

Congressman Ed Pastor Freeway Opens to Traffic

Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway has been on the map since 1985



The Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway, also known as the Congressman Ed Pastor Freeway, is now open to traffic, providing a direct link between the East Valley and West Valley and serving as a much-needed alternative to Interstate 10 through downtown Phoenix. The freeway will complete the Loop 202 and Loop 101 freeway system in the Valley and improve the quality of life in a fast-growing region.

The freeway opened Saturday, Dec. 21, 2019, three days after a grand opening ceremony that featured Governor Doug Ducey, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Chair Mark Mitchell, Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego, Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) Arizona Administrator Karla Petty,

Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Director John Halikowski, and other Valley leaders.

“Arizona has solidified its reputation as a state that is open for opportunity, and as we welcome hundreds of new residents every day, we are making sure our infrastructure remains some of the best in America,” Governor Ducey said. “This Loop 202 opening represents a big step forward in connecting the East and West Valleys, as well as prioritizing safety for drivers. My thanks to the local, state, tribal, federal and private partners who helped bring this project to fruition ahead of schedule with major cost savings.”

Continued on page 10

INSIDE *this issue*

Message From the Chair	2	Affordable Housing (continued)	7
Voices From the Council.....	3	McSally/Stanton Tourism Bill	8
Put Your Money Where Your House Is ..	3	Broadway Road Improvements	9
Regional Profile: Mayor Hermosillo	4	South Mountain Freeway (continued)...	10
The Road Ahead in 2020	5	Upcoming 2020 Census	11
Homeless Point in Time Count.....	6	Calendar	12



Message From the Chair



Mayor Mark Mitchell, City of Tempe

I had the unique pleasure of being the MAG chair as the Valley saw the opening of Congressman Ed Pastor Freeway (Loop 202 South Mountain)—the largest freeway project in state history. Never before have 22 miles of freeway opened up in one fell swoop. I was proud to witness this milestone, not only as the leader of an East Valley community that will see an important new connection to the Southwest Valley, but also as the representative of MAG, which charted the course for this day 30 years ago.

MAG worked tirelessly over three decades to see this moment, and it was my honor to be the chair who bears final witness to the delivery of a promise to Maricopa County voters to complete the Loop 101 and 202 system. It truly was a historic moment.

But I want to take this opportunity to speak directly to those commuters who are now traveling this pavement on a daily basis. Because of your support, we have the opportunity we need to position our region for growth and opportunity. This new freeway will connect communities and employment centers that will bring about future prosperity, and for that, we are grateful for your support.

The freeway was first identified as the South Mountain Loop, and

was included as part of Proposition 300 in 1985. Since then, it has faced a number of obstacles. First, it met delays due to a declining economy and funding limitations. It also required the deliberative and detailed development of alternatives, and the most extensive environmental review of any highway project to date. Lastly, it had to overcome legal challenges that were finally resolved in late 2017.

The freeway will create important new economic opportunities. As noted in our cover story, MAG estimates that the majority of the population and employment growth in our region will take place within the areas of the Valley connected by the South Mountain Freeway corridor. This means economic vitality not just for those areas, but for the entire region.

That is why I also want to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for my Regional Council predecessors and peers, as well as to numerous MAG staff who have worked on this project. I applaud previous Regional Councils for their leadership in bringing us to this important freeway facility. I also want to call out two people who were involved with this project from the beginning: current Executive Director Eric Anderson and former MAG Executive Director

Continued on page 3



MAGAZine

MAGAZine is a quarterly newsletter of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG). It focuses on the issues and concerns of the cities, towns, counties, and Native nations of the MAG region. 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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Sam Eiters & Jack Sellers
Arizona Department of Transportation

Visit www.azmag.gov and click on Regional Council.



Homelessness is a complicated issue, and resources are finite. That's why working together is so important. By partnering with cities and towns that are also making large investments in homelessness, we can make our dollars stretch further and increase our impact.

—Maricopa County Supervisor Jack Sellers, Arizona State Transportation Board

Chandler is focused on providing forward-thinking transportation networks that connect our community to the Greater Phoenix region and allow convenient access to our employment corridors. The opening of the Loop 202 South Mountain Freeway expansion is extremely exciting for the City as it connects to a vibrant and dynamic employment corridor. We have seen redevelopment and repositioning of existing buildings to attract companies that will benefit from this enhanced access. With this convenient connection to the West Valley, I look forward to working with regional partners to continue bringing a diverse array of high quality jobs to the state.

—Chandler Mayor Kevin Hartke



Message From the Chair

(continued from page 2)

Dennis Smith. They stimulated, sustained and steered this project through several transportation elections and numerous rounds of determining funding priorities. It was their vision and stewardship that saw this project through to its completion.

