiders the use of these funds as they relate to Arizona’s municipalities.”

Mesa Mayor Scott Smith reports the LTAF losses for his city equaled \$895,000 for fiscal year 2009/2010 and \$1.97 million for FY 2010/2011.

“Right now, we are working on different scenarios that include transit reductions and delays in planned new service,” said Mayor Smith. “Losing LTAF funding creates an especially challenging situation because this is a permanent reduction, not a one-time loss.”

The list of potential routes to be impacted is available at www.valleymetro.org. While not all of the cuts on the list will be made, all potential reductions are included in order to provide Valley residents an opportunity to provide input on the cuts. Regardless, one Valley Metro staff member referred to the list as “heart stopping.” Public hearings are being planned to hear the priorities of residents (*see sidebar*). Those who can’t attend the hearings are encouraged to fill out an online survey at the above web address.

Phoenix Public Transit Director Debbie Cotton, chair of the MAG Transit Committee, said LTAF revenues compound other revenue declines. February 2010 regional transportation sales tax revenues were 7.1 percent lower than February 2009. Those reductions parallel declines in local sales tax collections, which also fund transit services.

“Sales tax revenue has shown a negative change from

the previous year for 30 straight months in a row,” said Cotton. “The recession has hit local transit agencies hard, since much of transit funding is financed through fares and sales taxes. The elimination of LTAF will leave thousands of Maricopa County residents with extremely limited transportation options,” she said.

A case in point is the city of Tempe, which recently completed a public involvement process to develop the service changes necessary to help address a forecasted budget deficit of \$18 million. Tempe’s transit system is funded primarily by a half-cent local sales tax, which has dramatically decreased. As a result of the elimination of LTAF, the impact to Tempe’s transit fund is approximately \$250,000 in lost revenue.

For the disability community, the cuts will come especially hard. “Many people with disabilities rely on public transit as our only transportation option,” said Amina Kruck, director of advocacy programs for Arizona Bridge to Independent Living. “We need transit for vital needs such as getting to work, shopping for food, or traveling to medical appointments,” she said.

Among the routes regionwide that are possibly impacted are routes 1, 3A, 8, 29, 29A, 30, 40, 45, 48, 50, 51, 52, 56, 61, 62, 65, 66, 72, 76, 77, 80, 81, 90, 96, 104, 106, 108, 112, 128, 136, 138, 154, 156, 170, 186, 511, 532, 536, 540, 571, 572, 573, 576 and 660, as well as BUZZ, Scottsdale Downtown and Neighborhood Trolley, LINK Mesa Main Street, and Dial-a-Ride services. 



Mayor Marie Lopez Rogers
City of Avondale



Mayor Boyd Dunn
City of Chandler



Mayor Scott Smith
City of Mesa



Valley Metro is holding hearings to receive public comment regarding proposed transit service cuts. At each location, an open house will be held from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. with the hearing to follow from 6:30 to 7:15 p.m.

Public hearing dates are:

Wednesday, May 19, 2010

Glendale City Council Chambers
5850 W. Glendale Ave.
Glendale, AZ 85301

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

Webster Elementary School Cafeteria
202 N. Sycamore
Mesa, AZ 85201
(North of the Sycamore Transit Center)

Wednesday, May 26, 2010

Avondale City Council Chambers
11465 West Civic Center Drive
Avondale, AZ 85323

Or, participate via Webinar:

Tuesday, May 25, 2010

12 p.m. (Noon) to 1 p.m.
Register at www.valleymetro.org

Thursday, May 27, 2010

6 p.m. to 7 p.m.
Register at www.valleymetro.org

Online comment card information:

Go to www.valleymetro.org to provide input online about bus route changes effective as early as July 26, 2010.

Visit our website: www.mag.maricopa.gov



or follow us on Twitter at:
<http://twitter.com/MAGregion>



A Quarterly Newsletter Focusing on Regional Excellence

May-July 2010  Vol. 15: No. 2

Summer 2010 Calendar

May 2010

- 5th 8:30 a.m. Regional Community Network (RCN) Working Group
- 5th 10:00 a.m. Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee
- 5th 1:30 p.m. Standard Specifications and Details Committee
- 6th 1:30 p.m. Regional Domestic Violence Council
- 11th 1:00 p.m. Street Committee
- 12th 12:00 p.m. Management Committee
- 13th 1:00 p.m. Human Services Technical Committee
- 13th 1:30 p.m. Transit Committee
- 17th 12:00 p.m. Regional Council Executive Committee
- 17th 2:00 p.m. Continuum of Care Regional Committee on Homelessness
- 18th 1:30 p.m. Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee
- 18th 2:30 p.m. Planners Stakeholders Group
- 19th 2:00 p.m. Building Codes Committee
- 19th 4:00 p.m. Transportation Policy Committee
- 20th 10:00 a.m. Technology Advisory Group
- 25th 10:00 a.m. Population Technical Advisory Committee
- 25th 1:30 p.m. Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee
- 26th 5:00 p.m. Regional Council
- 27th 10:00 a.m. Transportation Review Committee

Parking is available under the building. Please ask for parking validation at the meeting. Transit tickets will be provided for those using transit. Bike racks are available at the entrance to the parking garage.

June 2010

- 2nd 8:30 a.m. Regional Community Network (RCN) Working Group
- 2nd 10:00 a.m. Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee
- 2nd 1:30 p.m. Standard Specifications and Details Committee
- 8th 1:00 p.m. Street Committee
- 9th 12:00 p.m. Management Committee
- 10th 1:00 p.m. Human Services Technical Committee
- 10th 1:30 p.m. Transit Committee
- 15th 1:30 p.m. Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee
- 16th 2:00 p.m. Building Codes Committee
- 21st 12:00 p.m. Regional Council Executive Committee
- 22nd 10:00 a.m. Population Technical Advisory Committee
- 23rd 4:00 p.m. Transportation Policy Committee
- 24th 1:30 p.m. Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee
- 28th 2:00 p.m. Continuum of Care Planning Subcommittee
- 30th 5:00 p.m. Regional Council Annual Meeting (Sheraton Downtown)
- 30th 6:00 p.m. Desert Peaks Awards

All meetings, unless indicated otherwise, will be held in the conference rooms located in the MAG offices on the second floor of the building, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix. The dates, times and locations of all meetings may change. Other committees not listed here may meet during these months.

July 2010

- 1st 10:00 a.m. Transportation Review Committee
- 7th 8:30 a.m. Regional Community Network (RCN) Working Group
- 7th 10:00 a.m. Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee
- 7th 1:30 p.m. Standard Specifications and Details Committee
- 8th 1:00 p.m. Human Services Technical Committee
- 8th 1:30 p.m. Transit Committee
- 13th 1:00 p.m. Street Committee
- 14th 12:00 p.m. Management Committee
- 15th 9:00 a.m. PSAP Managers Group
- 15th 10:00 a.m. Technology Advisory Group
- 19th 12:00 p.m. Regional Council Executive Committee
- 20th 1:00 p.m. Human Services Coordinating Committee
- 20th 1:30 p.m. Bicycle & Pedestrian Committee
- 21st 2:00 p.m. Building Codes Committee
- 21st 4:00 p.m. Transportation Policy Committee
- 26th 2:00 p.m. Continuum of Care Regional Committee on Homelessness
- 27th 10:00 a.m. Population Technical Advisory Committee
- 28th 5:00 p.m. Regional Council
- 29th 10:00 a.m. Transportation Review Committee
- 29th 1:30 p.m. Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee

For confirmation, call (602) 254-6300, or visit the Web site: www.mag.maricopa.gov/meetings.cms