

MAG Public Participation Guide:

**A Roadmap for Providing Input on
Regional Transportation Decisions**



**MARICOPA
ASSOCIATION of
GOVERNMENTS**

www.azmag.gov

(602) 254-6300

Let's Get Our Bearings

Before we take our guided trip through the public participation process for the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), it may be helpful to take a minute to familiarize ourselves with MAG's roles and responsibilities in our region.



MAG provides regional planning and policy decisions in the areas of transportation, air quality, water quality, and human services. A main responsibility is preparing transportation plans, serving as the funding authority for these plans, and seeking public input into these plans. MAG also develops population estimates and projections for the region, which are used in planning decisions.

MAG is designated by the federal government as the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) for transportation planning in the Maricopa County area. Under federal requirements, each urban area of more than 50,000 people must have an MPO that is responsible for regional transportation planning. Any regionally significant transportation project, regardless of funding source, must be included in MAG's transportation plans. In addition to serving as the MPO, MAG is also a Council of Governments that brings together local governments across the region to address issues and needs that cross city, town, and county boundaries.



The MAG Office is located on the corner of 1st Avenue and Van Buren Street in downtown Phoenix.

Who's On Board?

MAG members include 25 incorporated cities and towns, Maricopa County, and three Native American Indian Communities in the region. Representatives of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and the Citizens Transportation Oversight Committee (CTOC) also serve on the agency's governing board (Regional Council) for transportation-related issues.



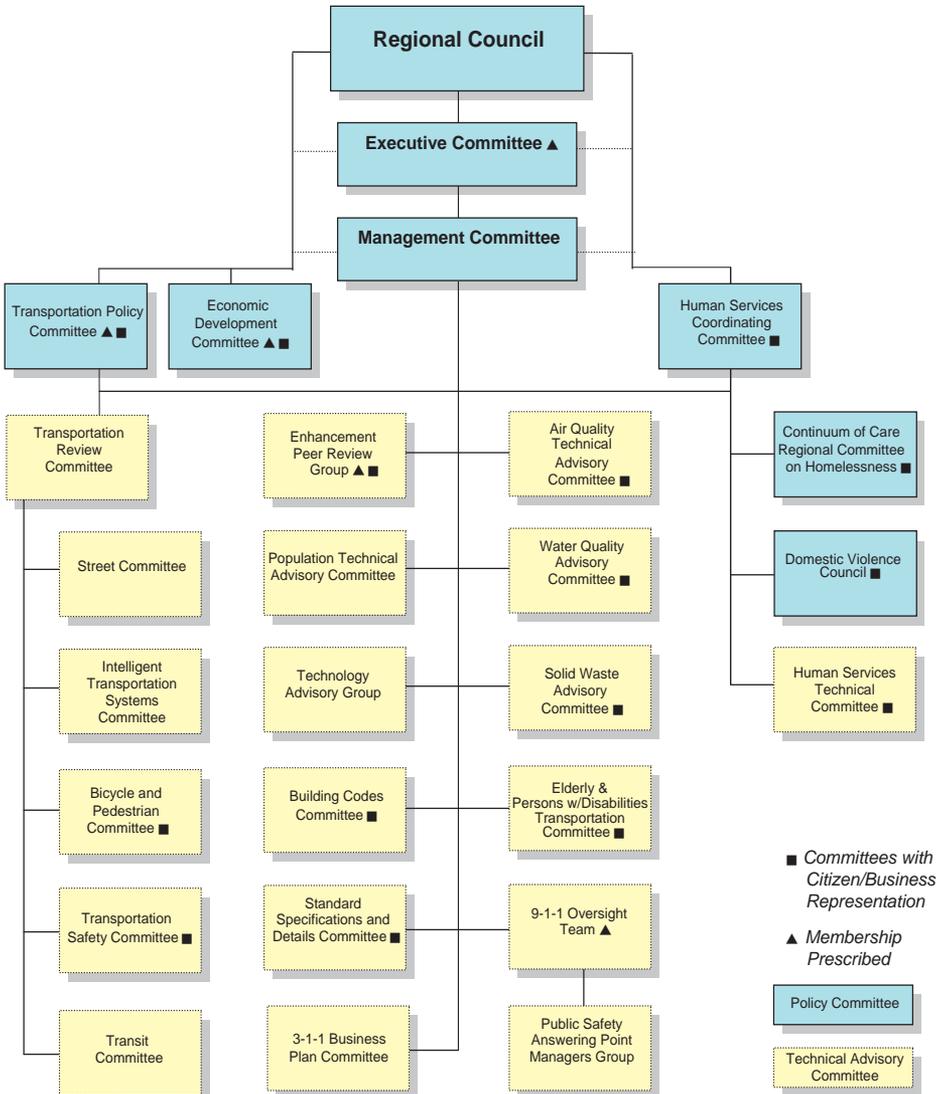
The Regional Council is the governing and policy-making body for MAG and is composed of elected officials appointed by each member agency. For municipalities, the city or town mayor typically serves as the Regional Council member, while the chair of the Board of Supervisors usually represents Maricopa County. Each of the three Native American Indian Communities also designates a representative. Both members of the State Transportation Board who represent the MAG region are also members of the Regional Council, as is the chair of the Citizens Transportation Oversight Committee, who is appointed by the Governor. For a complete list of Regional Council representatives, please visit MAG's website at www.azmag.gov, or call (602) 254-6300.



