



## Executive Director's Report

Our October meeting included approval for air quality conformity analysis of two very important documents that guide transportation planning in our region: the draft MAG 2035 Regional Transportation Plan and the draft Fiscal Year 2014-2018 MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP). The TIP and Plan outline the transportation projects and programs that will be implemented in the short term and over the next 20 years. After being analyzed to ensure conformance with air quality requirements, they will come back to the Regional Council for final approval in January. While these two documents represent the core business at MAG, they also remind us that we have to look ahead to the next generation of transportation projects in the region, what our priorities will be and how they will be funded.

We have been receiving information at our policy committees about the challenges faced by our region with declining sales tax revenues. It was noted that, due to the recession, the current sales tax projections reflect a 40 percent decrease over the 2002 projections. In addition, we have seen a significant decline in gas tax revenues, due in part to more fuel efficient vehicles. Our discussions are among many others taking place statewide by a number of groups looking for ways to address revenue shortfalls.

A key question before us is timing. Arizona has just lived through a very difficult economic period, with many people losing their jobs, incomes, or homes. Are they ready to think about our transportation future? In 2002, we saw a decline in sales tax revenues, and Proposition 400 was passed two years later. This time, however, the decline in 2009 was much more significant. Is this an appropriate time to request future investment in transportation?

To answer these important questions, MAG will be conducting a public opinion poll on transportation issues. At our Regional Council meeting, we elicited input from the committee for the survey instrument that will be used to gauge public sentiment on these issues. Online bulletin boards and an additional meeting will be held with stakeholders in the coming weeks to help finalize the instrument. It is critical that we remain sensitive to what the public is willing to accept. Any effort, to be successful, will need the support of the largest possible community, and we are looking forward to learning more about the public's mindset through the public opinion survey.

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

## Meeting Report for Wednesday, October 23, 2013

### Action Items



#### Draft MAG 2035 Regional Transportation Plan

Following a report on the FY 2014 MAG Mid-Phase Public Input Opportunity (*see information items, below*), the Regional Council approved the Draft MAG 2035 Regional Transportation Plan for an air quality conformity analysis.

The 1990 Federal Clean Air Act Amendments require that regional transportation plans and programs be in conformance with all applicable air quality plans. To comply with this requirement, an air quality conformity analysis of the Draft MAG 2035 Regional Transportation Plan needs to be conducted prior to consideration of the Plan for final approval.

The Regional Transportation Plan guides transportation investments in the region, providing a long-range blueprint that extends through fiscal year 2035. The Plan is required to maintain eligibility for federal transportation funding and must be updated at least every four years. The 2035 Plan includes regional plans for freeways/highways, arterial streets, public transit, as well as plans for other transportation programs in the region. The Plan includes \$59.9 billion in funding, about half of which is dedicated to arterial street projects, one-quarter to freeways/highways, and one quarter to transit. Other transportation activities include bicycle and pedestrian planning, transportation safety, demand management, freight planning, transportation system operations, and special needs transportation. Next steps include a Final Phase Public Hearing at 5:00 p.m. on November 25, 2013, at the MAG Offices.

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

#### Draft FY 2014-2018 MAG Transportation Improvement Program – Listing of Projects

As with the Regional Transportation Plan, the Clean Air Act Amendments require that the five-year program of projects known as the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) also undergo an air quality conformity analysis. The draft TIP listing contains all regionally significant projects within the planning boundary, regardless of funding source. All MAG member agencies were consulted regarding projects incorporated in the TIP, including locally and privately funded projects. A draft listing of the Section 5307 Program of Projects, which is a subset on the transit project listings in the TIP, is also included.

The total transportation project costs in the draft FY 2014-2018 TIP is \$4.43 billion, including \$2.8 billion for highway projects and \$1.6 billion for transit projects.

The TIP is developed in coordination with the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Arizona Department of Transportation, and member agencies. This TIP represents projects in the expanded regional planning boundary. Among the programs included are the Arterial Life Cycle Program, Transit Life Cycle Program, and Freeway Life Cycle Program. There are 782 projects by mode, including 332 street/intersection projects, 40 freeway/freeway interchange projects, 119 transit rail projects, 152 transit bus projects, and 61 bicycle/pedestrian projects. The TIP will also be available for public comment during the Final Phase Public Hearing at 5:00 p.m. on November 25, 2013 at the MAG Offices.

For more information, please contact Teri Kennedy, MAG Transportation Improvement Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.

### **Briefing on EPA Rulemaking for the Navajo Generating Station**

The Regional Council received a briefing from Central Arizona Project (CAP) General Manager David Modeer regarding the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) proposed regional haze rule for the Navajo Generating Station (NGS) located in Page, Arizona. He reported that the rule would require installation of costly controls on each of the NGS's three generating units as early as 2018, and that the costs would be passed on to municipal water users that receive CAP water.

