



## Executive Director's Report

In the midst of many important business items to address in October, the Regional Council approved a resolution of planning coordination among the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), Pima Association of Governments (PAG), and Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG). This marks an important step forward in expanding our collaborative process. The Regional Council voted for the MAG Chair to sign the resolution at a future joint meeting of the three agencies.

The resolution calls for a Joint Planning Advisory Council to be established to identify mutually agreed upon goals and interests, to provide guidance on possible technical assistance and joint planning activities, and to enhance communication and cooperation among policymakers in the three regions.

MAG and CAAG have a solid history of partnering in many joint planning studies, such as the Southeast Maricopa/Northern Pinal County Study, the Commuter Rail Strategic Plan, and the Hidden Valley Transportation Framework Study. The two agencies share three member agencies in common, Apache Junction, the Gila River Indian Community, and Queen Creek, while PAG and CAAG share Marana as a member agency. The partnership formed under this resolution will assist us in a variety of areas, including sharing transportation modeling, forecasting population, and developing accurate planning information to guide infrastructure decisions.

We are confident that these efforts will result in the "Sun Corridor" enhancing its economic position by providing transportation connections and distribution centers that will serve as a competitive and attractive market for global trade.

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

## Regional Council Meeting Report for Wednesday, October 28, 2009

### Action Items



#### Regional Council Approves Revised Freeway/Highway Program Budget

The Regional Council approved a series of strategies to close a \$6.6 billion deficit in the freeway/highway portion of the 20-year Regional Transportation Plan. The committee voted to revise the program utilizing a broad mix of solutions to reduce the gap between projected revenues and anticipated expenditures. Before the action, the proposed cost opinion for constructing the freeway/highway projects in the plan was approximately \$16 billion. However, due to a decline in the economy

and lower sales tax collections, revenues are projected to be approximately \$6.6 billion. Since \$3 billion in projects were already funded, a funding gap of about \$6.6 billion remains for completing the rest of the projects in the system.

Recommended solutions encompassed four categories, including management strategies (\$762 million in savings), value engineering (\$1.7 billion in savings), project deferrals (\$4.1 billion in savings) and staying the course.

Among the value engineering proposals was reducing the footprint of the entire Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway corridor from an originally proposed 10-lane facility of four general purpose lanes plus one HOV lane in each direction, to an eight-lane facility of three general purpose lanes plus one HOV lane. In addition, staff recommended moving the most expensive segment of the corridor, between Lower Buckeye Road and Interstate 10 (Papago Freeway), from an alignment near 55th Avenue to utilizing 59th Avenue and its existing right-of-way. Other value engineering recommendations involved the Loop 303 Freeway, including constructing an interim partial cloverleaf interchange at US-60/Grand Avenue, developing a lower cost alternative for the I-10 system interchange, and deferring construction of the freeway segment from MC-85/SR-801 north to Interstate 10.

The largest amount of savings in the tentative scenario came in deferring projects to a new Phase V of the Plan, with Phase V encompassing the years 2026 to 2031. Deferral recommendations include delaying the SR-801 corridor (known as the I-10 Reliever Freeway), SR-802 (known as the Williams Gateway Freeway), and the southern portion of the Loop 303 from MC-85 to I-10. Additional deferrals include delaying construction of general purpose lanes for portions of Loop 101, Loop 202 and SR-51. At the same time, the proposed scenario recommends continuing to construct HOV lanes wherever possible, since they are relatively low-cost additions that will encourage carpooling and assist the region's express bus service.

**For more information, please contact Eric Anderson, MAG Transportation Director, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Policy Options Explored for Local ARRA Funds**

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 directs transportation infrastructure funds to highway and transit agencies in state and regional planning organizations. In March 2009, the MAG Regional Council provided policy direction on how to program the ARRA funds designated to the MAG region for local projects, which included a regional obligation deadline of November 30, 2009. Federal regulations require projects to undergo a set of federal clearances prior to obligation and advertisement and to be obligated by March 2, 2010.

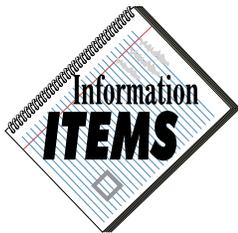
Bids for initial ARRA funded projects have been from 20 percent to 50 percent below original estimates, and it is anticipated that trend will continue. As a result, the savings from these projects may result in ARRA funding being available for additional projects. It is also anticipated that while some projects may be on track to

meet the federally mandated obligation date of March 2, 2010, they may not be able to meet the Regional Council November 30, 2009 deadline. The Regional Council decided that the November 30, 2009 date should no longer be considered a hard deadline but rather as a milestone date to determine the likelihood of obligation by the March 2, 2010 date. In addition, the Regional Council requested that the MAG staff explore and the Transportation Review Committee further review the following uses for the reallocation of the unobligated ARRA funding:

- That additional ARRA funds be used for existing ARRA projects, however, no increase in scope would be allowed.
- A reduction in the local match, but not below the minimum set by MAG policy, for other federally funded projects that will obligate by the deadline.
- Other local projects in the region that are eligible for ARRA funds and can obligate by the deadline.
- Transfer funds to Transit.

The Regional Council will vote on the priorities for these uses at its next meeting in December.

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



## Information Items

### Projects Selected for Homeless Funding Application

The Maricopa Association of Governments is the responsible entity for a year-round homeless planning process that includes submittal of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Stuart B. McKinney Continuum of Care Consolidated Application for the MAG region. The Continuum of Care grant supports permanent and transitional housing as well as supportive services. A total of \$172 million has been awarded to the region since 1999. Last year, the application resulted in more than \$24.5 million for projects serving homeless individuals and families in the region.

Information was provided to the Regional Council from the Continuum of Care Committee's ranking and review panel, which provided a list of all new and renewal applicants requesting funding for the application process and a final list of recommended projects. Since that time, the Continuum approved the ranked list of projects, which supports 51 existing projects and two new projects.

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

### Next Regional Council Meeting

The next meeting of the MAG Regional Council is scheduled for Wednesday, December 9, at 5:00 p.m. in the Saguaro Room at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix. Agenda items are expected to include possible recommendations

of policy options to reallocate unobligated local ARRA funds; possible action to recommend adding the SR-143 project to the ARRA highway project list to be funded based on the ability to obligate; a commuter rail studies update; an inventory of unpaved roads; and a report on *The Arizona We Want*, a study conducted by the Center for the Future of Arizona and the Gallup Arizona Poll. Additional agenda items are pending.

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