And while we are discussing visionaries, we are naming this stretch of highway after one of the most iconic Congressional delegates for Arizona.

Congressman Ed Pastor served Arizona for 24 years in Congress and served on the County Board of Supervisors before that. He was instrumental in shaping the Phoenix metro area that we see today. Nearly every major infrastructure project in Arizona during his years of service was helped to fruition by Ed Pastor.

So the next time you are driving on the Loop 202, let it be a reminder of the hard work put in by Congressman Pastor and know that you are driving on what 30 years ago was just a dream. 🏔️

Putting Your Money Where Your House Is

As housing costs soar, economic development leaders seek ways to create affordable housing

As the Valley's population continues to grow, the region is seeing significant increases in housing demand, but the supply of affordable housing is decreasing. As housing costs increase faster than income, many residents are struggling. The Maricopa Association of Governments Economic Development Committee (MAG EDC) recently convened a group of experts to discuss the need for affordable housing solutions.

"The market is moving along smoothly, but there are a lot of differences between today and the previous boom," said Jim Belfiore, founder and president of Belfiore Real Estate Consulting. "The major difference is there is a lack of supply in the marketplace."

Not only a lack of supply, but with millennials, empty nesters, and middle income Americans jumping back into the market, vacancy rates are low for both rental and for-sale housing. Gone are the days of homes being owned



by flippers or sitting empty for long periods of time.

"If you drive around a new home community, you're going to see curtains in the windows. People are purchasing them, and they're living in them," Belfiore said.

"With land and labor costs rising at a double-digit percentage rate in recent years, 'affordable' housing is difficult to tackle," said Belfiore. Contributing to the rise in home prices is that construction

Continued on page 7

Regional Profile: Mayor Alexis Hermosillo



Mayor Alexis Hermosillo, City of El Mirage

Childhood Dreams Become Reality for El Mirage Mayor

A fourth-generation resident of El Mirage, Mayor Alexis Hermosillo now runs the city in which she grew up.

Her great grandparents first came to El Mirage as field workers. Her grandmother was 3 years old when they made El Mirage their home. It is the only home Hermosillo has ever known. As a child, Hermosillo would gaze at the fields and imagine the possibilities.

“My great grandmother would take me on walks through the community. At the time, El Mirage was only about a 1-mile radius. I remember seeing the open fields and realizing we were at the end of the community. And even at 3 or 4 years old, I had this feeling, ‘there has to be more. So many things can go in these fields.’ Fast forward to today and the visions I had as a child are coming to life now as an adult. I’ve always wanted more for my city.”

Mayor Hermosillo says helping improve the quality of life for others has been her “calling” ever since she can remember. She says she has come to realize that her mom, who worked for the court system, was a significant role model.

Mayor Hermosillo high fives a fan at a 2019 Public Safety Day event.



“She has a passion for law and justice. She enjoyed aiding family and friends in navigating legal processes and procedures. My mom was very vocal about anything she felt was unjust, and she taught me the responsibility of standing up and speaking up for myself and others. It is because of her that I enjoy being the voice of my constituents.”

Today, Hermosillo is focused on issues such as expanding public transportation and improving economic development in her community.

“I believe economic development and access to public transportation go hand-in-hand. We have been focusing on the industrial and commercial growth in the southern region, and how that translates to the quality of life of our residents. Connectivity is at the forefront of our conversations—connecting residents to opportunities, as well as connecting residents to regional mobility. Our priority is the residents and our focus is creating a better community moving forward.”

Hermosillo calls herself a life-long learner who loves data and research. Most recently she has focused on small business development and organizational development.

“I come from a family of entrepreneurs and was raised in an environment where generating business ideas were as normal as deciding what to eat for dinner. While I enjoy researching business development practices in my spare time for my own curiosity, I am simultaneously thinking of ways to bring this information to residents through programming.”



Mayor Hermosillo with a 2020 Census coloring contest winner during Winterfest.

That love for learning is apparent in her resume. Hermosillo received her undergraduate degree in Interdisciplinary Arts and Performance with a minor in Spanish and her Master’s degree in Broadcast Journalism from ASU. She is currently pursuing her doctorate in Organizational Leadership with an emphasis in Organizational Development from Grand Canyon University. She studied business journalism in China and spent time as a journalist. She worked as a district representative for Congressman Raul Grijalva and in constituent services for (then) Phoenix Vice Mayor Michael Nowakowski. She helped businesses prepare for light rail development while working at Valley Metro, and she was the manager of a radio network that spanned three states. In her spare time, Hermosillo devoted her time to youth leadership development, allowing her to train and mentor youth to be leaders, themselves. All of which she believes uniquely prepared her, at the age of 29, for her role as mayor.

