

Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey



## Executive Director's Report

Just days after the MAG Regional Council unanimously approved a motion calling for the Arizona Department of Transportation to meet with MAG to develop a funding level which meets the needs of this region, an agreement has been reached. The plan we presented during a joint meeting of the MAG Regional Council and the State Transportation Board December 17th will provide \$483 million in additional transportation funding for the MAG region. It also commits MAG and ADOT to a cooperative effort to speed up construction of the Regional Freeway System, with completion by 2007.

The accord marks a new era of cooperation between the region and the state. It comes after weeks of negotiations between MAG and ADOT over the distribution of additional funds Arizona will receive under TEA-21. Staff members will now get down to the business of identifying specific projects that can be completed under the plan.

Arizona Governor Jane D. Hull complimented MAG and ADOT for their willingness to work together in arriving at the joint agreement, saying, "I can not imagine a better holiday present for Arizona than the news our freeway system will be finished seven years sooner than planned."

Meanwhile, the dialogue also continues on the federal level with the Census Advisory Committee. I went to Washington, D.C. for the Committee meeting in early December and we are finalizing our report on recommendations for Census 2000. We will meet again in January to put the finishing touches on the report, and in February we will meet with Secretary of Commerce William M. Daley. Among the recommendations will be to ask the Census Bureau to develop a plan to account for the thousands of new housing units which will be built between the time the cities provide their local updates to the Bureau (occurring this year) and the time the Census is undertaken in April of 2000. Other issues addressed include the use of statistical sampling in the year 2000 census.

MAG is also pleased to announce the hosting of its first “Building Codes Stakeholders” meeting. Held December 15th, the meeting brought building codes officials, elected leaders and industry representatives to the same table. Discussions centered on how best to obtain uniformity and consistency in building codes among municipalities.

MAG is additionally proud of its involvement as host of the Government Finance Officers Association Exam October 23rd. MAG hosted the first two parts of a five-part exam to promote professionalism in municipal finance and management. The test drew the second highest level of attendance of any city in the nation. Among those taking (and passing!) the exam was MAG Fiscal Services Manager Art Rullo.



### **Regional Council Meeting Report December 9, 1998**

#### **Transportation Funding Estimate**

On December 3rd, before the above agreement was reached, the Arizona Department of Transportation had released a tentative funding estimate before a meeting of the State Transportation Board. That proposal fell about \$200 million short of what the region had asked for in its draft proposal.

During its December 9th meeting, the MAG Regional Council unanimously passed a motion calling for the ADOT director to meet with MAG staff to look for ways to develop a funding level which would meet the needs of this region. The Council also called for a joint meeting between the MAG Regional Council, the PAG Regional Council and the State Transportation Board, to resolve differences in how the increased transportation funding is spent. The Council further supported a recommendation that the Federal Highway Administration be included in the dialogue. As stated above, the action resulted in a meeting which was held at MAG December 17th, with outstanding success.

For more information, contact Eric Anderson, MAG Freeway Program Manager, 470-1107.

#### **Hundreds Provide Input Through Improved Public Outreach**

Under a new, more proactive approach to receive input on its transportation plans and programs, focus groups were conducted with citizens throughout the region to obtain Early Phase Input for development of the Transportation Improvement Program and Long Range Transportation Plan.

Transportation stakeholders were also contacted for their input. This enhanced process has enabled MAG to receive transportation programming input from more than 400 Valley citizens. WestGroup Research, which conducted the focus groups, provided an analysis of its research. WestGroup found that citizens characterized the transportation system as fraught with slow-moving traffic, “dangerous” drivers, and as being “outdated” and “clumsy.” They also expressed a belief that using transit or carpools can be faster, and that improvement needs to come through a combined use of widespread mass transit, better/more freeways, use of telecommuting and better planning. The groups reported that the process helped them define the transportation problem. Among the conclusions of the groups were that the public at large needs to be made aware of the magnitude of the transportation problem, that different districts have different needs, and that a “one size fits all” plan will not be well received at the local levels.

For more information, contact John Farry, MAG Transportation Planning Program Manager, 254-6300.

### **How Should It Be Spent? Council Approves Draft Guidelines**

In July, the Regional Council agreed that the MAG programming process could be improved by using established guidelines in the selection of transportation projects. Relying on input from stakeholders to identify funding parameters, MAG developed draft funding guidelines. These guidelines, developed by staff, were approved by the Transportation Review Committee on December 4th, 1998. The parameters for regional commitments include Regionalism, Multimodalism, Air Quality, Congestion and Human Services. After some minor amendments, the Regional Council unanimously adopted the guidelines.

