

Minutes of the
Maricopa Association of Governments
Regional Council Executive Committee
November 18, 2024

This meeting was conducted in person and virtually via Zoom
[Video recording of the meeting](#)

MEMBERS	ATTENDANCE
Buckeye: Mayor Eric Orsborn, Treasurer	In Person
Chandler: Mayor Kevin Hartke, Chair	In Person
El Mirage: Mayor Alexis Hermsillo, Vice Chair	Not in Attendance
Gilbert: Mayor Brigette Peterson	In Person
Glendale: Mayor Jerry Weiers	Virtual
Mesa: Mayor John Giles	In Person
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. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Hartke led the Committee in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Call to the Audience

Chair Hartke indicated that there were no requests to speak received for the Call to the Audience.

MAG staff indicated that there were no online written public comments received for the Call to the Audience or for any other agenda item.

4. Informational Items

Chair Hartke indicated that there were no items on the agenda for information only.

5. Approval of Consent Agenda

Chair Hartke stated that agenda items 5A through 5F 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.

Chair Hartke indicated that there were no requests to speak 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 5A through 5F, and Mayor Orsborn seconded the motion.

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

5A. Approval of the October 15, 2024, Meeting Minutes

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved the October 15, 2024, meeting minutes.

5B. Amendment to the MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget for Pavement Condition Data

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved an amendment to the MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget to transfer unobligated funding of \$150,000 from the Emerging Technologies Field Pilots On-Call to a new Pavement Condition Data project.

The MAG Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Biennial MAG Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and Budget was approved by the MAG Regional Council on May 24, 2023, and included a carryforward of \$841,819 for the Emerging Technologies Field Pilots project. In anticipation of upcoming arterial widening and arterial rehabilitation competitive programs, the need to maintain and update a regionwide pavement condition data layer has been identified to facilitate the project prioritization and evaluation. This agenda item represents a request to amend the FY 2024-2025 Biennial UPWP and Budget to transfer unobligated funding of \$150,000 from Emerging Technologies Field Pilots On-Call to a new Pavement Condition Data project.

5C. Consultant Selection for the Fiscal Year 2025-2027 MAG Traffic Signal Optimization Program On-Call

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved the proposed list of qualified consultants for the Fiscal Year 2025-2027 Traffic Signal Optimization Program On-Call.

The MAG Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and Budget includes \$1,000,000 for the Traffic Signal Optimization Program (TSOP). The intent of the TSOP On-Call is to enable MAG staff to augment existing resources by forming a pool of qualified consultants to provide specialized services that are required for executing tasks and projects. A request for qualifications was advertised with a total of 18

proposals received by the October 2, 2024, deadline. On October 28, 2024, an evaluation team met and made recommendations for consultant qualification.

5D. Consultant Selection for the Rio Reimagined Active Transportation Plan

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved the selection of Kimley Horn for the Rio Reimagined Active Transportation Plan and if negotiations are not successful, that MAG pursue negotiations with its second choice, AECOM.

On January 22, 2024, the MAG Regional Council Executive Committee approved an amendment to the MAG Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and Budget to include \$400,000 for the Rio Reimagined Active Transportation Plan. This plan will complement efforts by local, state, federal and nonprofit partners who have formed a partnership to undertake a broader Rio Reimagined Vision Plan ("RIO Plan.") As the regional transportation planning agency, MAG will lead the active transportation study within the Rio Reimagined boundary area in partnership with its member agencies and stakeholders.

A request for proposals was advertised on September 4, 2024, with a total of seven proposals received by the deadline October 2, 2024. On October 29, 2024, a multijurisdictional evaluation team met and recommended the selection of Kimley Horn. Additionally, the evaluation team recommended that if negotiations with Kimley Horn are not successful, MAG pursue negotiations with the second highest scoring consultant, AECOM.