Continued on page 5



Mayor Hermosillo (continued)

“A lot of this work revolved around people and helping people, and that’s exactly what being a mayor is all about. The radio station I worked for was under the Cesar Chavez Foundation that emphasized a double bottom line. The focus wasn’t only to meet business goals but also to meet community goals. It really helped me in understanding the link between business and community.”

Mayor Hermosillo says she most enjoys ensuring the voices of residents are heard. “I definitely feel very proud of being that person who brings middle ground. I feel we have worked very strongly to form a council that gets along, plays as a team, and builds consensus. That has trickled down into our community as well. I feel our community believes they are being heard and that their voice counts.”

Hermosillo says she considers all of El Mirage’s 35,000 residents as family. “I feel responsible for them and I take that responsibility seriously. I want everyone to be happy, healthy, safe, and I try to provide a high standard for their quality of life.”

An avid art aficionado, Hermosillo says she has grown into a “foodie.” Lately, she has discovered how food can be artistic, and has been on a mission to find some of the most dynamic restaurants locally. Her favorite food is as American as it gets.

“When it comes to comfort food, I can never pass up a really good burger. A lot of people love and rave about tacos, but I love burgers. How can you say ‘no’ to a burger?” she laughs.

Still, greater than her love for food is her love for El Mirage. “El Mirage is so full of life and opportunity. Our community is really amazing. We have a history of coming together, and together we have made El Mirage the best community to live, work and play. I want to build on that legacy and provide even more opportunities and resources for our residents and businesses.” 🏡

The Road Ahead in 2020

The year 2019 ended with the opening of South Mountain Freeway, the largest freeway project in state history. While 2020 won’t see quite such a major freeway achievement, construction crews will be busy on four important freeway projects. Below is a short summary of what you can expect in the year ahead.

I-17: Central Avenue Bridge

This project will replace the existing bridge at Interstate 17 and Central Avenue on the Maricopa Freeway. The bridge height will be brought up to current clearance standards and lengthened to accommodate the Valley Metro South Central Light Rail Extension. The bridge will be widened to accommodate auxiliary lanes between successive ramps on I-17. The project includes new I-17 roadway approaches, retaining walls, technological improvements, lighting improvements, drainage improvements, and signing and striping.

Construction cost: \$20.4 million

Loop 303 (Estrella): Happy Valley Parkway to Lake Pleasant Parkway

This project will construct one general purpose lane in each direction in the median of Loop 303/Estrella Freeway (SR-303L) from Happy Valley Parkway to Lake Pleasant Parkway. The project also will include the construction of a new traffic interchange at Jomax Road. The new interchange will be signalized and accommodate two through lanes in each direction. The project work includes new concrete pavement, sound walls, drainage improvements, signing and striping, technological improvements, ramp gore lighting, upgrades that will improve ADA accessibility, and landscape seeding.

Construction cost: \$34.8 million

SR-24 (Gateway): Ellsworth Rd. to Meridian Rd. (Ironwood Rd.)

This project will construct a new interim freeway from Ellsworth Road to Ironwood Road within the right of way for the ultimate State Route 24/Gateway Freeway (SR-24). The interim freeway facility will include a new traffic interchange at Ellsworth Road. The interim roadway will be two lanes in each direction separated by a graded median and will follow the entrance and exit ramp alignments with at-grade intersections at Williams Field Road, Signal Butte Road, Meridian Road, and Ironwood Road. The project will provide a grade separated structure at Mountain Road and an offsite drainage channel on the north side of the SR-24 alignment. The project includes improvements to the Powerline Floodway within ADOT’s right-of-way, signing, striping, and minimal utility relocations.

Construction cost: \$134.8 million

I-10: SR-85 to Verrado Way

This project will add one general purpose lane in each direction in the median of Interstate 10/Papago Freeway (I-10) between State Route 85 (SR-85) and Verrado Way. The project also will reconstruct the traffic interchanges at Miller Road and Watson Road. The project work will include new concrete pavement at the cross streets, new lanes on I-10, sound walls, drainage improvements, signing and striping, technology improvements, ramp gore lighting, upgrades that will improve ADA accessibility, and landscape seeding.

Construction cost: \$103.8 million

Hundreds of Volunteers Turn Out to Count People Experiencing Homelessness

Before the sun rose over the Valley on January 28, 2020, hundreds of volunteers fanned out across the region in an annual effort to count the number of people experiencing homelessness. The volunteers crisscrossed assigned grids to search alleys, parks, riverbeds, streets, and doorways as part of the annual Point in Time Homeless Street Count. The count provides a one-night snapshot of the number of men, women and children living in unsheltered situations or on the streets.

understand where we can intersect people along these pathways, and change the course of homelessness in our region.”

For the first time, the annual count was conducted entirely electronically using a cell phone app, following a successful pilot program conducted over the past two years.