For more information, contact Terry Johnson, MAG Transportation Manager, 254-6300.

### **Council Accepts MAG Financial, Audit Reports**

MAG Fiscal Services Director Art Rullo presented an update of management’s efforts to institute a Corrective Action Plan for the audit approved by the Council on June 30, 1997. The public accounting firm of Deloitte & Touche LLP has completed the audit of MAG’s Comprehensive Annual Financial Report and Single Audit for the fiscal year ended June 30, 1998. The Single Audit report indicated that there were no questioned costs, and provided two procedural findings aimed at improving MAG’s financial management. Both findings will be addressed in FY 1999.

Although a Comprehensive Annual Financial Report was not scheduled until next year, MAG chose to conduct this highest-level financial report as part of its commitment to improving the agency's financial reporting. The Council accepted the findings.

### Other Items

Efforts continue at the community level on the Valley Vision 2025 project. There are 31 citizen-based collaborative groups around the Valley who are working to engage residents in visioning discussions and other issue-oriented activities. Much of the input is being collected through a "Valley Vision 2025 Survey," which contains 18 thought-provoking questions covering nine issue areas. The survey can also be taken on-line through the Valley Vision Web site, thanks to a unique partnership with the Electronic Village Coalition. The Coalition is an association of public and private organizations whose mission is "to facilitate the creation of collaborative projects that will enhance access to local community communication and information resources..." The partnership also enables MAG to host live, on-line discussions about visioning efforts. Additionally, MAG has developed a "Valley Vision Hotline," which provides information about the effort, meeting times and locations, details on how citizens can get involved, and an opportunity for callers to record comments about their vision for the future.

For more information, contact Margot Cordova, Valley Vision 2025 Program Manager, 254-6300, or the Valley Vision Hotline at 452-5080.

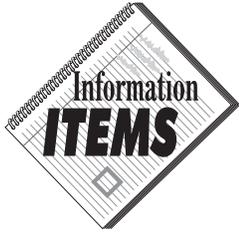


### Upcoming Issues

#### Deadlines for Projects Rapidly Approaching

Applications for projects utilizing MAG federal funds must be submitted to MAG by December 24th. All other projects to be included in the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) must be received by January 25th.

For more information, contact Paul Ward, Transportation Programming Manager, 254-6300.



## Information Items

### Council Accepts TIP Amendments

The Regional Council took action on eight amendments to the FY 1999-2003 MAG Transportation Improvement Program. Four were minor amendments and were accepted. Four others are considered “major” amendments and involve projects submitted by Maricopa County in the Desert Hills region of New River. Because the projects were submitted out of cycle, the Transportation Review Committee asked that they undergo a regional emissions analysis, followed by a public hearing, prior to the amendment being approved. The Regional Council approved the recommendations.

For more information, contact Paul Ward, 254-6300.

### Population Updates Approved

The Regional Council accepted the recommendation of the MAG Population and Technical Advisory Committee to approve the Municipality Resident Population Updates. The Updates were prepared using data supplied by MAG member agencies.



## Upcoming Events

### Regional Council Retreat Agenda Set

The Regional Council Retreat has been scheduled for January 8th at the Buttes in Tempe. The agenda will include a review of the past year’s accomplishments, a presentation, review and discussion of a MAG public communications plan, a discussion of member agency relationships, a presentation and discussion of committee structure revisions, a review and discussion of a revenue diversification effort, and discussion of work program priorities for 1999-2000.

For more information, contact James M. Bourey, Executive Director, 254-6300.

### Conference Seeks Mobility Solutions for Seniors

The year 1999 has been declared the “International Year of Older Persons” by the United Nations, and the month of May is “Older Americans Month” in the United States. In keeping with that spirit, MAG will co-sponsor, along with the Arizona Safety Management System Committee, a Mobility Solutions for Seniors Conference on May 21st, 1999. Among the topics to be discussed will be alternative transportation; education and awareness; licensing and testing; and vehicles and insurance. Registrants are expected to include decision makers in Arizona, New Mexico, Nevada, Utah, Southern California and Texas.

For more information, contact Sarath Joshua, Intelligent Transportation System Manager, 254-6300.

### Next Regional Council Meeting

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, January 20th, at 5:00 p.m. Agenda items will include discussion and possible action on the Short Range Transit Plan, prepared and updated annually by the Regional Public Transportation Authority for MAG. The plan includes an overview of the performance and operating characteristics of the public transit services provided in Maricopa County. The plan is intended to serve as a guide for municipalities to develop and enhance transit services.

For more information, contact Scott Miller of the Regional Public Transportation Authority, 262-7242.