5E. Consultant Selection for Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Transportation Policy and Programs Creative Services and Graphic Design

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved the selection of High Street Consulting Group LLC for the FY 2025-2026 Transportation Policy and Programs Creative Services and Graphic Design contract for an amount not to exceed \$400,000 and authorize the Executive Director to execute up to three, one-year extensions with High Street Consulting Group LLC for the Transportation Policy and Programs Creative Services and Graphic Design Contract, and if negotiations are not successful, that MAG pursue negotiations with its second choice, Olsson.

The MAG Fiscal Year (FY) 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget includes \$400,000 for the Transportation Policy and Programs Visualization Support project for creative and graphic design services. The intent of the project is to enable MAG staff to augment existing resources by selecting a qualified consultant to deliver data visualization, data analytic, and creative services to MAG to support programs, projects, and policy development associated with the Transportation Improvement Program and implementation of the Regional Transportation Plan. A request for proposals was advertised with a total of eight eligible proposals received by the October 28, 2024, deadline. On October 31, 2024, the evaluation team met and recommended the selection

of High Street Consulting Group LLC. In addition, the evaluation team recommended that if negotiations with High Street Consulting Group are not successful, MAG pursue negotiations with the second highest scoring firm, Olsson.

5F. Draft MAG 2025 Policy Principles

The Regional Council Executive Committee, by consent, approved the Draft MAG 2025 Policy Principles.

MAG's Policy Principles identify the legislative positions supporting the agency's roles and responsibilities and are updated annually or as needed. The draft MAG Policy Principles reflect priority areas for 2025 in advance of the 2025 Arizona legislative session and guide response to legislative and policy proposals.

6. Amendment to the MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget to Include a Midyear Salary Adjustment

Chair Hartke requested Ed Zuercher, executive director, to present this item. This item was on the agenda for action.

Mr. Zuercher presented a proposed midyear salary adjustment for MAG staff, starting with a background on the extended and difficult process to pass the enabling legislation that allowed an intact plan for a 20-year, half-cent sales tax extension to be placed on the ballot for Maricopa County voters as Proposition 479. He stated that during the last two years, MAG was cautious about long-term commitments in contracts, obligations and hiring. This caution included keeping pay for MAG staff flat, even during a period of historically high inflation. Based on a review of member and peer agencies, including Valley Metro, the average staff wage increase over the last two years was 12.4 percent compared to 5 percent over the same two years at MAG. He emphasized this conservative approach was due to the uncertainty about the ballot measure.

Mr. Zuercher indicated that with on the passage of Proposition 479, there is now certainty about regional funding. He mentioned that in his annual review in April, he had talked about proposing a midyear salary adjustment for the staff pending a positive outcome on Proposition 479. He stated that over the last seven years of preparation for the sales tax extension, the Regional Council Executive Committee has seen the value of MAG staff's expertise, commitment and execution of the Regional Council's vision for a regional transportation plan. He thanked the committee for their support and recognition of the staff, and to that end, is presenting a proposal for a midyear salary adjustment for all MAG staff except for himself and interns, who follow a different pay scale. Mr. Zuercher indicated the proposal is for a 6.5 percent raise to be split into two components: 3.5 percent for a cost-of-living adjustment and a 3.0 percent performance-based adjustment.

Mr. Zuercher indicated funding is available for this request due to saving from staff vacancies due to the agency's slow and deliberate hiring practices, as well as through

reduced overhead costs over the past two years. He thanked the committee members for being faithful stewards of the organization and for their consideration of this request. Chair Hartke clarified that the proposed pay raise applies to all staff, but that Mr. Zuercher is under separate contract. Mr. Zuercher reiterated this fact and commented that he is not proposing a raise for himself.

Chair Hartke asked if any members had questions or comments regarding the agenda item.

Mayor Peterson praised the staff for their performance while working under some of the most difficult times and situations that the committee has seen, including a historically long legislative session, and during a time of high inflation. She congratulated the staff and expressed her appreciation for their work and that she would be supporting this request.

Mayor Giles echoed Mayor Peterson's comments and expressed gratitude to MAG staff for their patience and understanding of the political limbo that the agency was in. He indicated he viewed MAG staff as an extension of Mesa's staff, viewing the agency as an important resource. He indicated Mesa has made pay increases greater than the one proposed today and he thanked MAG staff for their professionalism, excellent performance and patience over the last few years.