“Electronic data gathering enables us to get results more quickly. We also can map geographically where concentrations of homeless populations exist,” said Tempe Police Sgt. Robert Ferraro, co-chair of the Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Board, which develops regional solutions to end homelessness.

West Valley communities requested a new question be added this year related to foster care.

“We hope this question gives us additional information on those who age out of the foster care system who are now experiencing homelessness,” said Goodyear Councilmember Wally Campbell, chair of the MAG Human Services and Community Initiatives Committee. “Communities are interested in working with the Department of Child Safety to connect those without traditional family supports with services that will help connect them with stable housing resources.”

In 2019, the unsheltered count portion identified 3,188 people living in a place not meant for human habitation, such as on the street, in desert washes, or in vehicles, noted Systems Transformation Advisor Tamara Wright of Community Solutions, also co-chair of the Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Board.

“This represented an increase of 22 percent over 2018. Nearly 13 percent, more than 400 people, reported to be experiencing homelessness for the first time. Our hope is that these numbers will be lower this year and that we can start moving the trend line the other direction,” Wright said.

Going back to 2014, the unsheltered homeless population has increased 200 percent

For the first time, the 2019 unsheltered count also included a tally of pets. Overall data identified 182 pets on the street, 10 of which were service animals. The 2020 count also included a count of pets. 



Outreach worker Tara Devlin of Community Bridges, Inc., interviews Tony Cañes about his experience with homelessness as part of the Point in Time Homeless Count.

Coordinated by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the annual count utilizes volunteer teams that include city, town, county, and state representatives; community and faith-based organizations; businesses; and private residents.

The point-in-time data are submitted annually to the Department of Housing and Urban Development, which uses the information to allocate and prioritize funding for homeless programs. Regionally, the information is analyzed to better understand root causes of homelessness, including what leads to chronic homelessness, what leads to first-time homelessness, and the causes of veteran and family homelessness.

The 2019 Count found that the number of people experiencing homelessness increased in Maricopa County for the sixth straight year.

“These aren’t just numbers, these are 6,614 stories of individuals with 6,614 personal pathways into homelessness,” noted Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell, chair of the MAG Regional Council. “Our job is to better

Putting Your Money Where Your House Is (continued from page 3)

costs have increased and it is more difficult to find skilled workers.

“When the housing bubble burst, that labor left here, and it has not come back,” said Belfiore. “Today’s issue is supply, and that is going to put tremendous pressure on housing prices in the near future. We’ve seen what happens in other markets with increases in homelessness when housing costs rise. We all should be concerned. We are encouraging our builder clients and our developer clients to figure out ways to bring affordable product to the market.”

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) is a global nonprofit research organization focused on “creating and sustaining thriving communities worldwide.” ULI Arizona recently received a grant that is helping fund research on housing affordability. Kristen Busby, director of ULI Arizona, says the lack of affordable housing can have damaging effects on individuals.

Our zip code is more important to our health than our genetic code.

“Health is not what just happens in the doctor’s office,” Busby told the EDC. “Housing and transportation and job opportunities in the world around us extremely affect each person’s health. Our zip code is more important to our health than our genetic code. Children born in neighboring zip codes can have decades of difference in life expectancy,” she said.

Under the grant, ULI Arizona created a Task Force for Health, Equity and Housing Solutions. The task force will solicit best practices around affordable housing. It has

selected the city of Tempe as a case study for its unique approach to solving housing affordability.

For example, the city created an affiliate nonprofit housing authority. The authority buys townhouses, homes and apartment complexes and permanently converts them to affordable rental housing.

“We will always have a base number of units—albeit not enough—but there will always be a base number of affordable units so we know we will have some affordable housing,” said Tempe Housing and Revitalization Manager LeVon Lamy.

The profits earned from the rentals are put into buying more housing, as well as for providing incentives for developers to build and create more affordable housing.

Lamy also expressed concern that the lack of affordable housing is leading to an increase in homelessness throughout the region. But he added that affordable housing also is needed for those in the workforce.

“When you have an area median income of \$70,000 for a family of four, and you’re a brand new teacher making \$35,000 to \$40,000 a year, the ability to afford your apartment gets really difficult really quickly,” said Lamy.

Because housing affordability impacts workforce availability, Tempe also looked at the issue from an economic development standpoint.

“We thought, if we can’t attract more businesses to come here because they can’t get employees, then we need to find a way to help



the Tempe workforce to live in our city,” said Tempe’s Economic Development Program Manager Maria Laughner. “These are our teachers, bank tellers, car mechanics, store clerks, construction workers and police officers. If they can’t afford to live in the city where they work or near the city where they work, that means they have to drive. It is a serious economic issue when you have to deal with cars every day jamming up the roads and creating a lot of traffic and the stress that comes with that. Just the impact on infrastructure alone is big.”