Who to Contact:

Maricopa Association of Governments	(602) 254-6300	http://www.azmag.gov
Member Agency:	Phone Number:	Member Agency Web Address:
City of Apache Junction	(480) 474-5066	http://www.ajcity.net/
City of Avondale	(623) 333-1000	http://www.avondale.org/
Town of Buckeye	(623) 349-6000	http://www.buckeyeaz.gov/
Town of Carefree	(480) 488-3686	http://www.carefree.org/
Town of Cave Creek	(480) 488-1400	http://www.cavecreek.org/
City of Chandler	(480) 782-2000	http://www.chandleraz.gov/
City of El Mirage	(623) 972-8116	http://www.cityofelmirage.org/
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation	(480) 789-7000	http://www.ftmcdowell.org/
Town of Fountain Hills	(480) 816-5100	http://www.fh.az.gov/
Town of Gila Bend	(928) 683-2255	http://www.gilabendaz.org/
Gila River Indian Community	(520) 562-9500	http://www.gilariver.org/
Town of Gilbert	(480) 503-6871	http://www.gilbertaz.gov/
City of Glendale	(623) 930-2000	http://www.glendaleaz.com/
City of Goodyear	(623) 932-3910	http://www.goodyearaz.gov/
Town of Guadalupe	(480)730-3080	http://www.guadalupeaz.org/
City of Litchfield Park	(623) 935-5033	http://www.litchfield-park.org/
Maricopa County	(602) 506-3011	http://www.maricopa.gov/
City of Mesa	(480) 644-2011	http://www.mesaaz.gov/Home/
City of Peoria	(623) 773-7000	http://www.peoriaaz.gov/
City of Phoenix	(602) 262-6011	http://phoenix.gov/
Town of Queen Creek	(480) 358-3000	http://www.queencreek.org/
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community	(480) 362-7740	http://www.srpmic-nsn.gov/
City of Scottsdale	(480) 312-3111	http://www.scottsdaleaz.gov/
City of Surprise	(623) 222-1000	http://www.surpriseaz.gov/
City of Tempe	(480) 350-4311	http://www.tempe.gov/
City of Tolleson	(623) 936-7111	http://www.tollesonaz.org/
Town of Wickenburg	(928) 684-5451	http://www.ci.wickenburg.az.us/
Town of Youngtown	(623) 933-8286	http://youngtownaz.org/
ADOT: State Transportation Board	(602) 712-7550	http://www.azdot.gov/Board/index.asp
Citizens Transportation Oversight Committee	(602) 712-7519	http://www.azdot.gov/adot_and/ctoc/index.asp
Other Partners:		
Valley Metro/ METRO Light Rail	(602) 253-5000	http://www.valleymetro.org/
City of Phoenix: Public Transit Department	(602) 262-7242	http://phoenix.gov/publictransit/

