

# MAG Celebrates Golden Anniversary

## Decade Four: 1997-2007

*April 12, 2017, marked 50 years that the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) has been serving the region. This is the fourth part of a five-part series that covers the five decades of MAG and the major milestones that represent how MAG has made a difference to the residents of our region.*



equitable share of state and federal gas taxes. As a result, MAG and ADOT were able to accelerate completion of the freeways by another seven years.

### A New Director

In 2002, the Regional Council launched a nationwide search for a new executive director. Former Queen Creek Mayor Wendy Feldman-Kerr, who served as MAG chair from 2002-2004, says that the best candidate was found within MAG's own ranks. Dennis Smith, who had been a critical part of MAG since 1976 and had served as both an assistant director and interim director, was officially promoted to the position.



MAG Executive Director Dennis Smith

### Freeway Acceleration and "Fair Share"

Following the identification of \$500 million that put previously cut freeways back on the map, the focus turned to the reauthorization of the federal transportation funding. MAG expected a significant increase, but a surprise was in store. Soon after the transportation legislation was passed, MAG learned that only about 10 percent of the Arizona Department of Transportation's (ADOT's) discretionary (flexible) funding would be coming to the region. This created a major controversy over how funding was allocated. MAG, together with the Pima Association of Governments, conducted an analysis of the funding.

Months of negotiations with ADOT culminated in an accord that cemented MAG's "fair share" of transportation funding, meaning the region would receive an

"With his knowledge of where MAG had been and the knowledge of where we were headed, it was a good time for us to turn everything around and move positively into the future," states Feldman-Kerr.

### Prop 400—Take Two

With the half-cent sales tax set to expire in 2005, MAG would need the support of voters to continue transportation progress in the region. This meant learning from the 1994 election defeat.

"There's a saying, 'from failure comes great wisdom,'" notes MAG Executive Director Dennis Smith. "Even though we lost that election, we learned so much from losing that when we went for the sales tax extension in 2004 we corrected all of those mistakes."

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Former Tempe Mayor Neil Giuliano recalls there was a wide variety of needs to include in the new transportation plan.



Former Tempe Mayor Neil Giuliano, MAG Chair, 1998-2000

“Our friends in the West Valley needed freeway capacity, desperately needed freeway capacity. Our friends in the East Valley needed the freeway capacity, but also were interested in multimodal transportation and including something for urban transit, light rail, more buses, bicycles,” says Giuliano, who chaired MAG from 1998-2000. “So we had this (dilemma), how do you get everyone together for a transportation improvement plan when everyone has different needs?”

MAG Transportation Director Eric Anderson says the new Proposition 400 had to take a different approach from Proposition 300, which was limited to building new freeways.



“Proposition 400 was a multimodal approach. Of course, we still had major

funding for new freeways... but it also allocated a third of the revenues to the public transportation system. From a regional perspective, that was the first time we had regional funding for public transportation,” Anderson recalls.

Anderson adds that there was also more trust by the public, which had by then experienced tremendous transportation progress from Proposition 300. For example, the Loop 101 system and major portions of the Red Mountain Freeway were completed, and the Santan Freeway was under construction.

### Transportation Policy Committee

The first order of business: drafting a new Regional Transportation Plan.

“In addition, it was determined that we really needed a separate committee that just looked at transportation, and that’s how the Transportation Policy Committee came into being,” states former Glendale Mayor Elaine Scruggs.



Mayor Elaine Scruggs and Mayor Neil Giuliano at the retreat that launched the Transportation Policy Committee.

Former Phoenix Mayor Skip Rimsza, just coming out of Phoenix’s successful Transit 2000 election, recommended that MAG expand the policy process to include not only elected officials, but business representatives. The composition required that the private sector members represent regionwide business and that there be one representative each for transit, freight, and construction interests. Former Queen Creek Mayor Wendy Feldman-Kerr became chair of MAG just as the TPC was being created.

“By bringing the businesses into the fold and being on the committee, we could also talk about infrastructure—how it was going to impact the Valley and how we would get all of it done as a whole,” says Feldman-Kerr.

