

## Briefing to Member Agencies from Executive Director James M. Bourey



### Executive Director's Report

The Governor's Vision 21 Transportation Task Force is considering a recommendation by one of its subcommittees to create a new layer of government with taxing authority to oversee a portion of the regional transportation system. The authority would be empowered by state law to develop, maintain and operate "roads of regional significance." The MAG Regional Council has voted to oppose this recommendation.

Although such a proposal certainly represents a potential duplication of MAG, the proposal can also be viewed as an opportunity for local governments to inform citizens and neighborhoods about MAG's roles and responsibilities – and the ultimate logic of having regional planning based on local input.

When the federal government passed legislation creating Metropolitan Planning Organizations for each urbanized area with 50,000 or more in population, it recognized that municipal government, which is closest to the people, was best suited for making regional decisions. The Feds were on the right track.

The Governor's Task Force members who support the recommendation maintain that a directly-elected district board will somehow be more accountable to the public. Aren't mayors, who make up the MAG Regional Council, directly elected? Consider this: how many people know the name of their representative on the Central Arizona Water Conservation District, which is similar in structure to the transportation body being proposed by the Task Force? Now, how many people know the name of their mayor?

We have seen times when citizens or elected officials come to the MAG table to voice an opinion regarding the neighborhood impacts of a transportation project. Certainly these impacts must be considered a necessary part of the deliberative process. But the decisions made by the Regional Council are ultimately in the regional interest. A five-member district board would be insular, not inclusive.

We need look no further than the accelerated freeway system for a perfect example of an effective transportation planning system. This acceleration would not have occurred without the cooperation of MAG, the State, the Governor's office, the legislature, and the business community. The freeway system has been on time and under budget since MAG instituted reforms in 1990.

Another key consideration is the need for transportation planning to be interlocked with land use and air quality. As the federally-recognized Metropolitan Planning Organization, MAG develops regional population projections, transportation plans and programs, and air quality plans. Our Desert Spaces Plan helps protect environmentally-sensitive lands, and MAG is implementing a region-wide review of general plans to facilitate comprehensive regional planning.

All of these efforts are linked together. Creating a separate level of government will fragment the process, foster less accountability, and make the process more difficult for citizens and businesses. We hope that Valley citizens recognize that the current system is the best system, and we look forward to an open discussion about the value of MAG for local communities and the region.



## **Regional Council Meeting Report for February 28, 2001**

### **ITS Plan Approved**

The MAG Regional Council voted to approve the Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) Strategic Plan for the region. The ITS Plan will provide a roadmap for implementation of ITS solutions in the MAG region over the next 20 years, and will help identify transportation needs that can be addressed through high technology. The Regional ITS Architecture, developed through the cooperative MAG process, has positioned the MAG region well to compete for federal discretionary funds for ITS.

**For more information contact Sarath Joshua, MAG ITS Program Manager, at (602) 254-6300.**

### **Regional Off-Street System Plan Approved**

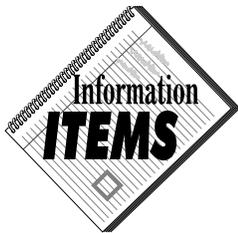
A plan that provides a way for people to travel to local destinations by walking or bicycling has been approved by the MAG Regional Council. The Council approved the Regional Off-Street System (ROSS) Plan, which includes paved pathways and unpaved trails located in areas such as canal banks, linear parkways and flood control channels throughout Maricopa County. The ultimate

goal of the ROSS plan is to improve air quality and relieve traffic congestion, while at the same time giving people a way to enjoy their neighborhoods.

The corridor map delineating the pedestrian and bike pathways was devised utilizing public input obtained during a Regional Trails Forum. The forum gave citizens interested in trails and open space an opportunity to help shape the pathway plan.

MAG staff told the Council that the plan shows that this region cares about creating a viable regional trail system, which can help the region leverage more federal funds for urban pathways.

**For more information contact Dawn Coomer, Transportation Planner, at (602) 254-6300.**



## Information Items

### **Supreme Court Approves New 8-Hour Ozone Standard**

The U.S. Supreme Court has upheld the authority of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to enforce a tougher health standard for ozone, based on a person's exposure over eight hours instead of just one hour. The high court also upheld the EPA's standard for fine particulate matter known as PM-2.5. The Supreme Court noted that the EPA does not have to consider cost effectiveness in determining its standards, which should be based solely on protecting public health.

It is unclear what the new ruling will mean for cities and the region, because the Supreme Court additionally ordered the EPA to restructure the way in which it implements and enforces the standards.

**For more information contact Lindy Bauer, MAG Environmental Manager, at (602) 254-6300.**



## Upcoming Events

### **Governor to Announce Launch of Freeway Service Patrol**

Governor Jane Hull will hold a press conference on March 13, 2001 to announce the successful launch of the Freeway Service Patrol. The press conference will be held at 11:00 a.m. in front of the old state capitol, between the House and Senate. Among the keynote speakers at the press conference will be MAG Regional Council Chair Skip Rimsza, who will talk about why MAG

committed \$750,000 in funding necessary to help launch and operate the Freeway Service Patrol program.

The Freeway Service Patrol project was launched by MAG as a component of the region's Intelligent Transportation Systems to address freeway incident management needs. The patrol consists of roving road repair service vehicles that provide on-the-spot assistance to stranded motorists. More than 400 motorists were assisted during the month of December alone. The ultimate goal of the program is to reduce exhaust emissions through improved traffic flow, and provide a valuable service to the region's residents.

**For more information contact Sarath Joshua, MAG ITS Program Manager, at (602) 254-6300.**

### **Next Regional Council Meeting**

The next Regional Council meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 28, 2001 at 5:00 p.m. at the MAG offices, 302 N. 1st Ave., Suite 200. Agenda items are expected to include a presentation on the FY 2001 MAG Mid-Phase Public Input Opportunity; a recommendation for additional MAG Federal funding for the Draft FY 2002-2006 MAG Transportation Improvement Program; recommended approval of the Draft FY 2002-2006 MAG Transportation Improvement Program and Draft MAG Long Range Transportation Plan Summary and 2001 Update for an air quality conformity analysis; an annual report for the MAG Regional Freeway Program; recommended acceptance of the FY 2001-2005 Short Range Transit Report; an update on the Regional Transportation Plan; and recommended acceptance of the report of the Animal Control Study Committee.

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