

## **June 20, 2000 Regional Trails Forum Meeting Summary**

July 5, 2000

### **Introduction**

On June 20, 2000 the third Regional Trails Forum was held to obtain feedback for the Regional Off-Street System Plan (ROSS). Twenty-seven attended the meeting, which was hosted by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), and featured an update on activities of the Maricopa County Trails Commission by the staff of the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department. The consultant for the MAG ROSS also distributed completed working papers and gave a presentation on the Plan. The presentations were followed with discussion of corridors to include in the Potential Corridor Map, travel issues for bicyclists and pedestrians, and implementation of the Plan. Participants were encouraged to voice their concerns, and members of the consultant team facilitated the discussion and documented these concerns for incorporation into the ROSS plan.

The Regional Trails Forum was originally initiated as a way to obtain input on the ROSS plan. The Forum increased in scope to incorporate planning efforts of other agencies addressing the issues of pathway development, trails, open space and transportation. With increased interest among several government agencies, private sector organizations, elected officials and members of the public in these issues, the creation of the Regional Trails Forum became a way to encourage cooperation among numerous players. Providing a forum for discussion and study of regional problems is a key role of MAG. By cooperating and pooling common resources, citizens can get the utmost dollar for every dollar spent on governmental operations.

### **Overview of Presentations**

#### **Welcome and Introductions**

The meeting began with a welcome and introduction from MAG staff. Meeting logistics were described, and participants were invited to sign-in, have their parking validated, and pick up meeting handouts from the registration table. Handouts for the meeting included:

- Meeting Agenda;
- Final draft of Working Paper Four: Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives; and
- Initial draft of Working Paper Five: Corridor Identification and Evaluation.

MAG staff described the purpose of the Regional Trails Forum. The Forum serves to:

- Provide input to the ROSS plan;
- Encourage connectivity of trails between jurisdictional boundaries; and

- Apprise cities, business interests, community groups and citizens of trail development issues and planning activities of public agencies.

### **Status Report on Maricopa County Trails Commission Activities**

The meeting continued with a status report on Maricopa County Trails Commission activities and a summary of the Commission's second meeting held on June 14, 2000. The report was given by Bill Scalzo of the Maricopa County Parks and Recreation Department. The status of several projects was reviewed at the June 14 meeting.

- McMicken Dam is a potential trail located on the east side of the White Tanks Park, and north and east of Bell Road. Several Commission members toured the area and a review of the tour was presented at the meeting. This potential trail fits well into the Maricopa County Trails Plan.
- The Maricopa Water District can connect McMicken Dam to Lake Pleasant. There may not be support for this, but the Trails Commission is working with the Water District to address any concerns with using the Water District right-of-way as a potential trail.
- Maricopa County Parks and Recreation has developed a draft intergovernmental agreement (IGA) with the Bureau of Reclamation to use right-of-way along the CAP as a trail. The IGA should be completed by the end of the year.
- An update was provided on the Superstition Santan Corridor along the East Maricopa Floodway. There are many beautiful riparian areas along the corridor, but there is some difficulty in crossing roadways where the corridor intersects. Possible project partners include the Roosevelt Water Conservation District.
- A status report was provided on the Agua Fria Watercourse Master Plan and the West Valley Recreation Corridor. An action plan for developing trails along the West Valley Recreation Corridor will be presented at the September meeting of the Maricopa County Trails Commission.
- Geographic information systems (GIS) data was presented to the Commission. The County has data of ownership and corridor identification, and wants to overlay potential corridor information. The information gathered through the MAG ROSS Plan may be useful in this effort.

As a reminder to Trails Forum attendees, the Maricopa County Trail will create the "outer loop" of a trail system for the entire County, and link the parks using existing right-of-way. Mr. Scalzo concluded by proposing that a future Regional Trails Forum provide an overview of the GIS information gathered.

### **Status Report on the Regional Off-Street System (ROSS) Plan**

Mr. Scalzo's presentation was followed with a presentation on the status report of the ROSS Plan by Michelle Green, a member of the RBF consultant team.

**Availability of Working Papers.** Two working papers were distributed to meeting participants. The final draft of Working Paper Four, Vision Statement, Goals and Objectives, has been revised based on comments obtained at the last Regional Trails Forum and the MAG Oversight Committees (Regional Bicycle Task Force and Pedestrian Working Group). Working Paper Five and Six, Corridor Identification and Evaluation, is available as an initial draft. Comments on the working papers can be submitted to MAG.

**Final Revision of the Potential Corridor Map.** Michelle referred to the final draft potential corridor map on the wall. Some participants requested that the map be mailed to them, and some with e-mail may have the map e-mailed to them as a PDF.

**Demonstration Projects.** Since it's not possible to develop detailed design for all of the potential corridors identified on the map within the budget for this project, three demonstration projects have been selected. The projects have been analyzed to identify opportunities, constraints and issues which are common to most types of corridors identified in the ROSS. There are three demonstration projects: the Creamery Branch, Roosevelt Canal and Dysart Drain. Maps were shown of each of the project areas.

**Opportunities.** Photographs were shown of each of the demonstration projects and opportunities were described. Many of these opportunities exist along several of the potential corridors identified in the ROSS. Opportunities of the different projects include:

- Visual appeal
- Connection to natural resources, such as the Agua Fria
- Connections to regional destinations, such as the White Tanks Regional Park
- Access to multi-modal connections, such as railways, bike lanes and bus routes
- Increased comfort for bicyclists and pedestrians by separating motorized and non-motorized travelers
- Links to residences and existing paths

**Issues.** Issues were categorized using goals of the ROSS plan. Each issue was accompanied with a photograph, and potential design solutions were identified and shown with schematic drawings. Different sites had different issues identified, though some sites had common issues.