While Tempe can’t require developers to create affordable housing, it can ask them to complete an affordable housing impact statement stating what housing is being removed, what housing is being added, and the price points for both. This helps the city track what is happening in the market and then find ways to incentivize developers.

ULI hopes that learning about successful programs like those in Tempe will help them create a robust toolkit of affordable housing solutions.

“There is no silver bullet strategy, which is why we are studying with a lot of partners,” said Busby. “We’ve been talking about challenges a long time. We want to have conversations around solutions,” she said. 🏡

McSally/Stanton Bill to Expand Tourism Secures Strong Support in Arizona

New bill would boost tourism from Mexico for greater economic opportunity

Tourism is Arizona's lifeblood. Every year, thousands of frequent, low-risk, short-term visitors travel from Mexico into Arizona to conduct business, visit family and friends, or shop at local stores—spending billions of dollars. Currently, pre-cleared travelers with U.S.-issued Border Crossing Cards cannot travel beyond Tucson or Yuma. Legislation introduced in Congress would change that.

In late December, Sen. Martha McSally and Rep. Greg Stanton introduced the Southwest Tourism Expansion Act as companion bills in the House and Senate, with Sen. Kyrsten Sinema and Rep. David Schweikert signing as original cosponsors. The bill would allow holders of a U.S.-issued Border Crossing Card to travel anywhere in the state of Arizona. The Southwest Tourism Expansion Act would create a 5-year pilot program and would allow pre-cleared visitors to enter without applying for an additional federal I-94 form.

generate up to \$181 million in additional spending during the first year.

“Extending the tourism and shopping zone would allow these visitors to come to Phoenix-area shopping centers, attend spring training baseball games, or experience the natural beauty that Arizona has to offer by visiting Flagstaff, Sedona or the Grand Canyon,” said Mayor Mitchell. “Allowing for easier and quicker border crossings will encourage more business and personal travel to our great state, which means more spending and more tax generation to benefit all of our communities. This is a win for both tourists and Arizona's economy.”

MAG, which has supported a travel zone extension for many years, had received strong support for the effort from dozens of partners across Arizona, ranging from metropolitan planning organizations to economic development agencies to businesses. One letter of support came from the Inter Tribal Association of Arizona, representing 21 Tribal Nations.

“As sovereign nations, we see statewide extension of the border crossing card zone as an important economic opportunity,” said Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community President Martin Harvier. “Tribal nations have significant investments in service industries that depend on tourists, including visitors from Mexico.”

Currently, Border Crossing Cards (BCCs) limit travel in Arizona to 75 miles entering through Arizona's land ports of entry, about as far as the city of Tucson. In the Yuma region, travel is even more restrictive, with a 25-mile limit for visitors entering through the San Luis port of entry.

Applicants for BCCs must provide fingerprints, photography, employment information, a security background check, and an in-person interview. The BCC is a B-1/B-2 visa issued exclusively to Mexican citizens by the U.S. State Department and includes an RFID chip. Holders of these cards also must demonstrate that they have ties to Mexico, including financial, that would compel them to return after a temporary stay in the U.S. Penalties for abusing the visa include revocation of the BCC with a fee, as well as losing the privilege for future visa application. 



“Arizona is open for business and when we allow approved visitors into more areas of our beautiful state, we unleash the potential for greater economic growth, more jobs, and additional sales tax revenue,” Sen. McSally said. “Our bill would start a pilot program allowing Border Crossing Card Holders to reach popular Arizona tourist destinations and businesses, generating hundreds of millions in dollars in additional annual spending.”



“This is an economic stimulus bill—it's a common-sense change that will open Arizona to more business, more tourism, and more economic opportunities,” said Rep. Stanton. “Our state benefits in so many ways from a strong relationship with Mexico—and a pilot program that invites Mexican nationals to explore and invest more throughout our entire state can only strengthen those ties.”

Tourism is Arizona's largest sector, with 192,000 jobs statewide generating \$24.4 billion in total direct travel spending. Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell, chair of the Maricopa Association of Governments Regional Council, says the initiative will mean more tourism dollars throughout the state. A University of Arizona study conducted at the request of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) in 2015 found that expanding the border zone to the entire state could

Your Tax Dollars Working for You

Under Proposition 400 in 2004, Maricopa County voters approved an extension of the half-cent sales tax for transportation. This series highlights projects built under Prop 400—to let you know where your money is going and how it is improving your transportation experience.



Commuters Seeing Benefits From Broadway Road Road Improvements

For many years, Broadway Road dead-ended at 43rd Avenue in the Southwest Valley. Today, thanks to a multi-phase project that began in 2014 and was completed last year, Broadway Road has been widened, extended to 51st Avenue, and portions renamed to Avenida Rio Salado, making travel in the south central portion of the Valley significantly easier for more than 26,000 commuters each day.