MAG has a number of policy and technical committees that provide input and recommendations to the Regional Council, which is the governing body of MAG. Policy committees are established by the Regional Council and generally consist of elected officials, agency staff, industry/business representatives, and citizen representatives. Technical committees are typically formed by the Management Committee and include technical experts from city, town and county staffs, as well as local, state and federal agencies, and in some cases, the private sector. Here's a look at MAG's committee structure:



Destination

So, what is the goal of our trip? It is to help residents understand MAG's transportation role in the region and how you can be a partner in the process. There are three major documents that guide transportation planning. MAG develops the *Regional Transportation Plan* (Plan) and the *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) for the region. Both of these plans must meet air quality requirements reported in the *Air Quality Conformity Analysis*.

- **Regional Transportation Plan (20-Year Plan)**

The *Regional Transportation Plan* (Plan) is a long-range plan with at least a 20-year time frame. It provides a broad vision for the regional transportation system for the next two decades, addressing freeways and other highways; streets; transit; bicycle and pedestrian facilities; freight; travel demand management; system management, including intelligent transportation systems (ITS); and safety. While federal law requires updates to the Plan at least every four years, MAG typically updates the Plan every other year. Amendments and modifications are made by the Regional Council as necessary at any time to reflect changes to projects, schedules, or costs that occur between updates.

- **Transportation Improvement Program (Five-Year Plan)**

The *Transportation Improvement Program* (TIP) is a short-range plan. It includes a schedule of specific projects being implemented in the next five years within the region, including projects undergoing design, right-of-way acquisition, construction, or capital acquisitions (such as the purchase of buses for transit). The TIP is also typically updated every other year, although amendments and modifications are made by the Regional Council as necessary.

- **Air Quality Conformity Analysis**

Both the TIP and Plan must undergo a thorough analysis using computer simulations to ensure that transportation activities, including construction of new freeways or other major projects, do not contribute to violations of federal air quality standards. The analysis must demonstrate that the plans meet, or conform to, the standards—a process known as a “conformity finding.” The conformity finding must be approved before the TIP or Plan can take effect.

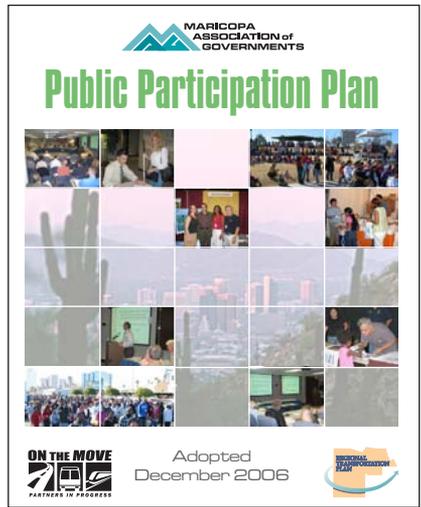
Getting Underway

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 develop transportation facilities and services that fit harmoniously into communities.

MAG has adopted a *Public Participation Plan* designed to ensure complete public 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 those protected under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act and Environmental Justice legislation.* MAG also considers the needs of seniors and people with disabilities as part of this process. For example, all MAG meetings are accessible for people with disabilities and accommodations can be made at MAG public meetings for sign language interpreters; materials in large print format, Braille, or Spanish; and other accommodations on request.

MAG's public involvement process adheres to all federal requirements. Through the years, MAG has coordinated its public involvement processes and activities with planning partners such as the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), the Regional Public Transportation Authority (Valley Metro), Metro Rail (METRO) and the City of Phoenix Public Transit Department. This coordination helps create an efficient and effective public participation process.