### User Friendly Issues

- *Issue:* Right-of-way is not clearly defined. *Solution:* Create a landscaped buffer and use differentiated pavement types.
- *Issue:* Lack of shade and human scale. *Solution:* Clearly defined pathway, vegetation and street furniture.
- *Issue:* Unattractive and untidy. *Solution:* Clean up, add landscaping and clearly define the trail.

### Connectivity Issues

- *Issue:* Private property. *Solution:* Provide an alternative route.
- *Issue:* Private property; canal is located behind a fence for Luke Air Force Base. *Solution:* Purchase land or negotiate access. Maybe the fence can be moved.
- *Issue:* Obstacles threaten to end the trail. *Solution:* Alter the direction of the route.
- *Issue:* Dead-end. *Solution:* Turn the dead-end into a beginning by adding a trail head.

### Accessibility Issues

- *Issue:* Crossing Canal. *Solution:* Construct Overpass. *Solution:* Perhaps use an existing structure that will serve a dual purpose.
- *Issue:* Crossing “v” ditches. *Solution:* Cross using a prefabricated structure or pipe and fill the ditch.
- *Issue:* Some private developments with fences do not provide access to potential off-street systems. *Solution:* Require pedestrian and bicycle access to the off-street system with gates in fences.

### Safety Issues

- *Issue:* Isolation and “creepiness” in some areas. *Solution:* Provide adequate lighting, open up space by planting low shrub, and increase the number of eyes on the trail.
- *Issue:* Incompatible use, such as an active trail line. *Solution:* Provide separation buffers.
- *Issue:* Existing use within corridor. *Solution:* Where possible, keep operations and maintenance separate from pedestrians and bicyclists.

### **Mid-Block Crossings**

- Mid-block crossings are a major *issue* in each of the three demonstration projects. Potential *solutions* include pedestrian/bicyclist bridges. Other potential *solutions* have been identified in a report completed by MAG and the City of Tempe in March, 1999: Alternative Solutions to Mid-Block Crossings.

### **Conclusions and Next Steps**

After today's meeting, the Final Draft of the Potential Corridor Map will be revised to reflect participant's comments. Design standards will be developed using the issues, opportunities and constraints identified with the assistance of the demonstration projects. An action plan will be developed to help implement the ROSS plan. An initial draft ROSS is expected in August, and review and comment from participants in the Regional Trails Forum will be important in revising the draft. The next Regional Trails Forum will occur on September 19, 2000 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. The draft plan will be presented at the September meeting.

### **Participant Comments**

The following is a summary of the participant comments from the Forum. Many of these comments address issues, who the paths are designed for and implementation of the plan. In listing the comments below, efforts have been made to state participant's ideas as voiced at the Forum.

- There may be a need to simplify the potential corridor map so that different data layers can be examined by cities or citizens as needed. There is also a need for more detailed information for trail planning purposes (MAG staff response: The map has been prepared using GIS so that different layers can be seen on different types of maps. While there is a need for more detailed information, this information is specifically for the "backbone" routes identified in the ROSS.)
- How can we work to identify existing trails? This type of information really needs to be included on the GIS map.
- How will the West Valley Recreation Corridor be developed? Who will pay for it, and who will construct it? (MAG staff response: This corridor will be constructed using a variety of funding sources, and the construction standards will depend on the source of the funding. Parts of the corridor are already constructed, and there are plans to construct other portions using federal funds.)
- It's important to remember that Phoenix is the sixth worst for pedestrian safety. Is riding bicycles and walking really something to be encouraged in light of this fact?
- How can users of a trail system cross busy arterials? This is really the biggest issue in constructing these off-street trails and paths. And, many of these options are costly. We don't have money and right-of-way to construct overpasses and underpasses at every roadway.

- Have utility line easements been identified on the map? These would be great corridors for bicyclists (MAG staff response: Utility line easements have been identified on the map).
- How will these facilities be lighted? Will use at night be permitted? (MAG staff response: specific standards for lighting will not be identified in the ROSS plan since lighting requirements will vary depending on the original purpose of the corridor and whether night travel is encouraged).
- How can we improve path quality? Some paths are just too rugged for bicyclists. Crossing roadways is a huge issue.
- Since there may be heavy algae growth in canals, truck access along the canal is necessary. The use of canals by trucks may impact the quality of the pathway surface for bicyclists and pedestrians.
- MAG has done a lot of work in developing policies and guidelines for pedestrian areas, and these need to be incorporated into the ROSS plan.
- Phoenix did a study of the North Canal. It's important for you to have this information since there are some design standards in there that should be considered in the ROSS. The Phoenix Arts Commission has done some wonderful things in this area.
- Gilbert has an equestrian easement along a railroad. So, it may be possible for other jurisdictions to obtain easements along railroads.
- The Rails to Trails Conservancy is a wonderful resource that should be consulted when developing some design guidelines.

Any comments are welcomed and can be e-mailed to [ross@rbf.com](mailto:ross@rbf.com) Or, call Dawn M. Coomer, MAG Transportation Planner, at the MAG office, (602) 254-6300.

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