



## Executive Director's Report

At the MAG Regional Council meeting, we had the opportunity to present information on many exciting projects. These ranged from high speed rail to a proposed new deep water port in Mexico. Often, how these important projects are linked together is not always apparent.

Recently, the MAG information services division updated the foreclosure map. It indicates that as of March 2010, Maricopa County has 63,182 foreclosed and pending residential properties. As a regional planning organization, this is sobering and a reminder that many of our planning efforts, although interesting, are not relevant unless we are focused on improving our economy.

To work on diversifying our economy, we realize that the economic engine in Arizona is primarily in the Sun Corridor (Maricopa, Pinal and Pima Counties). In December, we formed the Joint Planning Advisory Council. The consulting firm AECOM is preparing a report on how the Sun Corridor can be more globally competitive. For this region, it could include an inland port; a new Interstate 11, the re-emergence of the Union Pacific rail line to Yuma, leading to AMTRAK and high speed rail; and the connection of the Union Pacific and the BNSF Railroad going through the Hassayampa Valley, bringing new freight opportunities to Arizona.

As the late Jack Pfister, former leader of the Salt River Project, once said: "Sometimes when you are planning on a trip to the moon, you don't know every turn, you have to lift the rocket off the ground and steer as you go." It is time that we lift the rocket off the ground as we steer to a more sustainable economy for Arizona..  
**For more information, please contact Dennis Smith, MAG Executive Director, (602) 254-6300.**

## Regional Council Meeting Report for Wednesday, April 28, 2010

### Action Items



#### Regional Council Approves TIP and Plan

In separate actions, the MAG Regional Council voted to approve for air quality conformity analysis the Draft FY 2011-2015 MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Draft MAG Regional Transportation Plan 2010 Update.

The actions came after the Council first received a staff update on public input into the two plans. MAG conducts a four-phase public involvement process, including

the Early Phase, Mid-Phase, Final Phase, and Continuous Involvement. The 2010 Mid-Phase Input Opportunity was conducted during February and March. Included in this process were a variety of special events, small group presentations, and e-mail, telephone and website correspondence. The process also included a transportation public hearing held in conjunction with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), Citizens Transportation Oversight Committee, Valley Metro, METRO, and the City of Phoenix Public Transit Department. The Regional Council was provided an update summarizing comments received at the hearing, as well as a written report that included a full transcript of comments and staff responses to comments.

After the public input report, the Regional Council approved the Draft FY 2011-2015 MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) for an air quality conformity analysis as required under the Clean Air Act amendments. The TIP contains a list of all regionally significant projects, regardless of funding source, that are to be built in the region over the next five years. The TIP includes \$6.9 billion in project funding, including \$5.6 billion for street and highway projects and \$1.3 billion for transit projects. The draft TIP includes 409 street projects, 206 transit projects, 138 freeway projects, 87 Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) projects, 69 bicycle and pedestrian projects, 78 air quality or travel demand management projects, one bridge project and 20 projects designated in other categories.

The Regional Council also approved the MAG Regional Transportation Plan 2010 Update for conformity analysis. The 20-year draft Plan extends through FY 2031 and includes regional plans for freeways/highways, arterial streets, and public transit, as well as information on plans for other transportation programs in the region.

The Plan represents \$58.8 billion in “year of expenditure” funding, with approximately half coming from regional sources and the other half from local funds. Due to lower than anticipated sales tax revenues, in October 2009 the MAG Regional Council approved a number of modifications to the Plan to close a projected \$6.6 billion transportation funding gap for the highway portion of the Plan.

The Plan includes 79 freeway projects as well as the addition of 19 new bus rapid transit routes, 26 new regional bus routes, 37.5 miles of new high capacity transit, seven new freeway interchanges, and 151 arterial street project segments.

During discussion, it was noted that two projects that will move forward in the Plan were originally designated to be funded through a second round of potential stimulus funding. Since no additional stimulus funding has been approved by Congress at this time, the projects will move forward utilizing existing funding sources. These projects may be eligible for stimulus funding in the future if it becomes available. The projects include HOV lanes on Loop 101 from Interstate 10

to Tatum Boulevard (including the Agua Fria and Pima sections) as well as HOV lanes on the Loop 202 Santan Freeway from I-10 to Gilbert Road.

Copies of all of the above-referenced documents are available on the MAG website at [www.mag.maricopa.gov/event.cms?item=11428](http://www.mag.maricopa.gov/event.cms?item=11428).

**For more information, please contact Roger Herzog, Senior Project Manager, (602) 254-6300.**



## **Information Items**

### **Interstate 11 Proposal Update**

The Regional Council was provided with an update on studies surrounding freight movement in Arizona and the potential development of a 152-mile Hassayampa Freeway corridor that is being considered as part of a greater Interstate 11 corridor designation.

In 2008 and 2009, the MAG Regional Council approved the findings of the Interstate 10 Hassayampa Valley Roadway Framework Study and the Interstates 8 and 10 Hidden Valley Transportation Framework Study, respectively. These studies included the Hassayampa Freeway as an illustrative project. Several states are now working with Congress to seek a designation of the Interstate 11 corridor to Las Vegas, and potentially to destinations farther north into the Pacific Northwest.

During the update, staff noted 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. Long range planning will include examining the impact of the proposed Interstate 11 on freight activities and economic development.

Staff reported that in addition to the previous framework studies, a Freight Framework Study will be launched by MAG in the upcoming fiscal year. The study will describe the movement of goods through the study area, identify possible barriers, and propose strategies to improve an economical, safe, and efficient goods movement system. The study will also evaluate the potential development of inland ports in the study area in response to the anticipated freight flows from a 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.

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

### **Additional Information on the MAG Transit Framework Study**

The MAG Regional Council accepted the Regional Transit Framework Study on March 31, 2010. Members of the Regional Council requested additional information

on two items related to the study findings, including the financial implications of the recent elimination of the Local Transportation Assistance Fund (LTAF) and whether the peer regions evaluated as part of the study process have regional funding sources that expire after a set period of time, as is the case with Proposition 400 in the MAG region.

Staff reported that in March, LTAF was repealed permanently by the State Legislature to address a \$3 billion deficit in the state budget. There were two LTAF funding sources eliminated, known as LTAF I and LTAF II. LTAF I represented approximately \$23 million in funding dedicated specifically for transit operations. The FY 2010 distribution was to have been more than \$12 million to the MAG region. LTAF II provided funding for the broader category of transportation, but most of which was used by cities for transit purposes. The FY 2010 distribution was to have been \$5.5 million to the MAG region.

The reduction in LTAF means that funding sources anticipated in the Transit Framework Study will be reduced by approximately \$400 million. This is in addition to an overall decrease in anticipated transit revenue of \$1.1 billion due to reductions in sales tax revenue. The Transit Framework Study assumed a \$14 billion base scenario with three funding investment scenarios on top of the base ranging from \$2 billion to \$21.5 billion.

In answer to the Regional Council's request regarding peer region funding sources, staff reported that each region has a unique set of funding mechanisms. Several regions have perpetual funding sources for transit operations (Dallas, Denver, Salt Lake City and Seattle). Others have very long durations for tax measures, such as Atlanta and San Diego, which provide funding through 2047 and 2048, respectively. Staff recommended that next steps include evaluating the funding implications of revenue shortfalls for transit and the consideration of long-term implications of regional funding sources for transit operating costs.

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

## **Air Quality Update**

The Regional Council received an update on exceptional wind events and data collection in the vicinity of the West 43rd Avenue monitor. Staff reported that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has been reviewing the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality's (ADEQ) documentation of exceptional events regarding PM-10 violations, and has questioned four high wind exceedances at the West 43rd Avenue monitor in 2008. If EPA does not concur with the exceptional events, these four exceedances would count as a violation at the West 43rd Avenue monitor and the region would not have its first year of clean data at the monitors. MAG staff has been working with a consultant, Sierra Research,

to provide additional information to ADEQ to further support the exceptional events documentation.

In addition, MAG is working with ADEQ and the Maricopa County Air Quality Department to implement a data collection plan to evaluate and identify sources and unique geographic and meteorological conditions contributing to exceedances of the PM-10 standard at the West 43rd Avenue monitor. As part of the effort, soil samples will need to be analyzed to determine the types of soils that have the highest potential to create PM-10 emissions.

Staff also reported that the City of Phoenix received a permit in December for the initial phase of the Phoenix Rio Salado Oeste Environmental Restoration Project. This project will be a permanent long-term solution for stabilization of the Salt River area where the West 43rd Avenue monitor is located. Rio Salado is an environmental restoration project with the Army Corps of Engineers that includes flood control improvements and recreation features. A five-mile stretch of the Salt riverbed project is already constructed from 24th Street to 19th Avenue. The Rio Salado Oeste project will connect and continue the restoration of the bed from 19th to 83rd avenues, and will correct years of ecosystem damage.

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

## **Nominating Committee**

MAG Chair Peggy Neely has announced appointments to the 2010 MAG Nominating Committee. The purpose of the committee is to recommend a slate of officers and Executive Committee members for the upcoming year. Appointments to the Nominating Committee include its chair, Mayor James Cavanaugh, City of Goodyear; Mayor Jackie Meck, Town of Buckeye; Councilmember Dick Esser, Town of Cave Creek; Mayor John Lewis, Town of Gilbert; and Mayor Bob Barrett, City of Peoria. The Nominating Committee will develop a slate of seven candidates. These candidate include a Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer, the past Chair, and three members at-large. The election of officers will be held at the June 30, 2010, Regional Council meeting.

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

## **Development of FY 2010 MAG Unified Planning Work Program and Annual Budget.**

The Regional Council received an update on the MAG Unified Planning Work Program and Annual Budget, which is developed incrementally each year in conjunction with member agency and public input. The Work Program is reviewed each year in April by the appropriate federal agencies and approved by the Regional Council in May. Recommendations for the Work Program include continuing with a reduction to the draft dues and assessments by 50 percent due to the uncertainty of economic conditions. The FY 2011 Work Program includes 21 new projects,

including 14 transportation projects, two air quality projects, two information services projects, two communications projects, and one information technology project.

**For more information, please contact Rebecca Kimbrough, MAG Fiscal Services Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Next Regional Council Meeting**

The next meeting of the MAG Regional Council is scheduled for Wednesday, May 26, 2010, at 5:00 p.m. in the Saguaro Room, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix. Agenda items are expected to include an update on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act; an update and review of project deferral requests for the federal fiscal year 2010 closeout; acceptance of commuter rail planning studies; an update on the Sustainable Communities Planning Grant Program; and adoption of the FY 2011 Unified Planning Work Program and Annual Budget.

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