



## Executive Director's Report

The expression "There is no 'I' in team" was exemplified at our August Regional Council meeting with the passage of a pilot program that will improve safety and reduce congestion on our regional freeway system. Truly great projects are rarely accomplished single-handedly. This action could not have been taken without the cooperation of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), Department of Public Safety (DPS), and Federal Highway Administration (FHWA).

The Regional Council voted to jointly fund a program to co-locate a DPS officer at the ADOT Traffic Operations Center as a three-year pilot project (see summary, below). The concept of using regional funds to assist in an endeavor by two state agencies spurred numerous questions by MAG members, who thoroughly vetted the idea through the MAG committee process before recommending approval. However, similar to the Freeway Service Patrol that was originally funded by MAG as a pilot project in 2000, MAG, ADOT and DPS explained how clearing accident scenes more quickly can save lives by reducing secondary collisions and reducing the time motorists are stuck in traffic.

It is estimated that the time savings from having a DPS officer in the TOC could result in a 33 percent reduction in travel time delay caused by major accidents. Modeling scenarios show that a 33 percent reduction in delays for a 36-mile segment of Interstate 10 over a one-year time period would equate to a savings of \$6.6 million. The Regional Council further ensured accountability in the process by calling for annual performance reports and by agreeing to jointly fund only the first three years as a pilot project.

This project is a great example of how regional, state and federal agencies saw a problem in traffic delays and safety on the freeway system and came up with a short term, implementable plan for using technology and personnel, instead of pavement, to address the issue.

As this issue was being discussed, several personal stories emerged regarding accidents on the freeway. Safety is our number one priority and it is rewarding to see the MAG member agencies working to address this issue.

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

**Meeting Report for Wednesday, August 27, 2014****Action Items****Locally Preferred Alternative and Proposed Major Amendment for Light Rail Extension**

The Regional Council voted to approve a Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the South Central Avenue project, including light rail transit. The action adds the five-mile light rail transit extension on Central Avenue from downtown Phoenix near the existing light rail at Washington and Jefferson streets south to Baseline Road. During an update on the project, staff noted that the Phoenix City Council approved the LPA in December 2013, and recently formed a community-based committee to prepare a plan for the extension of the Transit 2000 sales tax extension, to include capital, operations, and maintenance funding for the city, including the South Central Avenue corridor. The project's capital cost is estimated at \$680 million, to be funded by the Phoenix Transit 2000 tax and possible federal discretionary funds. No regional public transportation funds (Proposition 400 funds) would be used for the capital expenditures.

Adding the project to the MAG Regional Transportation Plan requires a major amendment, in accordance with state law. The major amendment is needed because the corridor was identified as a bus corridor in the Plan, and the recommendation is for a light rail corridor. The major amendment process was put in place to ensure transparency for voters who approved the funding for the Plan in 2004 as part of Proposition 400. The Regional Council approved the LPA, including appropriate consultation with the State Transportation Board, Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, Regional Public Transportation Authority, Native American Indian Communities, cities and towns in Maricopa County, and the Citizens Transportation Oversight Committee.

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

**Funding for DPS Officers to Co-Locate in ADOT Traffic Operations Center**

As noted in the Executive Director's message above, the Regional Council voted to approve funding for a three-year pilot project, with an evaluation component, to co-locate three Department of Public Safety (DPS) officers and one DPS supervisor in the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Traffic Operations Center, and to equally share the first year cost of \$450,000 and subsequent annual cost of \$425,000 with ADOT. The funding for the MAG share would come from the MAG Regional Freeway and Highway Program Management Consultant funds of \$225,000 for the first year and \$212,000 annually for the next two years.

Staff from MAG, ADOT and DPS reported that the co-location of DPS in the operations center would improve operations on the region's freeways by enabling DPS to monitor traffic incidents via ADOT cameras and mobilize and implement an immediate and effective response. Based on the experience of the Utah Department of Transportation, which stations public safety officers at its traffic operations center, it is believed this would help reduce the duration of freeway closures by as much as 25 percent. It is also believed that clearing accidents more quickly will reduce secondary crashes at the back of the traffic queue, which are often more serious than the initial crash. A DPS officer would have unrestricted access to the DPS Computer Aided Dispatch system, which would help gauge the impact of other activities on freeway traffic. During freeway incidents, the DPS officer would coordinate timely updates to police, fire and other first responders and could immediately dispatch the required resources, such as tow trucks and traffic control personnel.

A traffic simulation analysis performed by MAG showed overall traffic congestion (person hours of delay) could be reduced by 33 percent due to improved coordination realized by the DPS co-location. A 33 percent reduction in traffic delay translates to \$220,000 in time savings. For the year ending June 30, 2014, a 36-mile segment of I-10 experienced 30 closures with an average duration of three hours. The annual value of time savings for that 36-mile segment would therefore equate to about \$6.6 million. Under the action approved by the Regional Council, annual performance reports on freeway traffic incident management during the pilot period of three years would be produced, with MAG performing a comparison of freeway operations before and after the DPS co-location to identify potential benefits.

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

### **Appointment of the MAG Economic Development Committee Chair and Members**

The Regional Council voted to appoint Gilbert Mayor John Lewis as chair of the MAG Economic Development Committee (EDC). Due to the immediate past chair of the Regional Council no longer being a current member of the Council, the chair position has been vacant.

In a separate motion, the Regional Council approved the appointments of the 17 remaining EDC member agency positions, including some prescribed seats and seats eligible for reappointment. New member appointments included Mesa Mayor Alex Finter and Avondale Mayor Kenneth Weise.

**For more information, please contact Denise McClafferty, MAG Regional Program Manager, (602) 254-6300.**

### **Representation by Providers of Public Transportation on MPO Boards**

A new requirement under the federal transportation law, Moving Ahead for Progress in the 21st Century (MAP-21), requires transit representation on the governing

bodies of Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) such as MAG. Options for the transit position on the MAG Regional Council have been developed and were included in the Regional Council packet. However, at the meeting, MAG staff reported that it had recently come to MAG's attention that some MPOs are exempt and therefore may not need to meet the new requirements. Before discussing further, staff recommended that additional fact-finding be conducted so that all potential options could be presented to the Regional Council for discussion and action.

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

## **Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the MAG Regional Council will be Wednesday, September 24, 2014, at 11:30 a.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Phoenix, second floor, Saguaro Room. Agenda items are expected to include the Arizona Water Quality Management Plan and streamlining of the 208 Water Quality Management Plan process; update on a petition by the Arizona Center for Law in the Public Interest for review of the EPA approval of the MAG 2012 Five Percent Plan for PM-10; and an update on efforts to provide a regional response to domestic violence to save lives. Additional agenda items are pending.

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