The State Legislature passed House Bill 2292, which formalized the Transportation Policy Committee in state law. It also passed House Bill 2456 to allow the Maricopa County Board of Supervisors to set the election. To celebrate passage of the bill, Governor Janet Napolitano posed for a photograph with members of MAG, the business community, legislators and the public.

Another difference from previous elections was the significant focus on public outreach.

“All told, we conducted more than 400 input events with stakeholders and the public,” says MAG Communications Manager Kelly Taft. “Many of them were led by the elected officials in their own communities. It became clear to the public that the leaders of their communities truly owned the plan and believed strongly in its importance.”

The hard work paid off. Proposition 400 passed by a solid margin of 58 to 42 percent.



### Domestic Violence

Another milestone in MAG’s fourth decade also had lasting implications. In 1998, the community was shaken by the murder of a young mother named Laura Muñoz. After three weeks of being turned away from domestic violence shelters due to a lack of

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beds, Muñoz was stabbed to death in front of her children. Shock turned into action. In 1999, MAG formed the Regional Domestic Violence Council, bringing together governments, law enforcement agencies, prosecutors, nonprofit groups and other community leaders working to prevent such tragedies.



“We didn’t realize the extent of the problem, and then once we got into the domestic violence issue, we found that there was no consistency,” recalls former MAG Human Services Manager Carol Kratz. Inconsistencies ranged from how domestic violence was defined to how evidence was collected to how abusers were arrested and prosecuted.



Former MAG Human Services Manager Carol Kratz.

The Council went to work to develop a series of protocols. Efforts included developing a resource guide for employers, a toolkit for healthcare workers that contained materials for screening and treating domestic violence victims in the emergency room, and a model of best practices for law enforcement.

### Air Quality

MAG continued to define best practices in air quality, in 1999 dealing with a new and tougher ozone standard and working on a

new dust plan to stave off threatened sanctions by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The revised plan was approved by the EPA in 2002.

Also in 1999, MAG conducted the Brown Cloud Project, which confirmed that gasoline and diesel engine exhaust accounted for about 70 percent of the small particulates that create the Brown Cloud. As a result, MAG recommended six control measures, including the mandated use of clean burning diesel fuel.

In 2005, the EPA redesignated the region to attainment for carbon monoxide. MAG Environmental Director Lindy Bauer says the success in controlling these pollutants is the result of sustained efforts over the years.

“Under the Clean Air Act, one air quality plan builds upon another,” says Bauer. “We have been very fortunate to have such a wide variety of control measures in place. Taking a look at the air quality trend data, the numbers keep coming down,” she says.

### Freeway Service Patrol

Another regional success was the launch of the Freeway Service Patrol in 2000, funded by MAG and operated by the Department of Public Safety. Still in effect today, stranded motorists receive help from roving road repair service vehicles that provide on-the-spot assistance to get them on the road again, improving safety and relieving traffic congestion.

### Quiet, Please!

Thousands of residents living near Valley freeways began experiencing the noise-reduction benefits of rubberized asphalt through a program begun in 2003. In a cooperative effort among the Governor’s

Office, ADOT, and MAG, a total of 115 miles would be covered with rubberized asphalt.

This program was further enhanced with the passage of Proposition 400, which provided funding to put rubberized asphalt on the rest of the system. Along with being quieter than other pavement, rubberized asphalt prevents pavement cracking and is waterproof and skid-resistant.

Prop 400 also included about \$20 million for additional noise walls at various locations around the freeway system.



Quiet pavement installation on the State Route 51 freeway.

### Don’t Trash Arizona! (Don’t Spray Paint it, Either)

In 2007, MAG, ADOT, and the Governor teamed up to identify freeway litter hot spots and bring recognition to the *Don’t Trash Arizona* litter education campaign. At a press conference, 500 bags of trash were lined up along one of the freeway hot spots, representing just one day’s worth of litter pickup along Valley freeways.



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[DontTrashAZ.com](http://DontTrashAZ.com)

In other efforts, MAG adopted model ordinances ranging from curfews to graffiti.

### Desert Peaks

With so many cooperative efforts around the region leading to collective success, in 1998 MAG launched the Desert Peaks awards program. The awards recognize innovation and achievements in regional partnership programs. The awards are held on a biennial basis. 

*The story will continue in the next quarterly edition of MAGAZine, focusing on 2007-2017.*

50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

