

Minutes of the
Maricopa Association of Governments
Regional Council Executive Committee
August 12, 2024

This meeting was conducted virtually via Zoom

[Video recording of the meeting](#)

MEMBERS	ATTENDANCE
Buckeye: Mayor Eric Orsborn, Treasurer	Not in Attendance
Chandler: Mayor Kevin Hartke, Chair	Virtual
El Mirage: Mayor Alexis Hermosillo, Vice Chair	Virtual
Gilbert: Mayor Brigette Peterson	Virtual
Glendale: Mayor Jerry Weiers	Virtual
Mesa: Mayor John Giles	Virtual
Phoenix: Mayor Kate Gallego, Past Chair	Virtual

1. Call to Order

The meeting of the Regional Council Executive Committee was called to order by Chair Hartke at 12:00 p.m. Roll call was taken to confirm a quorum of members was present.

2. Call to the Audience

MAG staff indicated that there were no online written public comments received for the Call to the Audience.

3. Informational Items

Chair Hartke indicated that items 3A and 3B were on the agenda for information only.

He asked if any member had questions or comments regarding these items. None was noted.

3A. Arterial Life Cycle Program Status Report: January 2024 – June 2024

This item was on the agenda for information only.

The Arterial Life Cycle Program (ALCP) is the financial management tool for the arterial street component of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The ALCP Policies and Procedures require a Status Report be provided to MAG committee members semi-annually to give an update on all project requirements and financial information. The January 2024 – June 2024 Status Report is the second report for Fiscal Year (FY) 2024. The Status Report provides information on projects programmed to receive reimbursements in FY 2024.

3B. Diamond Grind Pilot Program Expansion: Quarterly Update

This item was on the agenda for information only.

In November 2023, the MAG Regional Council approved the expansion of the Diamond Grind Pilot Program (DGPP). A major component of the program expansion consisted of providing regular updates on relevant study work and regional freeway pavement activities. This agenda item represents the next quarterly installment of these updates and provides an overview of the work conducted during the second quarter of 2024. This includes the progress made on (1) ongoing study efforts such as the Urban Heat Island and the MAG Freeway Noise Analysis (Phase II), (2) development of the long-term performance assessment program in collaboration with ADOT, and (3) regional freeway pavement surface rehabilitation efforts through the implementation of diamond grind.

4. Approval of Consent Agenda

Chair Hartke stated that agenda items 4A through 4F were on the Consent Agenda.

He asked if any members had questions or would like a presentation on any of the Consent Agenda items. None was noted.

MAG staff indicated that there were no online written public comments received for the Consent Agenda.

Chair Hartke requested a motion to approve the agenda item. Mayor Peterson moved to approve the Consent Agenda for items 4A through 4F, and Mayor Hermosillo seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following members voting in favor: Mayor Gallego, Mayor Giles, Chair Hartke, Mayor Hermosillo, Mayor Peterson, and Mayor Weiers.

4A. Approval of the June 17, 2024, Meeting Minutes

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved the June 17, 2024, Meeting Minutes.

4B. Conformity Consultation

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved consultation on a conformity assessment for an amendment and administrative modification to the Fiscal Year 2022-2025 MAG Transportation Improvement Program and MOMENTUM 2050 Regional Transportation Plan.

The amendment and administrative modification involve changes to several projects, including Freeway Life Cycle Program projects, General Roadway projects, Arterial Life Cycle Program projects, and Transit projects. The amendment includes projects that may be categorized as exempt from conformity determinations. The administrative modification includes minor project revisions that do not require a conformity determination.

4C. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Changes

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved amendments and administrative modifications to the FY 2022-2025 MAG TIP, RSTIIP, and MOMENTUM 2050 MAG RTP.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2025 MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and the MOMENTUM 2050 MAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) were approved by the MAG Regional Council on December 1, 2021, and the Regional Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Investment Plan (RSTIIP) was approved by the MAG Regional Council on September 27, 2023. Since approval of the last amendment, additional changes and modifications are needed.

4D. Amendment to the MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget to include the Phoenix Main Line Transit-Oriented Development Pilot Program Grant Award

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved an amendment to the MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget to include the Phoenix Main Line Transit-Oriented Development Pilot Program Grant Award of \$1,200,000.

The MAG Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and Budget was approved by the MAG Regional Council on May 24, 2023. On April 2, 2024, the U.S. Department of Transportation's Federal Transit Administration (FTA) announced the award of \$1,200,000 to the city of Phoenix to support planning efforts along the light rail system in Phoenix. The competitive funding award is through FTA's Pilot Program for Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Planning and is intended to support local planning and strategies to increase transit access and encourage ridership through mixed-use and mixed-income development near public transportation projects. The award will include a \$75,000 in-kind local match provided by the city of Phoenix.

