

Public Participation Plan

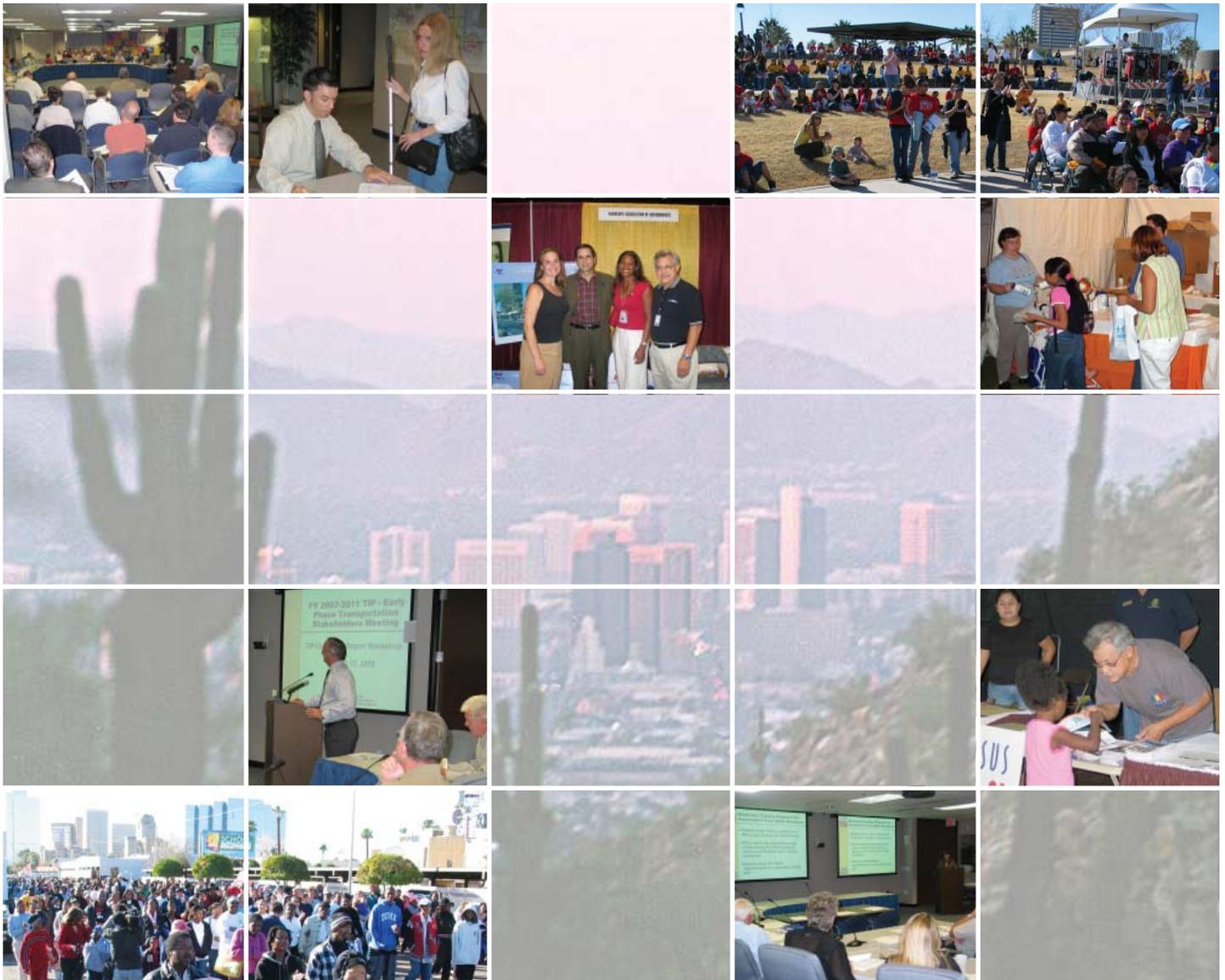




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MAG PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PLAN

INTRODUCTION

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) believes that public participation is a critical and necessary part of the transportation planning process. The involvement of the public helps MAG make better transportation decisions that meet the needs of all people, and to plan transportation facilities that fit more harmoniously into communities. In 1994, MAG adopted a public involvement plan designed to provide complete information on transportation plans, timely public notice, full public access to key decisions, and opportunities for early and continuing involvement in the process for all segments of the region's population, including Title VI and Environmental Justice communities.

This Public Participation Plan updates MAG's public involvement process in response to requirements included in the federal Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) legislation, enacted August 10, 2005. The Public Participation Plan requirements are outlined in section 450.316 Interested parties, participation, and consultation. As required under SAFETEA-LU, the purpose of this Public Participation Plan is to define a process for providing citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of public transportation employees, freight shippers, providers of freight transportation services, private providers of transportation, representatives of users of public transportation, representatives of users of pedestrian walkways and bicycle transportation facilities, representatives of the disabled, agencies or entities responsible for safety/security operations, providers of nonemergency transportation services receiving financial assistance from a source other than Title 49, United States Code (U.S.C), Chapter 53, and other interested parties with reasonable opportunities to be involved in the transportation metropolitan planning process.

BACKGROUND

Federal law requires that each state designate a Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for urbanized areas with 50,000 or more population. MAG was designated as the MPO for the Maricopa region in 1973, and undergoes federal certification as outlined in transportation regulations.

MAG is responsible for preparing both short-range and long-range transportation plans, and for seeking citizen input into these plans. For its short-range plan, MAG develops a five-year Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) that includes all transportation projects for the region. All transportation projects must be included, regardless of how they are funded. For its long-range plan, MAG is responsible for preparing a 20-year Regional Transportation Plan. Both plans are typically updated every year, and both must undergo an air quality conformity analysis to ensure that transportation activities do not contribute to violations of the federal air quality standards.





In 1994, the MAG Regional Council, which serves as the organization's governing body, adopted an aggressive public involvement program designed to provide Valley residents with as many opportunities for comment on MAG transportation plans as possible. This program was enhanced in 1998 and has been improved each year through a variety of methods, including consulting with Valley residents on the effectiveness of the process.

MAG's public involvement process currently adheres to all federal requirements related to public involvement. Through the years, MAG has coordinated public involvement processes and activities with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA/Valley Metro), Valley Metro Rail (METRO) and most recently with the City of Phoenix Public Transit Department. This coordination has helped create an efficient and effective public participation process.

With the passage of SAFETEA-LU, MAG's goal is to continue to improve its public involvement program by incorporating new federal requirements, further ensuring an open and inclusive process for all interested parties.

MAJOR MILESTONES

Following are a few of the major milestones in the MAG public involvement process.

- The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991 requires that metropolitan planning organizations adopt a formal public involvement process that is proactive, encourages broad public participation, and considers and responds to public input.
- In June 1992, the Regional Council approves a 15 minute Call to the Audience for its meetings, with audience members requested to keep their comments under three minutes each.
- The MAG Process for Public Involvement in Transportation Planning is adopted by the Regional Council in September 1994, following a 45-day comment period. The adopted process provides the guiding principles for public involvement to meet the requirements established in ISTEA and subsequently reaffirmed in the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21). The process includes four phases: Early Phase, Mid-Phase, Final Phase and Continuous Involvement. The phases allow for early and continuing input and encourage public comment during each step of the planning process. The process calls for Input Opportunity Reports to be completed during each phase detailing the comments received. The reports include staff responses to comments on the Draft Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan. The 15 minute Call to the Audience is retained for public comment at the beginning of MAG policy committee meetings.
- In February 1996, the Regional Council approves recommendations which re-engineer the MAG policy process. Public comment opportunities are increased for the Regional Council meetings. In addition to the Call to the Audience at the

beginning of the meeting, members of the audience are provided the opportunity to comment on the Approval of the Consent Agenda and to speak on each Action Item, with audience members requested to keep their comments under three minutes for each public comment opportunity.

- In July 1998, the Regional Council recommends that the process for programming federal transportation funds be enhanced. These enhancements include a more proactive community outreach process and the development of early guidelines to help select transportation projects within resource limits. This proactive community outreach process leads to an enhanced public involvement process beginning with the fiscal year 1999 Public Involvement Program. The enhanced public involvement process involves transportation stakeholders as outlined in the 1998 TEA-21 legislation and includes input from Title VI stakeholders (minority populations and low-income populations). The input received during the enhanced input opportunity is incorporated in the development of early guidelines to guide project selection for the Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and Long-Range Transportation Plan.
- In 2001, MAG hires four Community Outreach Associates to provide targeted outreach to the Hispanic, Native American, African American, and Disability communities as part of its dedicated Title VI outreach. In 2002, these part-time positions evolve into a full-time Community Outreach Specialist position within MAG to allocate more MAG resources to this effort and to allow for the translation of all major MAG materials into Spanish. The Disability Community Associate continues as a part-time position.
- Beginning in 2001 through 2004, MAG embarks on an intensive and unprecedented public involvement effort surrounding the Long-Range Transportation Plan, which is renamed the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP or Plan). Extensive research is conducted, and more than 350 public input opportunities are provided. Expert panel forums are held early in the process featuring topics in demographics and social change, environmental and resource issues, land use and urban development, and transportation and technology. Sixteen subregional focus groups are also held to receive input from transportation stakeholders across the Valley, including focus groups specific to African American and Hispanic communities. A project Web site, www.LetsKeepMoving.com, is created to provide information and receive feedback on the Plan. The site, which remains active and is continually updated, includes online surveys, maps, meeting notices, copies of studies and presentations, plan drafts and maps, funding information, feedback links, and calendar listings of public input opportunities.
- In 2005, Congress passes SAFETEA-LU, which requires a documented public participation plan that defines the process for citizen input.



MAG PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESS

The federal regulations for metropolitan planning under SAFETEA-LU are easily incorporated within MAG’s adopted public involvement structure, and specific strategies for addressing the new regulations are included in the final section of this report. As noted above, MAG’s adopted public involvement process is divided into four phases: Early Phase, Mid-Phase, Final Phase and Continuous Involvement. MAG staff receives comments in a variety of ways, including but not limited to, small group presentations, special events such as large community festivals, public meetings/hearings, telephone and electronic correspondence, and correspondence through the MAG Web site.

The following table details the phases of the public involvement process and the opportunities for input which exist in each phase:

Phase	Public Input Opportunities
Early Phase	A public process for early input into the transportation programming process is held. At this stage, which generally occurs from late summer through early fall, public input is reviewed and considered by MAG policy committees with specific reference to upcoming issues and work topics. Events during this phase include an Early Phase Stakeholders meeting and comment at MAG meetings. Additional efforts may include open houses, booths at special events, and small group presentations. Comments received are summarized and provided to MAG policy committees for review and consideration in the form of an Early Phase Input Opportunity Report. All meetings are widely advertised with appropriate advanced notice. Because projects are not yet programmed, in many ways, the Early Phase represents the best opportunity for members of the public to suggest projects for inclusion in the TIP or Plan.
Mid-Phase	A variety of public outreach methods are used during this phase, which generally occurs from late winter to early spring, to gather input on the initial plan analysis for the Draft TIP and Draft RTP update. The phase culminates with a joint transportation public hearing co-hosted by MAG, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA). Comments are summarized, receive a written response and are provided to MAG policy committees for review and consideration – in the form of the Mid-Phase Input Opportunity Report—prior to taking action. All meetings are widely advertised, including major daily and minority newspapers, with appropriate advanced notice.
Final Phase	Several forums are used to obtain input during this phase, which generally occurs from early summer to late summer. The phase culminates with a transportation public hearing on the final Draft RTP update and TIP update. The hearing is advertised with a formal public notice and draft reports are also available for 30 days for public review. All comments receive a written response and are provided to MAG policy committees for review and consideration—in the form of a Final Phase Input Opportunity Report—prior to the committee taking action. All meetings are widely advertised, including major daily and minority newspapers, with appropriate advanced notice.
Continuous Involvement	MAG continuously seeks public input and comment beyond the three structured phases above. Outreach is conducted throughout the annual update process and includes activities such as providing presentations to community and civic groups, participating in special events, hosting booths at shopping malls, distributing press releases and newsletters, and coordinating with partnering agencies. MAG provides speakers upon request to make presentations to community and civic groups, within the limits of available resources.



FEDERAL LAW

The role of public involvement in transportation planning and programming was increased with the passage of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act (ISTEA) of 1991. The Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21), passed in 1998, continued to emphasize public involvement in the metropolitan transportation planning process. TEA-21 required that the metropolitan planning organization (MPO) work cooperatively with the state department of transportation and the regional transit operator to provide citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, freight shippers, private providers of transportation and representatives of users of public transit a reasonable opportunity to comment on proposed transportation plans and programs.

The intent of the public involvement provisions in SAFETEA-LU, passed in August 2005, is to continue the legacy of TEA-21 when it comes to increasing public awareness and participation in transportation planning and programming, while developing a documented public participation plan that defines the process for citizen input. On June 9, 2006, the U.S. Department of Transportation proposed rules that incorporate the provisions of SAFETEA-LU.

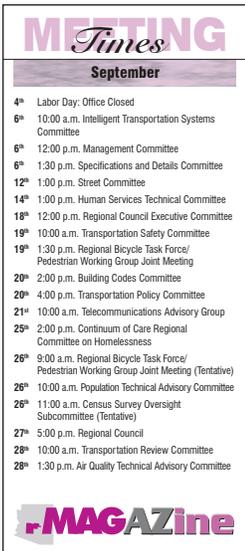
The proposed rules under Section 450.316 require that metropolitan planning organizations develop a public participation plan in consultation with all interested parties and “shall, at a minimum, describe explicit procedures, strategies and desired outcomes for” ten specific provisions. These ten provisions are outlined below, along with MAG’s strategies for meeting these requirements.

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS AND MAG PUBLIC PARTICIPATION STRATEGIES

1. **Providing adequate public notice of public participation activities and time for public review and comment at key decision points, including but not limited to reasonable opportunity to comment on the proposed metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.**



MAG provides timely public notice of public participation activities. All public hearings are announced with a formal public notice, usually 30 days in advance of the hearing, as well as through a display advertisement in the largest circulation newspaper and in minority oriented newspapers two weeks prior to the public hearing. MAG maintains a public involvement mailing list that includes interested citizens, affected public agencies, representatives of transportation agency employees, private providers of transportation, advocates for low-income interests and minority interests, and representatives of community groups with an interest in transportation. This mailing list is used to announce meetings, distribute newsletters, and for other opportunities for public involvement. Interested individuals are added to the mailing list upon request.



In addition, all MAG public meetings and public input opportunities are posted on the MAG Web site at www.mag.maricopa.gov. A calendar listing major MAG meetings is included on the final page of every issue of MAGAZine, MAG’s quarterly newsletter. MAG public meetings are also posted 24 hours in advance as required under the Open Meeting Law (*see Appendix A*).

MAG also works closely with the news media to help distribute information about MAG activities. Press releases are prepared and distributed to local media in conjunction with periodic news events and public involvement opportunities. Copies of MAG agendas and other materials are sent to major news publications and to any reporters who request to be included on MAG’s mailing lists.

Public comment is allowed at all MAG public meetings (*see MAG Public Comment Process, Appendix B*). MAG’s four-phase public input process specifically provides opportunities for interested parties to comment at key decision points (and throughout) the development of the TIP and Regional Transportation Plan. For example, the Early Phase Stakeholders Meeting provides an opportunity for the public to comment during the initial programming process. The Mid-Phase Public Hearing provides the opportunity for comment prior to Regional Council action to approve the Draft TIP and Plan to undergo an air quality conformity analysis, and the Final Phase public hearing provides an opportunity for comment prior to approval of the conformity analysis, final TIP, and final Plan.

MAG also provides ongoing opportunities for input during its Continuous Involvement activities, such as frequent participation in special events, including hosting booths at large community festivals, and through numerous small group presentations as requested (*see #5 for additional information*).

Where appropriate, information is provided in a bilingual format or other alternative formats such as large print and Braille.

2. Providing timely notice and reasonable access to information about transportation issues and processes.

As outlined above, timely notice of MAG activities is provided through a variety of methods, including formal postings, newspaper ads, direct mail, Web site postings, calendar listings, press releases, and other publications and materials. Similarly, MAG provides information about transportation issues and processes through a number of public involvement and communication strategies.

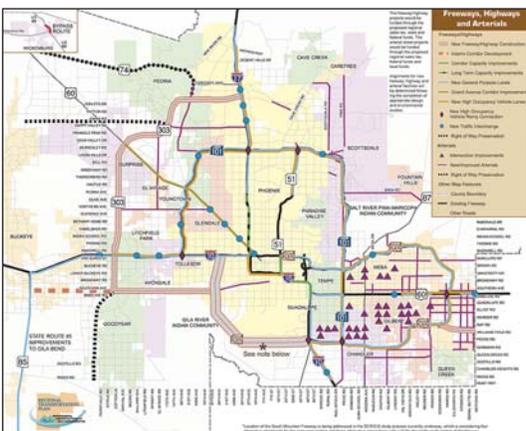
Prior to the final completion of plans or programs, draft documents are made available to the public for review and comment, so that public concerns can be considered and reflected in the final documents. When draft studies, plans, programs and reports are completed they are available for public review and public comments are presented to the Management Committee, Transportation Policy Committee and Regional Council

for review prior to action. Documents are available for review in the MAG library at the MAG Offices, 302 N. 1st Avenue, Suite #300, Phoenix. The TIP, Plan, Conformity Analysis and Input Opportunity Reports are distributed to libraries throughout the region as well as to partnering agencies such as the Federal Highway Administration, Federal Transit Administration, Arizona Department of Environmental Quality, Environmental Protection Agency, Arizona Department of Transportation, Regional Public Transportation Authority, Maricopa County, Pinal County, and the Central Arizona Association of Governments.

MAG also provides information about transportation issues and processes through a variety of publications, including a quarterly newsletter called MAGAZine, a monthly Regional Council Activity Report, a monthly e-newsletter outlining the activities of the Transportation Policy Committee, and project-specific publications such as fliers, brochures, and notices. These publications report information of general interest on events and programs at MAG, as well as on specific items such as the TIP or Regional Transportation Plan.

As noted above, all major documents, including news releases, notices of meetings and events, news stories, agendas, minutes, plans and studies are posted online at www.mag.maricopa.gov. An interactive calendar listing MAG meetings and events is available on the home page. Historical reference files of all documents are maintained and these reports are also available for public review.

MAG also responds to public inquiries through e-mail, written correspondence, telephone calls, one-on-one meetings, and Web site feedback. Every attempt is made to respond in a timely manner. A public records request form is available for those requesting MAG documents or public records.



3. Employing visualization techniques to describe metropolitan transportation plans and TIPs.

With the help of its graphics, Web, and Information Services staff, MAG utilizes many innovative techniques to help residents better understand what transportation investments are included in its transportation plans and TIPs, and to help them visually conceive what the plans will look like when completed. Examples include project-specific maps and graphs, digital photography, high resolution graphic displays, Geographical Information Systems, map overlays, PowerPoint presentations, aerial photography, photo simulations, technical drawings, charts and graphs. Alternative scenarios, including visual depictions of scenarios, are presented to demonstrate differences among solutions or approaches.

4. Making public information (technical information and meeting notices) available in electronically accessible formats and means, such as the World Wide Web.



MAG maintains a Web site www.mag.maricopa.gov that provides easy access to information about MAG meetings, agendas, news releases, and electronic publications through timely posting of these materials. The site includes a calendar of events, monthly meeting schedules, committee activities and actions, requests for proposal and employment notices, and electronic versions of nearly 3,000 MAG documents, including plans, reports, agendas, and minutes. The site includes a search function that allows users to link to specific documents or other information using key words. The site includes a Spanish language Web page and has feedback links as well as staff contact information. In addition to the MAG Web site, MAG maintains www.LetsKeepMoving.com, which is a

project-specific site designed to provide detailed information about the Regional Transportation Plan.

Along with the extensive availability of documents, technical information, meeting notices and other information on the Web site as described above, MAG often e-mails electronic documents to individuals or agencies upon request.

5. Holding any public meetings at convenient and accessible locations and times.

Understanding that different individuals have different perceptions of “convenient,” MAG strives to hold its public involvement activities at various times to accommodate as many citizens as possible, including during business hours, after work hours, evenings, and weekends. All public events are scheduled in venues that are transit accessible and comply with the provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act. In addition, Spanish language materials, sign language interpretation, and alternative materials such as large print and Braille, and FM/Infrared Listening Devices, are available on request.

MAG understands that often it is difficult for members of the public to attend formal public meetings. Therefore, MAG makes every attempt to be highly visible and accessible to the broader community by providing information and receiving feedback at well-attended special events. These opportunities include such events as freeway openings, community festivals, trade fairs, minority-oriented events, and booths at heavily populated venues such as shopping malls and the state fair. When possible, MAG coordinates outreach activities with the Arizona Department of Transportation, the Regional Public Transportation Authority (Valley Metro), and Valley Metro Rail, Inc. (METRO), to allow members of the public access to a wide range of information across all transportation modes. In addition to special events, MAG often makes presentations to smaller groups, such as Kiwanis and Rotary clubs, college classes, chambers of commerce, professional associations, businesses, and nonprofit groups.



6. Demonstrating explicit consideration and response to public input received during the development of the metropolitan transportation plan and the TIP.

MAG demonstrates explicit consideration and response to public input received in a variety of ways. Of primary significance is the publication of Input Opportunity Reports during each of the three key public involvement phases (Early Phase, Mid-Phase, and Final Phase). Each report includes a summary of the activities conducted during the phase and a detailed summary of comments received during the phase. The reports also include a list of input opportunities conducted, locations of activities, a description of the MAG public outreach process, copies of publicity materials such as display ads and public notices, and correspondence received since the end of the previous phase. The Mid-Phase and Final Phase public hearings are conducted with a court reporter in attendance. A verbatim transcript of each hearing is included in the Mid-Phase and Final Phase Input Opportunity reports, which also include staff responses to all comments received during the phase. Copies of the reports are distributed to MAG policy committees (including Management Committee, Transportation Policy Committee, and Regional Council) in advance of any plan approvals. In addition, an oral presentation is provided at these meetings summarizing the comments received prior to committee action.

Another way in which MAG demonstrates explicit consideration of public input can be seen in the addition of specific projects that are included in MAG plans as a result of public input.

7. Seeking out and considering the needs of those traditionally underserved by existing transportation systems, such as low-income and minority households, who may face challenges accessing employment and other services.

MAG addresses and considers the needs of underserved populations throughout its planning and programming process, and provides outreach in a variety of ways, including the Title VI Community Outreach Program, GIS mapping, the Human Services division of MAG, and through programs run by the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) using MAG funds. Through the Community Outreach Program, MAG's Community Outreach Specialist coordinates with minority communities to solicit input and to serve as a liaison between MAG and the communities. In addition to minority communities, MAG targets and solicits input from persons with disabilities. Through RPTA's Complementary Paratransit Plan, the needs of the elderly and people with disabilities are served. In addition, a MAG committee reviews and prioritizes applications for federal assistance under the Elderly Persons with Disabilities Transportation Fund, which provides capital investments to programs serving the elderly and people with disabilities. MAG transportation plans and programs are also submitted to the Human Services Coordinating Committee for review. Additionally, MAG provides multimodal transportation information for review and comment to the Human Services planning process. The needs of elderly persons are further being addressed through the MAG Elderly Mobility Initiative. The Initiative identifies and addresses the changing mobility options that are needed as people age.





8. Providing an additional opportunity for public comment, if the final metropolitan plan or TIP differs significantly from the version that was initially made available for public comment.

If the final metropolitan plan or TIP differs significantly from the version initially made available for comment, MAG provides additional opportunities for public comment. MAG prepares a revised draft plan and takes it back through the public involvement and committee approval process.

9. Coordinating with statewide transportation planning public involvement and consultation processes (as outlined under subpart B of Section 450.316).

As part of the public involvement process, MAG conducts agency consultation directly with local, state and federal resource agencies. MAG also consults, as appropriate, with agencies and officials responsible for other planning activities within the metropolitan planning area that are affected by transportation. To coordinate the planning functions to the maximum extent practicable, such consultation includes the comparison of the MAG Regional Transportation Plan and TIP, as they are developed, with the plans, maps, inventories, and planning documents developed by other agencies. This consultation includes, as appropriate, consultations with state, local, Indian tribal, and private agencies responsible for planned growth, economic development, environmental protection, airport operations, freight movements, land use management, natural resources, conservation and historic preservation. MAG also seeks input and comment from neighboring counties or contiguous planning areas as appropriate.

Additionally, MAG reaches out to federal, state, tribal, regional, local, and private agencies to consult on environmental and resource issues and concerns. Specific topics of interest include: land use management, wildlife, natural resources, environmental protection, conservation, historic preservation, and potential environmental mitigation activities. An important consideration in the consultation process is the recognition that previously adopted projects in the Plan undergo extensive environmental and resource assessment by the implementing agencies, such as the Arizona Department of Transportation, the Regional Public Transportation Authority, cities, towns and Maricopa County. With these processes already well established, including requirements for input on mitigation and resource issues, the primary goal of the consultation effort is to gain insight regarding concerns that may involve future transportation planning efforts.

To facilitate the agency consultation process and acquisition of resource information, MAG conducts an agency consultation workshop. The purpose of the workshop is to explain the goals of the consultation process, receive input from environmental and resource agencies in attendance, and establish continuing consultation in the regional transportation planning process. In addition, the workshop establishes a beginning point for more in-depth discussions with individual agencies, as may be appropriate. Input is sought on the availability of environmental, cultural and natural resource mapping or

other information sources, as well as comments on potential environmental mitigation measures, resource issues, and land use concerns. Agencies are also invited to provide written input.

10. Periodically reviewing the effectiveness of the procedures and strategies contained in the participation plan to ensure a full and open participation process.

MAG continually reviews its public participation efforts as part of its communication planning efforts and makes adjustments as warranted. More formal reviews are conducted during the federal certification process every four years, and as directed by transportation legislation such as ISTEA, TEA-21, and SAFETEA-LU. Additionally, MAG ensures that a minimum public comment period of 45 calendar days is provided before any initial or revised participation plan is adopted, in accordance with federal requirements.

APPENDIX A

OPEN MEETINGS

MAG conducts meetings in accordance with the state Open Meeting Law. Meetings of technical committees, working groups, the Management Committee, Transportation Policy Committee, and Regional Council are open to the public. Notices for these meetings are posted at least 24 hours in advance.

The Open Meeting Law is contained in the Arizona Revised Statutes, A.R.S § 38-431.01. The Open Meeting Law also establishes requirements for the taking of minutes. Minutes of MAG meetings are available by request, and are available on the MAG Web site, www.mag.maricopa.gov.



While MAG makes every attempt to allow for public comment, on rare instances, public comment may be limited based on time availability, based on the discretion of the meeting chair.

In addition to the Open Meeting Law, MAG also adheres to the Arizona Public Records Law, A.R.S. § 39-121. Public records may be obtained through submission of a Public Records Request form, which can be obtained through the MAG office, requested electronically, or downloaded from the MAG Web site.

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC COMMENT AT MAG MEETINGS

MAG allows public comment at all of its public meetings. Below is an outline of the rules and procedures relating to the public comment process for MAG meetings.

1. **Submittal of Request to Speak Cards:** There are two colored cards provided for citizens wishing to speak at MAG committee meetings. Blue cards indicate a “Request to Speak on a Non-Agenda Item” and yellow cards indicate a “Request to Speak on a Specific Agenda Item Designated for Action.” The cards contain information about the rules for speaking, as well as spaces for citizens to provide information, including name, address, city, zip code, phone, agenda item number, and date. Yellow cards additionally include boxes at the top of the card that the speaker can check indicating the following: Support; Statement Only; Oppose; Neither.

Rules outlined on both the yellow and blue cards include:

- Please speak from the podium (accommodation will be made for persons with disabilities).
- Please present your comments in three minutes or less.
- Your comments must pertain solely to the agenda item and shall not include any personal attacks on other citizens or persons present at the meeting.
- Please conduct yourself in a professional and appropriate manner.

Citizens are asked to submit the cards to a designated MAG staff member, who will deliver them to the meeting chair.

The yellow cards contain these further statements: The purpose of this opportunity for public comment is to allow citizens to provide additional information on items slated for action. The Committee may ask questions for clarification; however, this comment period is not designed for debate with the audience. The public is encouraged to provide comment to MAG during the committee process, prior to the Regional Council action. The Regional Council will receive information on comments provided to technical and policy committees. Written comments will always be accepted by the Chair.

2. **Time Allotted for Public Comment:** Three opportunities are provided for public comment at MAG meetings, including Call to the Audience, Consent Agenda, and Action Items to be Heard.
 - **Call to the Audience.** Citizens have three minutes to speak on any item of their choosing. Topics may include non-agenda items, or items that are on the agenda but which are not slated for action. This comment period takes place at the beginning of the meeting.

- **Consent Agenda.** Citizens have a total of three minutes to speak on any or all consent agenda items (cumulatively). Citizens may determine whether an item is a consent item by looking on the meeting agenda. Consent items will be marked in the first column by an asterisk (*). This comment period usually comes near the beginning of the meeting, after the Executive Director’s Report and prior to approval of the consent agenda by the Council.
 - **Action Items.** Citizens are given three minutes to speak on any action item (three minutes per item). Citizens may determine whether an item is an action item by looking on the meeting agenda, under the second column, “Committee Action Requested.” Action items will state “for action” or “for possible action.” This comment period usually is provided just prior to a vote on each action item by the Regional Council.
3. **Speaking Rules and Chairman’s Discretion:** The Chairman or his/her designee has the power to strictly enforce the above rules and to revoke speaking rights if rules are violated. The Chair or his/her designee has the power to accept additional comments and extend the time of the speaker, or limit public comment based on time availability.

The cards include this statement:

Note: The Chairman or his/her designee shall have the power to strictly enforce these rules and to revoke your speaking rights if you violate any of these rules. The Chairman may also revoke your rights to speak at the rest of today’s meeting and/or at future meetings if you twice refuse to be silent after being directed to do so. (If you lose your right to speak, you may still present written comments.)

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