“We have seen a significant rise in traffic each day now with this improved corridor. The addition of this stretch of roadway has reduced congestion for several other major roadways in the area. It also has increased access, improved the economy, and reduced travel time from the southwest metro area to downtown Phoenix,” said Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego. “This project is a great example of how investment in transportation through Proposition 400 has paid off for Valley residents.”

One of those residents is Reza Mohkami. He owns Rio Grande Material, a sand, gravel and rock supplier at 51st Avenue and Broadway Road in Laveen, where the project ends. Before the project, customers would have to take surface streets and come north on 51st Avenue from Southern Avenue.

“Without a doubt, it did help our business as far as the traffic goes, because you are dealing with a lot



[An aerial view of the Broadway Road/Avenida Rio Salado project.](#)

of trucks in and out daily and it has made their life a lot easier, going and coming,” says Mohkami. “It helped traffic quite a bit also. It slowed down the traffic on 51st, and I can’t tell you how much it’s helped. It’s too early even to say (how much), but without a doubt it helped quite a bit.”

The project included widening Broadway Road to six lanes between 51st Avenue to 7th Street. Additional project improvements included new traffic signals, medians, bike lanes, sidewalks, curb and gutter improvements, extensive storm drainage improvements, and landscaping. The project included

extensive right of way acquisitions, as Broadway Road had several adjacent front-facing businesses. The city commissioned an artist to design and incorporate several small rest areas to enhance the landscape.

This project was one of many included in the MAG Arterial Life Cycle Program (ALCP). The ALCP is the financial management tool to implement arterial street projects identified in the MAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and is funded through the Proposition 400 half-cent sales tax extension and federal highway funds allocated to the region. 

South Mountain Freeway (continued from page 1)

The South Mountain Freeway travels between Interstate 10 at the Loop 202 Santan Freeway in the East Valley and I-10 at 59th Avenue in the West Valley. Signs at both ends of the freeway carry the honorary designation of Congressman Ed Pastor Freeway, approved this fall by the Arizona State Board on Geographic and Historic Names. The designation recognizes the efforts of the late Arizona Congressman in securing federal funding for the freeway.

The freeway is projected to carry about 117,000 vehicles per day within its first year and as many as 190,000 vehicles per day by 2035.



MAG Executive Director Eric Anderson and former Executive Director Dennis Smith add their names to a memorial sign.

FHWA Arizona Administrator Karla Petty added that “the new segment will provide faster and easier access between East Valley and West Valley cities, while making it more convenient for residents to access other parts of the Valley for work, shopping, education and entertainment.”

Using an innovative public-private partnership for the state’s largest-ever highway project, ADOT was able to open the 22-mile freeway three years earlier than if it had been built as a series of traditional projects. The agreement also allowed ADOT to deliver the \$1.7 billion South Mountain Freeway at a cost savings of more than \$100 million.

“This is Arizona’s first highway project built using a public-private partnership, which combined design, construction and maintenance in a single contract,” said MAG Executive Director Eric Anderson, who helped shepherd the project through the most extensive environmental review of any highway project to date in Arizona. “It represents the innovative approach needed for large-scale infrastructure projects, and sets a standard of flexibility that can serve as a model as we begin development of our next generation Regional Transportation Plan.”

Former MAG Executive Director Dennis Smith also worked on the project since its inception. He credits former and current Regional Council members for sticking with the project through funding and legal challenges and an ever-changing political landscape.



“This new freeway will create important new economic opportunities,” said MAG Chair and Tempe Mayor Mark Mitchell. “MAG estimates that 55 percent of the population growth and 58 percent of the employment growth will take place in the southeast and the southwest areas of the Valley connected by the South Mountain Freeway corridor.”



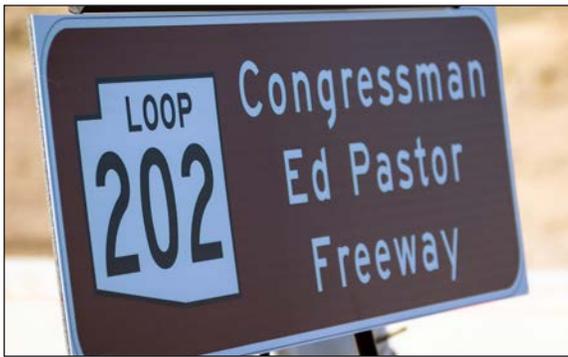
Phoenix Mayor Kate Gallego noted that MAG and its partners have worked tirelessly over 30 years to bring the project to fruition, and she specifically thanked voters for their ongoing support.