4E. Request to Add One Temporary, Fulltime Equivalent Staff Position to Support the Youth Homeless System Improvement Grant

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved adding one temporary, fulltime equivalent staff position to support work under the Youth Homelessness System Improvement (YHSI) grant for the 30-month duration of the grant.

The MAG Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget was approved by the MAG Regional Council on May 24, 2023. On June 6, 2024, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development notified MAG that it was one of 38 communities selected to receive the Youth Homelessness System Improvement grant to improve regional services for youth experiencing homelessness. Funding for this temporary staff position is available as part of the awarded grant for a period of 30 months.

4F. Consultant Selection for the Meridian Road Corridor Study

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved the selection of Wilson and Company for the Meridian Road Corridor Study, and that if negotiations are not successful, that MAG pursue negotiations with its second choice, Kimley-Horn.

On May 13, 2024, the MAG Regional Council Executive Committee approved an amendment to the MAG Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget to include \$485,000 for the Meridian Road Corridor Study. This section of Meridian Road rests on the border of two counties and two cities and impacts five agencies. The study will help local jurisdictions in the study corridor understand the transportation needs along the roadway and develop a vision to support projected growth. The study will be done in partnership with the City of Apache Junction, the City of Mesa, Maricopa County, Pinal County, and the Arizona Department of Transportation.

A request for proposals was advertised with a total of six proposals received by the July 15, 2024, deadline. On July 29, 2024, an evaluation team met and recommended the selection of Wilson and Company. Additionally, the evaluation team recommended that if negotiations with Wilson and Company are not successful, MAG pursue negotiations with the second highest scoring consultant, Kimley-Horn.

5. Air Quality Update

Chair Hartke introduced Matt Poppen, Environmental Director, to present this item. This item was on the agenda for information and discussion.

Mr. Poppen presented updates on ozone and PM-2.5 concentration levels in the region. He began by addressing the persistent issue of rising ozone concentrations, despite decreases in manmade local emissions of nitrogen oxides and volatile organic compounds, which are the primary contributors to ozone formation. Mr. Poppen highlighted a concerning trend that although emissions in the region have decreased steadily since approximately 2016, ozone has been consistently rising. Currently, the region's three-year average of the fourth-highest ozone concentration is 80 parts per billion (ppb), which exceeds the current standard by 10 ppb. Mr. Poppen explained the fourth-highest value was selected by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as the ozone standard metric to approximate ozone levels the public may be exposed to.

Each annual fourth-ozone concentration is averaged over three years before being compared to the EPA standard. He clarified that ozone measurements in 2024 would be made through September as ozone exceedances can occur anytime in April through September. Once the data is collected from the different monitors in the region, it would be sorted and ranked by the highest readings to determine the fourth-highest concentration in 2024. Mr. Poppen reported that as of August 1, 2024, the region had experienced 42 exceedance days this year, which are days when at least one monitor recorded ozone levels of 71 ppb or higher. As of the morning of August 12, 2024, the number of exceedance days is up to 50 days, with no improvement over 2023 in ozone concentration levels.

Ed Zuercher, Executive Director, added that he has been working with other executive directors of Western regional planning organizations to send a letter to Joseph Goffman, EPA Assistant Administrator for the Office of Air and Radiation, asking the EPA to study this divergence between decreasing emissions and rising ozone readings in the Western United States. Signatories to the letter include the regional planning agencies in Denver, Salt Lake City, Las Vegas, Fort Collins, and Colorado Springs. He indicated that these metro areas are all experiencing this divergence between decreasing emissions and rising ozone levels. The goal is to continue engaging with the EPA on solutions that reflect the situation in the Western United States.

Mr. Poppen then outlined the timeline associated with ozone regulation. The EPA had previously issued a finding of failure to submit a Moderate Area plan on November 17, 2023, which triggered a sanctions clock as outlined in the Clean Air Act. As expected, the region missed the Moderate Area attainment date on August 3, 2024, when ozone levels of 80 ppb exceeded the standard of 70 ppb. As a result, the EPA is expected to reclassify the region to "Serious" nonattainment, a reclassification that could happen anytime until February 3, 2025. Reclassification to Serious is expected to occur in other areas in the Intermountain West that are facing similar ozone level challenges, including Las Vegas, Salt Lake City, and Denver.