Mr. Modeer stated that CAP and its partners worked together to develop a proposal that would ensure that the NGS would stay open. A working group consisting of the Navajo Nation, the Gila River Indian Community, Salt River Project, CAP and environmental groups developed the Technical Working Group Proposal. CAP considers the proposal a reasonable alternative to the EPA proposal. Without a reasonable solution, Mr. Modeer said the NGS, which provides the least costly energy alternative in Arizona, would be shut down. He stated that the EPA has accepted the supplemental proposal for publication in the Federal Register and that public hearings are being scheduled in the Page area, Phoenix and Tucson.

Following discussion, the Regional Council voted to support a letter to the editor favoring the Technical Working Group Proposal.

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

### **Information Items**

#### **FY 2014 Mid-Phase Public Input Opportunity**

Staff provided an update on the input received during the Mid Phase Input Opportunity for the 2014-2018 Draft TIP and 2035 Regional Transportation Plan. Staff noted that MAG has an adopted four-phase public involvement process—early, mid phase, final phase, and continuous involvement. The mid phase provides



residents a key opportunity to provide input into draft plans and programs before MAG policy committees take action.

During the mid phase, MAG received public comment at its policy committee meetings, as well as at small and large group presentations, a public meeting, and through web and telephone correspondence. The public meeting was noticed through approximately 3,000 postcards sent to MAG's public involvement mailing list and through display advertisements in mainstream and minority newspapers. Staff provided a summary of questions and comments received during the phase. Comments are included in the Input Opportunity Report on the MAG website at <http://www.azmag.gov/Communications/default.asp> under "Related Links."

**For more information, please contact Jason Stephens, MAG Public Involvement Planner, (602) 254-6300.**

### **State and Regional Planning for a Safer Transportation System**

The Regional Council received updates on safety planning for the state and regional transportation systems. Director Alberto Gutier of the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety provided a report on the state's new Strategic Highway Safety Plan. The plan is a statewide, coordinated strategy developed in cooperation with a broad range of stakeholders, including federal, state, local and tribal interests. The effort includes a number of task forces encompassing various highway safety issues such as speeding, aggressive and impaired driving, older drivers, bicycle and pedestrian safety, and animal issues. The director noted that over the past six to seven years, DUI arrests have increased from approximately 300 to 400 per year to about 4,500. The task force will attend a summit in November and the most important issue will be to obtain funding to pass along to cities and towns.

Regional safety efforts are the focus of the MAG Strategic Transportation Safety Plan, which is being developed under the guidance of the Transportation Safety Committee to implement systematic road safety improvements regionwide. Recommendations will be included in the NexGen Regional Transportation Plan. Staff reported that accomplishments to date include road safety assessments of 26 high-crash intersections, the implementation of crash data analysis software, annual school crossing guard training workshops, and the establishment of an overall vision and goals for transportation safety in the MAG region. In 2012, there were 74 fatal freeway crashes in the region, up from 64 in 2011. There were 282 fatal crashes on arterials/local roads in 2012, down from 297 in 2011. Accidents involving serious injuries, however, were down for both freeways and local streets. There were 75 fatal pedestrian crashes and 14 fatal bicyclist crashes in 2012 (compared to 75 and 17 in 2011, respectively). Staff reported that the MAG "Road Safety Vision" is zero deaths and zero injuries.

**For more information, please contact Sarath Joshua, MAG Senior ITS and Safety Project Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

## **Public Opinion Transportation Survey Development**

Several discussions have been held with the MAG Transportation Policy Committee and Regional Council regarding transportation revenues. It has been noted that current sales tax projections are 40 percent lower than in 2002, and the Highway User Revenue Fund projections are at the 2004 and 2005 levels. Numerous options were discussed to increase transportation revenues. It was determined that a public opinion survey would be helpful to gauge public views and sentiment regarding needs and revenue sources.

Regional Council input was sought regarding the development of the survey instrument. The council discussed three topic areas for potential inclusion in the survey, including public satisfaction with the current regional transportation system, awareness and level of understanding regarding the current funding of the system, and the public's willingness to consider various revenue options.

WestGroup Research, Inc., will conduct the survey in late November. In the meantime, it will host two online bulletin boards to further streamline the survey questions. The first bulletin board opportunity will be for members of the Transportation Policy Committee; the second will be with registered high-efficacy voters to gauge initial perceptions and attitudes.

**For more information, please contact Eileen Yazzie, MAG Transportation Planning Project Manager, at (602) 254-6300.**

## **Next Meeting**

Due to the Thanksgiving holiday, the next meeting of the MAG Regional Council will be Wednesday, December 4, 2013, at 11:30 a.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix, second floor, Saguaro Room. Agenda items are pending.

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