Mayor Orsborn also expressed his appreciation and asked Mr. Zuercher to share what type of pay situation MAG staff has faced compared to other cities in the region. Mr. Zuercher indicated that for the 10 largest cities in the region, the two-year combined pay increase averaged almost 12.5 percent. Due to a cautious approach, MAG's pay increase over the last two years was 5.0 percent. The proposed 6.5 percent increase would bring MAG almost up to the regional average.

Mayor Orsborn emphasized that added perspective to clarify MAG is addressing cost of living for its outstanding staff and the importance of staying competitive in the labor market to avoid losing talent.

Chair Hartke asked if there were any comments from committee members participating online. None was noted. Chair Hartke stated that the committee is aware that there are there are individuals who so not receive raises. He expressed his gratitude for the extraordinary and dedicated staff at MAG and that he also supports this proposed midyear raise.

Chair Hartke indicated that there were no requests to speak received for the agenda item and that there were no online written public comments received for the agenda item.

Chair Hartke requested a motion for the agenda item. Mayor Weiers moved to amend the MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget to include a midyear 3.5 percent cost-of-living adjustment for MAG staff effective the pay period

beginning December 1, 2024, and an average 3.0 percent performance adjustment effective the pay period beginning January 13, 2025, and Mayor Peterson seconded the motion.

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

7. Amendment to the MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget for the Preparation of a Clean Air Act Section 179B Demonstration of International Transport of Emissions and Air Quality Update

Chair Hartke requested Matt Poppen, environmental director, to present this item. This item was on the agenda for action.

Mr. Poppen presented a request to amend the budget to add consultant project to prepare a demonstration of the impact of international emissions on ozone concentrations in the region. He indicated the Clean Air Act allows an area not to be reclassified into higher ozone nonattainment if they can prove that the area would have attained the ozone standard but for impacts from international emissions. He reiterated that one of MAG's overall strategies in addressing ozone nonattainment is to address international emissions. He indicated that once the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) reclassifies the region to a Serious nonattainment area, a demonstration of the impact of international emissions will be a part of a Serious area plan submittal because the region will not be able to demonstrate attainment without excluding international emissions, regardless of additional control measures.

Accordingly, Mr. Poppen indicated the demonstration is a very important aspect of MAG's Serious area plan submittal to the EPA. It will set up the mechanism to keep the region at the Serious designation even if it doesn't reach the attainment date of August 3, 2027. He indicated that engaging consultants to prepare the demonstration may help in review and approval of the demonstration, as a consultant is an independent, third-party.

Mr. Poppen indicated that MAG staff has shared a flier that presents MAG's three-prong strategy to address the region's ozone issues. He indicated that the three-pronged strategy is to 1) turn off sanctions clocks that were triggered by the EPA finding a failure to submit a Moderate area plan, 2) prepare a viable Serious area plan, requiring a demonstration of international emissions, and 3) continue engagement with the EPA for new ozone science and regulatory relief in terms of international emissions and wildfires. Mr. Poppen indicated the second page of the flier details basic ozone facts and EPA standards.

Mr. Zuercher stated that this agenda item would have normally appeared in the consent agenda, but as this committee has been addressing air quality, MAG staff placed it in the agenda for presentation. He stated it was a follow-up to the prior month's commentary about putting in place a strategy at the federal level, one that MAG has addressed with

its Intermountain West partners. He mentioned that Salt Lake City is pursuing a similar strategy.

Chair Hartke asked if any members had questions or comments regarding the agenda item.

Mayor Orsborn asked about the timing of the results of the report. Mr. Poppen responded that the consultant selection is anticipated to be approved in February of 2025 and the results of the demonstration are anticipated in August 2025, with a draft report prepared by September 2025 to inform the draft Serious area plan. Mr. Zuercher indicated that a plan using the results would need to be submitted by January 1, 2026.