Mr. Poppen indicated the first set of sanctions of increasing offsets could take effect on May 17, 2025, followed by highway funding sanctions on November 17, 2025. However, there is a pathway to avoid these sanctions, for which MAG is actively preparing. Mr. Poppen mentioned that work is underway now to draft and submit a plan to the EPA that addresses the outstanding Moderate Area requirements that are independent of the Moderate Area attainment date. If this plan is submitted before the first sanctions deadline and EPA finds the plan complete, it will prevent sanctions from being implemented. Mr. Poppen stated that MAG is also working on developing a Serious Area plan, which will be due on January 1, 2026. This plan must demonstrate how the region will meet the ozone standard by the new Serious Area attainment date of August 3, 2027.

Mr. Poppen reiterated the parallel efforts underway to address ozone requirements. First, to turn off the sanctions clock associated with failure to submit a Moderate Area plan, MAG will submit a plan to EPA addressing outstanding requirements before the first

sanctions clock is triggered. MAG aims to have a draft plan available by the end of the year, with the plan then coming before the MAG Management Committee and Regional Council for approval, anticipated in early 2025. Second, MAG will develop a Serious Area plan. To that end, MAG is developing emissions inventories to understand the amount of pollutants in the air and is performing modeling to determine the ozone reductions needed to meet the standard. Preliminary numbers on these reductions will be available soon, and MAG aims to incorporate these into the plan to be submitted to EPA. Third, Mr. Poppen emphasized the importance of continued engagement with the EPA to address regional ozone challenges. MAG is pressing the EPA to provide new scientific data to explain why ozone levels are rising despite reductions in local emissions. He also indicated MAG is requesting further relief from exceedances caused by wildfires and international transport emissions.

Shifting to his update on PM-2.5, Mr. Poppen explained that these fine particulate matter particles, often emitted through combustion processes and disturbance of soil, can be lodged deep into the lungs, posing significant health risks. In February 2024, the EPA set a stricter annual standard for PM-2.5, lowering it from 12 micrograms per cubic meter to 9 micrograms per cubic meter. Currently, the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) has released their draft nonattainment area boundaries for both Maricopa and Pinal counties. The current boundary for Maricopa County includes three monitors that exceed the standard. Municipalities and stakeholders are encouraged to provide feedback to ADEQ, with a formal comment period expected to begin in September. ADEQ will submit their final recommendations to the governor by January 7, 2025, who will then provide final recommendations to the EPA by February 7, 2025. The EPA will issue final nonattainment area boundaries by February 7, 2026.

Chair Hartke asked if any members had questions or comments regarding the agenda item. He asked if there had been a meeting of stakeholders with ADEQ in June to initially go over the area boundaries and whether there were any more updates from that meeting. Mr. Poppen indicated staff from ADEQ met with MAG member agencies to provide information on how the agency is planning to set those boundaries and on how stakeholders can comment on the proposed boundaries. MAG will provide an update when there is more information.

There were no further questions or comments from the committee.

6. Executive Director's Report

Chair Hartke introduced Mr. Zuercher to present on this item. This item was on the agenda for information only.

Mr. Zuercher thanked Chair Hartke for discussing the upcoming fiscal year at MAG on the television program Arizona Horizon on the Arizona PBS station. He reported that Chair Hartke covered the wide range of programs and initiatives at MAG, ranging from human services and homelessness planning, programs to address affordable housing, air quality

modeling and transportation work, including Proposition 479. He thanked MAG member agencies who have featured information about Proposition 479 on their websites. He indicated that most recently, Mesa, Tolleson and Phoenix have added information on their websites and many other agencies have done so as well. He stated he is gratified the region's residents have information about Proposition 479 on which to base their decisions when they go to the polls in November.

Mr. Zuercher noted that on Tuesday, August 13, 2024, MAG is hosting a virtual technical assistance workshop on the Housing Opportunities in Education and Mentorship Technical Assistance program for member agency staff. He indicated the program offers technical assistance funded by a grant from the JP Morgan Chase Foundation to help MAG member agencies grow housing that is affordable in the region. He mentioned that around 50 local and tribal government staff are expected to attend the virtual seminar.

Chair Hartke asked if any members had questions or comments regarding the agenda item. There was none.

7. Legislative Update

Chair Hartke noted there was no report.

8. Request for Future Agenda Items

Chair Hartke asked members if there were any requests for future agenda items. None was noted.

9. Comments from the Committee

Chair Hartke asked the members if there were any comments. He indicated he looked forward to seeing committee the members at the annual League of Arizona Cities & Towns conference at the end of the month. He indicated the MAG Regional Council would not be meeting in August. There were no further comments from the committee.

Adjournment

Chair Hartke indicated that the next meeting of the Regional Council Executive Committee would take place on September 16, 2024. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.