



Executive Director's Report

In October we heard the first ever panel presentation at a Regional Council meeting devoted to homelessness. MAG has consistently taken a leadership role on this issue, starting in 1985 when the Regional Council authorized the first homeless street count. For decades, MAG worked to address this issue through its traditional policy process, involving the Regional Council and the Management Committee. Due to changes in federal law and new requirements by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), a different structure was needed.

The Maricopa Regional Continuum of Care Board was established in 1999. This independent body, staffed by MAG, has been very successful, securing more than \$374 million in homeless assistance funding to the region. One of the unintended consequences of the Board's independence was that it became disengaged from MAG's planning process and the Regional Council and Management Committee. At our October meeting, it was recognized that local governments needed to re-engage as a region due to the direct and significant impact homelessness is having on cities and towns.

MAG's annual homeless count shows that while the total number of homeless individuals overall is staying flat, around 6,000, the number of people on the street is rising every year. Trends show the unsheltered population is increasing in all communities across Maricopa County. A major resource gap is housing, with increasing difficulties in placing people in apartments. Cities and towns are already spending money on areas related to homelessness, such as providing law enforcement resources and housing assistance, and partnering with nonprofits to provide outreach and services. But it isn't enough. A local HUD representative informed members there may be cuts in funding from the federal government; in fact this year the funding could be \$1 million less. We have to be more efficient and work together as a region, through our community partners and the Continuum of Care, to address this difficult and complex issue.

As in 1985 when MAG first addressed homelessness, it is time to work together to offer a unified response to the challenges every community is facing. We need to learn from each other about best practices and innovative solutions that are making a difference. An important dialogue has started, and we will continue to reach out to our member agencies. Through a coordinated regional effort, we can advance our goal of ending homelessness and improve the quality of life for all of our residents.

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



Meeting Report for Wednesday, October 25, 2017

Action Items

Recommendation of a Name for the Future Arizona State Route 30 Freeway

Members of the Regional Council approved “Tres Rios” as the name for the future 31-mile Arizona State Route 30 (SR-30), from SR-85 in Buckeye to Interstate 17/Black Canyon Freeway in Phoenix. The suggested name of this freeway, which is in the funded MAG’s Regional Freeway and Highway Program, comes from the three rivers located near the new freeway corridor: the Gila River, Salt River, and Aqua Fria River. The name also honors what these rivers represent to the Cities of Avondale, Buckeye, Goodyear, and Phoenix.

Staff noted that the Tres Rios name meets naming guidelines, approved in 1986. Names are to be related to Arizona natural features, landmarks, or Native American names; names should not exceed 13-letters, and the facility type should not be indicated in the recommendation. The nine character “Tres Rios” name (including the space) is fewer than the 13 characters recommended by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) for segment names. This allows for easy printing on directional signs that will be posted with the route shield in the future SR-30 corridor. Staff also noted the name is recommended as an additional identification for the corridor, not as a replacement to the ADOT designation of the future corridor as Arizona State Route 30.

Per state statute, the approved recommendation now goes to the Arizona State Board on Geographic and Historic Names for final consideration.

For more information, please contact Bob Hazlett, MAG Senior Engineering Project Manager, (602) 254-6300.



Information Items

Quarterly Status on the Implementation of the Regional Freeway and Highway Program

Members of the Regional Council received a status report on the implementation of the Regional Freeway and Highway Program. ADOT, with MAG’s assistance, continues work on the 37 projects in the rebalanced program approved by the Regional Council on June 28, 2017. MAG staff informed the committee that 19 of the 37 projects are underway, and reported that ADOT and MAG staff meet monthly to refine delivery options and the scope of the projects.

Several projects were highlighted, including the recent opening of Loop 303 between the I-10 Freeway to Van Buren Street, as well as construction of Loop 202/South Mountain Freeway, which is targeted for completion in December of 2019. Staff also

mentioned eight other projects of note, including a planned diverging diamond traffic interchange at Happy Valley Road and I-17, which begins construction in June 2018; adding lanes on I-17 north of Anthem Way, with work scheduled to start in January 2020; and a Loop 101/Price Freeway design-build project, which would add lanes from Baseline Road to Loop 202/Santan Freeway, set to begin in January 2019.

Also discussed was the continued high level of coordination with ADOT and the Federal Highway Administration to execute these projects. Staff raised awareness of the potential impact involving the “Red Letter” process on some projects, which requires MAG member agencies to notify ADOT of potential development activities in freeway alignments, including zoning applications and permits.

For more information, please contact Bob Hazlett, MAG Senior Engineering Project Manager, (602) 254-6300.

Regional Plan to End Homelessness - Community Engagement

As mentioned above, MAG staff led a panel discussion on homelessness. The panel, which included Continuum of Care Board Co-Chair Amy Schwabenlender and HUD Phoenix Director Stephanie Smelnick, gave an overview of the scope of homelessness and how it is impacting cities and towns throughout the region. Valley Metro CEO Scott Smith reported on a new “Respect the Ride” code of conduct that was recently adopted by the Valley Metro Board. MAG’s annual homeless count shows that while the total number of homeless people overall is staying flat at around 6,000, the number of people on the street is rising. Trends show the unsheltered population is increasing in all communities throughout the MAG region. A major resource gap is housing, with increasing difficulties in placing people in apartments. In 2017, the number of needed housing units was more than 2,300. Challenges include rising housing costs and a tight private rental market run by landlords reluctant to rent to vulnerable populations.

Priorities of the plan moving forward are creating a collaborative, regionwide system based on needs; a well-advertised, easily accessible coordinated entry system; strengthening partnerships to create additional housing and freeing up housing dollars, and tracking progress with a standardized assessment tool. MAG will be sending out surveys to member agencies to discover what cities and towns are doing to connect those experiencing homelessness to housing and services. Staff will collect best practices and outline a coordinated, regional approach. The goal is to create a long-term, sustainable system that truly makes an impact on this difficult and complex issue.

For more information, please contact Brande Mead, MAG Human Services Manager, (602) 254-6300.

Next Meeting

The next meeting of the MAG Regional Council will be held on Wednesday, December 6, 2017, at 11:30 a.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix, second floor, Saguaro Room. Agenda items are expected to include an update on project streamlining and environmental stewardship. Additional agenda items are pending.