**For more on the protections offered to Title VI communities, such as minority populations or people with low incomes, please see the MAG website at www.azmag.gov.*



Let's hit the road.

On the Road

All MAG policy and technical committee meetings provide opportunities for public comment. The dates and times of these public meetings are posted on the MAG website at www.azmag.gov. A calendar listing of major MAG meetings is included on the back page of every issue of MAG's quarterly newsletter, *MAGAZine*. MAG public meetings are also posted at the MAG offices 24 hours in advance as required under the Open Meeting Law. Members of the public are always welcome to call the MAG offices, (602) 254-6300, to check for dates and meeting times.

Public comment is encouraged at all MAG public meetings. MAG's public input process specifically provides opportunities for interested parties to comment at key decision points throughout the development of the TIP and *Regional Transportation Plan*. MAG also conducts formal public hearings as required by federal law. All public hearings are announced at least two weeks prior to the public hearing with a formal public notice as well as through display advertisements in the largest circulation newspaper (currently *The Arizona Republic*) and minority-oriented newspapers.

MAG maintains a public involvement mailing list that includes residents, public agencies, representatives of transportation agencies, private providers of transportation, advocates for low-income 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. Anyone can request to be added to the public involvement mailing list by contacting the MAG office. Other outreach efforts include the Transportation Ambassador Program, which provides transportation information and collects feedback from the public regarding transportation issues.

Residents with access to the Internet can also sign up for automatic updates for agenda postings and other communications by clicking on the envelope icon  on any web page of interest.

Transportation planning at MAG focuses on four primary modes of transportation: freeways, streets, transit and nonmotorized modes such as bicycles and pedestrians.

- **Freeways**

Freeway planning involves coordinated efforts between MAG and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT). The two agencies work together to plan, study, and allocate necessary funding to proposed projects. In general, it can be viewed this way: MAG helps plan, prioritize and fund transportation projects. ADOT helps plan, design, build, and maintain projects.



- **Streets**

Street projects usually involve decisions made by the local jurisdiction where you live, such as your city, town, Native American Indian Community, or Maricopa County (if you live in an unincorporated area). However, MAG provides federal funding and design assistance for many street projects, and all regionally significant projects, regardless of funding source, must be included in the MAG TIP and Plan. Local governments work with MAG to determine regional significance and available funding to move a project idea forward.



- **Transit**

Transit planning involves a layered system of public transit alternatives made up of local bus routes, light rail, bus express/rapid routes, dial-a-ride (paratransit), and other options that are determined by both regional and local decisions. The agencies most often involved are MAG, Valley Metro, METRO, and local governments.



City of Phoenix
PUBLIC TRANSIT DEPARTMENT

- **Nonmotorized modes of transportation (bicycle and pedestrian)**

MAG provides federal funding to develop shared-use paths, bike lanes, sidewalks, and programs such as bike education and safe routes to school, to ensure that all modes of transportation are accommodated in the region.



In the Driver's Seat

Now that we're here, how can you help drive the transportation decision-making process? There are a number of ways to get involved, depending on whether you have a specific transportation idea or project that you want in your neighborhood, or if you have a more general interest in transportation issues and want to provide input on overall strategies and vision. Let's take a look at how to travel these two paths.

Path One:

What if I have an idea for a transportation project?

Specific projects, even if they are regionally significant, typically require a "sponsor," meaning the project is first considered by the local government, such as the city or town in which you live, to determine its feasibility and benefit. That "sponsor" then brings the idea forward to MAG, usually beginning with the appropriate technical committee. Therefore, we recommend that one of your first destinations be your local city council or transportation department.