Mayor Orsborn stated that the faster the data and report are available, the better off the region would be in terms of preparing a plan with a study that can be referenced. He asked if an exemption is granted, whether it could be rescinded depending on which administration is in the White House. Mr. Poppen responded that EPA would consider approval of the demonstration as part of an approval of a Serious area plan, and that the approval process is a legal process mandated by the Clean Air Act. He praised the approach of keeping the strategy to address this issue in front of the committee.

Chair Hartke asked how a significant change in policy by the EPA would impact the region. Mr. Poppen indicated that the requirements are in the Clean Air Act and while some issues could get delayed, this issue of ozone nonattainment would remain, unless the Clean Air Act was amended. Mayor Peterson stated that the issue would remain regardless of the stance of the federal administration, as a change in the Clean Air Act would require an act of Congress. Mr. Poppen concurred with Mayor Peterson and reiterated the ozone nonattainment issues would remain regardless of which administration is in the White House but noted there might be discussions about changing aspects of the Clean Air Act. He noted MAG's legal counsel is monitoring developments in Washington, D.C.

Mayor Orsborn reiterated that the committee is not trying to skirt requirements and not looking to make the air dirtier. Mr. Poppen agreed and indicated that MAG is looking to show that a large percentage of the ozone levels are due to factors that are out of the region's control. He indicated the goal is put forward a plan that makes sense for the region and that helps the region get into attainment as quickly as possible. MAG is putting together a plan that can be approved by the by EPA and for that to happen, EPA would have to adjust how it approaches this issue.

Chair Hartke asked if there were any further comments or questions from the committee. He indicated that there were no requests to speak received for the agenda item and that there were no online written public comments received for the agenda item.

Chair Hartke requested a motion for the agenda item. Mayor Giles moved to amend the MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget to add \$250,000

for the Preparation of a Clean Air Act Section 179B Demonstration of International Transport of Emissions, and Mayor Peterson seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following members voting in favor: Mayor Giles, Chair Hartke, Mayor Orsborn, Mayor Peterson, and Mayor Weiers. No response was received from Mayor Gallego.

8. Executive Director's Report

Chair Hartke introduced Mr. Zuercher.

Mr. Zuercher referred to an article shared with the Regional Council Executive Committee about the passage of Proposition 479. He congratulated the committee and thanked them for their leadership and efforts in developing the regional plan and advocating for its passage. He indicated that approximately 59.8 percent of the vote was in favor and in 2004, it was just over 57 percent, reflecting a higher passage rate than in 2004. He thanked the committee for its support of MAG staff and indicated that MAG staff appreciates their leadership.

Chair Hartke also thanked committee members for helping pass Proposition 479.

9. Legislative Update

Chair Hartke indicated there was no legislative update. He asked if any members had questions or comments regarding the agenda item. None was noted.

Chair Hartke confirmed that the legislative session would be starting on January 13.

10. Request for Future Agenda Items

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

11. Comments from the Committee

Chair Hartke asked the members if there were any comments. He indicated that this would be the last Regional Council Executive Committee meeting for two members, Mesa Mayor John Giles and Gilbert Mayor Brigitte Peterson. He thanked them for their service and praised them for their contribution in overseeing MAG and for being instrumental in the passage of Proposition 479.

Chair Hartke invited the departing members to comment. Mayor Peterson thanked Chair Hartke, the members of the Executive Committee and MAG staff. She indicated that one of the best decisions that she was part of was the hiring of Mr. Zuercher. Mayor Giles stated that as he has engaged nationally over the last 10 years and talked to other mayors,

he has noted how collaborative the MAG region is. He stated that the region is fortunate that its leaders come in good faith and that he has observed zero to little parochialism and that is something to be proud of. He indicated that it is an honor to be part of it and was glad that MAG looked at issues beyond transportation, such as homelessness. He thanked his colleagues for the opportunity to be part of this process and thanked MAG staff.

Chair Hartke again thanked Mayor Giles and Mayor Peterson.

Adjournment

Chair Hartke indicated that the next meeting of the Regional Council Executive Committee would take place on January 13, 2025. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:40 p.m.