“Funding was allocated in 1985 and then again in 2004 through voter-approved regional transportation funding known as Prop 300 and Prop 400,” said Mayor Gallego. “The area where we sit now may be part of an even larger corridor with State Route 30. We’re continuing to ask our voters to support our freeway infrastructure and they continue to step up and say, ‘yes we do want to invest in infrastructure in America’s fastest-growing county.’ So we would not be here today without the wisdom of our voters.”

Ramp from South Mountain Freeway on the south to I-10 on the west.



Continued on page 11



“Although we just celebrated the opening of the South Mountain Freeway, in large part it represents the determination of local elected officials to keep a promise that was made to the voters in 1985,” he said.

The South Mountain Freeway features three travel lanes and an HOV lane in each direction. Among the freeway’s 15 interchanges are Arizona’s first two using a diverging diamond configuration promoted through FHWA’s Every Day Counts Innovation Initiative to improve traffic flow and safety. The freeway’s 40 bridges include two half-mile spans over the Salt River that have the longest concrete bridge girders—175 feet—ever used in Arizona.

Connect 202 Partners, the developer chosen for the project, will maintain the South Mountain Freeway for the next 30 years under the agreement. Connect 202 Partners consists of Fluor Enterprises Inc., Granite Construction Co., and Ames Construction Inc., with Parsons Brinckerhoff Inc. as the lead designer. Connect 202 completed more than 5.5 million hours of work without an incident causing lost time while using more than 120 subcontractors and suppliers.

“This freeway is open on an ambitious timeline because of the innovation, creativity and dedication of our teams at ADOT and at Connect 202 Partners,” ADOT Director John Halikowski said. “This monumental achievement will benefit Arizonans for decades to come.”

While the freeway is open to traffic, work will continue into 2020 in several areas, including a traffic interchange at 32nd Street, a 6-mile multi-use path between 40th Street and 17th Avenue in Ahwatukee, and landscaping. The 32nd Street interchange was added after the initial design at the request of area residents. 🏞️

The Arizona Department of Transportation contributed to this article.

Everything You Need to Know About the Upcoming 2020 Census

The 2020 Census is nearly here—make sure you count!

Every 10 years, the U.S. Census Bureau counts how many people are living in the United States, and uses that data to distribute \$675 billion in federal funds to support programs in education, healthcare, transportation, parks and recreation services and many other important community resources. The census also is used to redraw legislative districts and determine Arizona’s representation in Washington, D.C.

For each person counted in Arizona, the state receives about \$3,000, totaling more than \$20 billion per year. Arizona also is likely to pick up a seat in Congress, bringing the state’s delegation to 10 members in the U.S. House of Representatives.

“The stakes couldn’t be higher,” says Goodyear City Manager Julie Arendall, who co-chairs MAG’s Regional Census Communication Group with Chandler City Manager Marsha Reed. “We’re one of the fastest growing regions in the country, and it’s critical to capture that growth and bring our fair share of federal resources and representation to our communities.”

iCount2020

MAG’s iCount2020 campaign is a regional public outreach initiative funded by member agencies.

“We want everyone in the region to know that they count,” says Chandler City Manager Reed. “Through iCount2020, we intend to demonstrate how every woman, child and man has an impact on the future of the Maricopa region by participating in the 2020 Census. Our goal is for that awareness to lead to a complete and accurate count of all people living in the region.”

The iCount2020 campaign includes [icount2020.info](https://www.icount2020.info), an interactive and social media-friendly website in English and Spanish; targeted advertising across all media platforms to reach diverse audiences; and a public relations campaign to promote awareness and to educate and motivate people to complete and submit their census forms.

How to Participate

The United States has counted its population each decade since 1790. Participating in the census is now easier than ever, as this is the first Internet census in history. By Census Day on April 1, 2020, every home will receive an invitation to participate in the census. There are three ways to participate: online, by phone or by mail. You can even respond on your mobile device. Each method takes fewer than 10 minutes to complete. The deadline to respond is June 30. However, census workers will begin following up in person with households that have not responded by April 30, 2020.

How the Census Protects You

Your responses on the census form are safe, secure and protected by federal law. Answers can only be used to produce statistics, which helps guide funding for important community services such as road improvements, emergency services, hospitals and schools. By law, your information is protected from being shared with any person, organization, court, business or government agency, including law enforcement. 🏞️

Visit [iCount2020.info](https://www.icount2020.info) to learn more about the regional campaign. Follow the regional efforts on [Facebook.com/iCount2020official](https://www.facebook.com/iCount2020official), [@iCount2020](https://twitter.com/iCount2020) and [Instagram @iCount2020Official](https://www.instagram.com/iCount2020Official).