Because MAG's technical advisory committees likely include a representative from your jurisdiction, you can also share your idea by presenting it during public involvement opportunities before the appropriate committee. (*See the committee chart.*) Key technical advisory committees include:

- Street Committee
- Transit Committee
- Bicycle and Pedestrian Committee
- Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) Committee
- Transportation Safety Committee
- Transportation Review Committee
- Ad Hoc Elderly and Persons with Disabilities Transportation Committee

Once you have shared your idea/
project with the MAG committee:



- Promoting your idea may mean attending a variety of meetings, both formal and informal, such as advisory committees, meetings with agency planners and engineers, and city council meetings.
- If the idea is supported and if a member agency sponsor is identified, MAG staff will work with the relevant city/town, Native American Indian Community, or Maricopa County on the idea or project.
- MAG staff and the local agency will work on project details, including recommended funding, scope, and schedule.
 - If the project is funded with local funds, it will most likely be included in the local capital improvement program of the sponsoring jurisdiction.
 - If it is a regionally significant project, it will be forwarded to MAG for inclusion in the *Transportation Improvement Program*. Working with the project sponsor, MAG will determine whether the project may be funded with regional or federal funds. MAG has a number of programs that identify projects for regional or federal funding, typically involving an application process and evaluation based on project selection criteria. There are defined processes to apply for regional and federal funds that local agencies know firsthand.
- If the sponsoring agency and the technical committee support the project and funding is identified, the project will be recommended to the MAG policy advisory committees. The MAG Regional Council has the final say.
- If the Regional Council supports the project and it passes air quality conformity requirements, it will be included in the *Regional Transportation Plan* and *Transportation Improvement Program*, as appropriate.

Path Two:

What if I want to provide input on broader issues, such as the overall strategic vision, or where I think the priorities should be for transportation funding?



Residents are welcome to provide ideas and input at any meeting throughout the year. However, when MAG updates the *Regional Transportation Plan*, a specific process is followed that includes many opportunities for the public to influence the planning process. MAG publicizes these opportunities extensively in advance, and the public is encouraged to provide input and comment during the update process. During this process, specific projects and services can be considered. One caveat is that during the development of the *Regional Transportation Plan*, which received extensive public input, specific projects were identified and funding was assigned to those projects. This Plan became the basis for Proposition 400, which extended the half-cent sales tax for transportation for 20 years and was overwhelmingly passed by voters in 2004. That means that much of the available transportation funding is already spoken for, and not all ideas beyond those already included in the Plan will be able to be funded.

There are four main “stops” on the public involvement path: the early phase, mid-phase, final phase, and continuous involvement.



Early Phase

This may be the most important stop when it comes to getting new ideas into the program. During this phase, which generally occurs from late summer through early fall during the biennial (every other year) update process, residents are encouraged to provide input with specific reference to upcoming issues and work topics. Events during this phase vary and may include meetings, open houses, booths at special events, small group presentations, and regular comment opportunities at MAG meetings. Comments received are summarized and presented to MAG policy committees for review and consideration in the form of an *Early Phase Input Opportunity Report*. 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

Various public outreach methods are used during this phase, which generally occurs from late winter to early spring during the biennial (every other year) update process, to gather input on the initial drafts for the updated TIP and Plan. The phase culminates with a transportation public hearing hosted by MAG, that may include representatives from ADOT, CTOC, METRO and Valley Metro. Comments received during the phase are summarized, and a written response to all comments is provided to MAG policy committees for review and consideration in the form of the *Mid-Phase Input Opportunity Report*—prior to the committees taking action on the TIP or Plan. 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 during the biennial (every other year) update process. The phase culminates with a transportation public hearing on the final drafts of the updates to the TIP and Plan. 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. By this phase, the documents have been well finalized and changes are not easily made without significant justification.

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. Requests for presentations can be made via the MAG website, e-mail, or by calling the MAG offices at (602) 254-6300.



Journey's End and the Road Ahead

As we conclude our trip through the MAG public participation process, it is important to note that everyone has a key role to play in the development of the transportation facilities and services that we all use and enjoy. Your participation will help make these plans more effective. Because you are on board and care about the final destination, our region will be stronger.



For more information contact:



302 N. 1st Avenue, Suite 300, Phoenix, AZ 85003
Phone: (602) 254-6300 www.azmag.gov