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A Quarterly Newsletter Focusing on Regional Excellence

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Spring 2020 Calendar

February

- 4th 11:30 a.m. Economic Development Committee (Saguaro)
- 5th 10:00 a.m. Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee (Ironwood)
- 5th 12:00 p.m. Management Committee (Saguaro)
- 5th 1:30 p.m. Standard Specifications and Details Committee (Ironwood)
- 6th 1:00 p.m. Regional Domestic Violence Council (Saguaro)
- 11th 1:00 p.m. Street Committee (Saguaro)
- 12th 11:30 a.m. Transportation Policy Committee (Saguaro)
- 13th 1:30 p.m. Human Services Technical Committee (Chaparral)
- 18th 12:00 p.m. Regional Council Executive Committee (Ironwood)
- 18th 1:00 p.m. Active Transportation Committee (Ironwood)
- 19th 9:30 a.m. Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Committee (Ironwood)
- 19th 2:00 p.m. Building Codes Committee (Ironwood)
- 20th 9:30 a.m. Transit Committee (Ironwood)
- 24th 1:30 p.m. Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Board (Chaparral)
- 25th 10:00 a.m. Population Technical Advisory Committee (Chaparral)
- 26th 11:30 a.m. Regional Council (Saguaro)
- 27th 10:00 a.m. Transportation Review Committee (Saguaro)
- 27th 1:30 p.m. Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee (Saguaro)

The dates, times and locations of all meetings may change. Other committees not listed may meet during these months. For confirmation, call (602) 254-6300.

Parking is available under the building. Please ask for parking validation at the meeting. A transit ticket will be provided for anyone who purchased a transit ticket to attend a meeting. Bike racks are available at the entrance to the parking garage.

March

- 3rd 10:00 a.m. Solid Waste Advisory Committee (Saguaro)
- 3rd 11:30 a.m. Economic Development Committee (Saguaro)
- 4th 10:00 a.m. Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee (Ironwood)
- 4th 1:30 p.m. Standard Specifications and Details Committee (Cholla)
- 10th 1:00 p.m. Street Committee (Ironwood)
- 11th 12:00 p.m. Management Committee (Saguaro)
- 16th 12:00 p.m. Regional Council Executive Committee (Ironwood)
- 17th 1:00 p.m. Active Transportation Committee (Ironwood)
- 18th 9:30 a.m. Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Committee (Ironwood)
- 18th 10:00 a.m. Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation Committee (Cholla)
- 18th 11:30 a.m. Transportation Policy Committee (Saguaro)
- 18th 2:00 p.m. Building Codes Committee (Ironwood)
- 19th 9:30 a.m. Transit Committee (Ironwood)
- 23rd 1:30 p.m. Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Board (Chaparral)
- 24th 10:00 a.m. Transportation Safety Committee (Ironwood)
- 24th 10:00 a.m. Population Technical Advisory Committee (Chaparral)
- 25th 11:30 a.m. Regional Council (Saguaro)
- 26th 10:00 a.m. Human Services and Community Initiatives Committee (Chaparral)
- 26th 10:00 a.m. Transportation Review Committee (Saguaro)
- 26th 1:30 p.m. Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee (Saguaro)

The newsletter is available at www.azmag.gov. Click on the MAGAZine Newsletter link under the NEWSROOM menu.

April

- 1st 10:00 a.m. Intelligent Transportation Systems Committee (Ironwood)
- 1st 1:30 p.m. Standard Specifications and Details Committee (Ironwood)
- 2nd 1:00 p.m. Regional Domestic Violence Council (Saguaro)
- 7th 11:30 a.m. Economic Development Committee (Saguaro)
- 8th 12:00 p.m. Management Committee (Saguaro)
- 9th 1:30 p.m. Human Services Technical Committee (Chaparral)
- 13th 12:00 p.m. Regional Council Executive Committee (Ironwood)
- 14th 1:00 p.m. Street Committee (Saguaro)
- 15th 9:30 a.m. Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Committee (Ironwood)
- 15th 11:30 a.m. Transportation Policy Committee (Saguaro)
- 15th 2:00 p.m. Building Codes Committee (Ironwood)
- 16th 9:30 a.m. Transit Committee (Ironwood)
- 21st 1:00 p.m. Active Transportation Committee (Ironwood)
- 22nd 11:30 a.m. Regional Council (Saguaro)
- 23rd 10:00 a.m. Transportation Review Committee (Saguaro)
- 23rd 1:30 p.m. Air Quality Technical Advisory Committee (Saguaro)
- 27th 1:30 p.m. Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Board (Chaparral)
- 28th 10:00 a.m. Population Technical Advisory Committee (Chaparral)
- 28th 10:00 a.m. Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation Committee (Cholla)
- 29th 10:00 a.m. Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation Committee (Cholla)

All meetings, unless indicated otherwise, will be held in the conference rooms located in the MAG office on the 2nd floor of the building, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix.