

Minutes of the  
Maricopa Association of Governments  
Regional Council  
March 27, 2024

This meeting was conducted in person and virtually via Zoom

[Video recording of the meeting](#)

<b>MEMBERS</b>	<b>ATTENDANCE</b>
Apache Junction: Mayor Chip Wilson	Virtual
Avondale: Mayor Kenneth Weise	Not in Attendance
Buckeye: Mayor Eric Orsborn	In Person
Carefree: Mayor John Crane	In Person
Cave Creek: Mayor Robert Morris	In Person
Chandler: Mayor Kevin Hartke, Vice Chair	In Person
El Mirage: Mayor Alexis Hermosillo, Treasurer	Virtual
Florence: Mayor Tara Walter	Not in Attendance
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: President Sandra Pattea	Virtual
Fountain Hills: Mayor Ginny Dickey	Virtual
Gila Bend: Mayor Tommy Sikes	Virtual
Gila River Indian Community: Governor Roe Lewis	Not in Attendance
Gilbert: Mayor Brigitte Peterson	In Person
Glendale: Mayor Jerry Weiers	In Person
Goodyear: Mayor Joe Pizzillo	In Person
Guadalupe: Mayor Valerie Molina	Virtual
Litchfield Park: Mayor Thomas Schoaf	Virtual
Maricopa: Mayor Nancy Smith	Not in Attendance
Maricopa County: Supervisor Thomas Galvin	In Person
Mesa: Mayor John Giles	In Person
Paradise Valley: Mayor Jerry Bien-Willner	In Person
Peoria: Mayor Jason Beck	Not in Attendance
Phoenix: Mayor Kate Gallego, Chair	In Person
Pinal County: Supervisor Mike Goodman	Not in Attendance
Queen Creek: Mayor Julia Wheatley	Virtual
Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community: President Martin Harvier	Not in Attendance
Scottsdale: Mayor David Ortega	In Person
State Transportation Board: Jenn Daniels	Virtual
State Transportation Board: Jackie Meck	Not in Attendance
Surprise: Mayor Skip Hall	Virtual
Tempe: Mayor Corey Woods	Not in Attendance
Tolleson: Mayor Juan Rodriguez	Not in Attendance
Wickenburg: Mayor Rui Pereira	Virtual
Youngtown: Mayor Michael LeVault	Virtual

**1. Call to Order**

The meeting of the Regional Council was called to order by Chair Gallego at 11:30 a.m. Roll call was taken to confirm a quorum of members was present.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance**

Chair Gallego led the members in the Pledge of Allegiance.

**3. Call to the Audience**

Chair Gallego indicated that there was one request to speak received for the Call to the Audience.

Dianne Barker said she was wearing black for many reasons. She was raised to participate with government, being raised by a World War II colonel. She stated that the Board of Supervisors' meeting was chaotic because people mistrust elections. Affordability made multimodal work for her, but she urged the agency to educate the public on why we have climate problems.

Chair Gallego indicated that online written public comments for the Call to the Audience received prior to the deadline were provided to the members for consideration. Please see the attached report.

**4. Informational Items**

Chair Gallego indicated that item 4A was on the agenda for information only.

She asked if any member had questions or comments regarding these items. None were noted.

**4A. ADOT Red Letter Process**

This item was on the agenda for information only.

The Regional Council approved the Red Letter Process in 1996 to provide early notification of potential development in planned freeway alignments. Development activities include actions on plans, zoning, and permits. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) has forwarded a list of 283 notifications from July 1, 2023, to December 31, 2023.

**\*5. Approval of Consent Agenda**

Chair Gallego stated that agenda items 5A through 5E were on the Consent Agenda.

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

Chair Gallego indicated that there were no requests to speak received for the Consent Agenda.

MAG staff indicated that one online written public comment for the Consent Agenda was received prior to the deadline and was provided to the members for consideration. Please see the attached report.

Chair Gallego requested a motion to approve the item. Mayor Weiers moved to approve the Consent Agenda for items 5A through 5E, and Mayor Orsborn seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following members voting in favor: Mayor Bien-Willner, Mayor Crane, Ms. Daniels, Mayor Dickey, Chair Gallego, Supervisor Galvin, Mayor Giles, Mayor Hall, Vice Chair Hartke, Mayor Hermosillo, Mayor LeVault, Mayor Molina, Mayor Morris, Mayor Orsborn, Mayor Ortega, President Pattea, Mayor Pereira, Mayor Peterson, Mayor Pizzillo, Mayor Schoaf, Mayor Sikes, Mayor Weiers, Mayor Wheatley, and Mayor Wilson. No response was received from Supervisor Galvin.

**\*5A. Approval of the February 28, 2024, Meeting Minutes**

The Regional Council by consent, approved the February 28, 2024, meeting minutes.

**\*5B. Conformity Consultation**

This item was on the agenda for consultation.

The Maricopa Association of Governments is conducting 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 and General Roadway 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.

**\*5C. Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) Project Changes**

The Regional Council, by consent, approved amendments and administrative modifications to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022-2025 MAG Transportation Improvement

Program (TIP), Regional Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Investment Plan (RSTIIP), and MOMENTUM 2050 MAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

The FY 2022-2025 MAG TIP and the MOMENTUM 2050 MAG RTP were approved by the MAG Regional Council on December 1, 2021, and the RSTIIP was approved by the MAG Regional Council on September 27, 2023.

Since approval of the last amendment, additional changes and modifications are needed.

**5D. Consultant Selection for FY 2024-25 Regional Research, Geospatial Data, and Service Support On-call**

The Regional Council, by consent, approved the proposed list of qualified consultants for the FY 2024-25 Regional Research, Geospatial Data, and Service Support On-call.

The MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget includes \$425,000 for expertise in geospatial data, data collection and surveys, and automation and visualization. A request for Statements of Qualifications was advertised with a total of 14 responses were received by the January 31, 2024, deadline. On February 20, 2024, an evaluation team met and recommended a list of qualified consultants.

**\*5E. Arizona State University/MAG Partnership**

The Regional Council, by consent, approved of the Arizona State University (ASU)/MAG Partnership.

ASU and MAG have a long history of working together on important issues facing the region. In recognition of the growing impacts on our communities, an opportunity to further explore the intersection of heat with shelter and public health has been prioritized to better inform future planning and policymaking. Building from the existing Heat Relief Network, this collaboration seeks to leverage the interdisciplinary resources at each agency and advance tangible outcomes for the benefit of the region.

**6. Strengthening Regional Heat Relief Efforts**

Chair Gallego indicated Amy St. Peter, Deputy Executive Director, would present this item. This item was on the agenda for information and discussion. But prior to the presentation, Chair Gallego introduced Ed Zuercher, Executive Director, to make a special introduction.

Mr. Zuercher recognized Captain Kent Forde as the federal team lead for the region's ALL INside Initiative. The federal initiative was created to reduce homelessness by 25 percent by 2025. Captain Forde has been focused on regulatory relief and waivers for homelessness providers in the MAG region, with a goal of completing five waivers and five relief packages during his assignment. Mr. Zuercher acknowledged Captain Forde for his attendance at today's meeting.

Moving onto the item presentation, Ms. St. Peter began by thanking MAG's partners for their efforts with the regional Heat Relief Network. She noted that the Arizona State University (ASU)/MAG Partnership that was just approved on the Consent Agenda and will focus on the impacts of heat using ASU's Decision Theater.

Ms. St. Peter was joined by Dr. Rebecca Sunenshine, Maricopa County Department of Public Health (MCDPH) Medical Director. She recognized Maricopa County's investment in the regional Heat Relief Network and the City of Phoenix for their nationally recognized Office of Heat Response and Mitigation. She stated that the purpose of the presentation was to share background and data on heat relief efforts, offer updates on emerging roles, and invite increased participation in these important efforts.

Ms. St. Peter explained that MAG's Heat Relief Network began in 2005 through the leadership of then Chair of the Continuum of Care, Greg Stanton, after there was a record number of heat-related deaths in the region. She indicated that the effort has evolved over the years from a crisis-oriented response network. Ms. St. Peter stated that MAG's role is in mapping the heat relief sites and helping to raise awareness. She stated that MCDPH started monitoring heat deaths in 2006 and has become a national model. She noted there has been one-time funding available for the preparation of heat relief in 2024, supporting transportation, a call center, and overnight cooling centers.

Ms. St. Peter showed a map of the heat relief sites available last summer, including hydration stations, cooling centers, respite centers, and donation sites. She stated that the aim is to increase the number of sites and the hours of operation at the sites. She stated that it is critical for sites to be available overnight and on Sundays. The application process for sites for the 2024 season will open in April.

Dr. Sunenshine continued the presentation, noting Maricopa County's efforts. She stated that there was a record number of heat-related deaths in 2023—645 deaths—which was 52 percent higher than the previous year and 500 percent higher than one decade ago. She noted that half of the reported heat-related deaths are people experiencing homelessness, who are 500 times more likely to die from heat than someone who has shelter. She noted that 60 percent of all heat-related deaths are people over age 50, and among people who died indoors from heat in Maricopa County, about 16 percent lived in mobile homes, RVs, or trailers.

Dr. Sunenshine noted a majority of heat-related deaths occurring in the month of July. She explained the different kinds of heat relief sites, indicating a cooling center is a staffed, airconditioned space where someone can cool down from the outside heat and that includes access to a public restroom. A respite center includes all these as well as space for uninterrupted rest, such as for sleeping. She expressed the need for extended hours at heat relief sites and for centers to be open on Sundays, noting that in Phoenix, nearly 40 percent of heat calls occurred when cooling centers were closed.

Utilizing a map of the previous year's cooling and respite centers, homeless outreach sites, and locations of heat-related deaths from years 2022 and 2023, Dr. Sunenshine indicated that teams are analyzing where heat relief is most needed, noting an opportunity to shift from a decentralized volunteer emergency response to a coordinated, strategic infrastructure driven by data. She expressed the need for resources to build and sustain supportive infrastructure, including getting better data on the performance of various heat relief efforts. She articulated the need for centralized and coordinated decision making, ancillary services such as transportation and call center support, formal agreements, and funding to support staff at the sites, including on evenings and weekends.

Dr. Sunenshine then shared news on MCDPH's efforts, including a contract with 2-1-1 Arizona to receive support for heat-related calls, including connecting people to resources for heat relief. She indicated efforts with municipalities to help build and sustain more heat relief network sites that are open at least six days each week, including Sundays, and until at least 7 p.m. She noted there will be a request for proposals for community-based organizations to expand hours for cooling centers.

Dr. Sunenshine stated that MAG, Maricopa County, the City of Phoenix, and Arizona are seen as national leaders in addressing the health effects of heat. She called on community partners for support in building the new infrastructure, including supporting funding to: provide services such as case management, meals, and transportation for the cooling centers; opening a new site or extending the hours/days an existing site is open; hosting a donation drive to collect water, socks, hats, cooling towels, sunscreen, and funding; promoting the network with the public; and coordinating well checks with homebound, older adults. Insofar as long-term needs, she expressed the need for a sustainable funding source for 2-1-1 services.

Dr. Sunenshine and Ms. St. Peter thanked the group for their support of these efforts. Ms. St. Peter invited Supervisor Galvin, Maricopa County Board of Supervisors, to offer comments.

Supervisor Galvin acknowledged the diligent efforts of staff for heat relief. He stated that since 2005, Maricopa County and MAG have been working together to provide heat relief and surveillance data to understand the health effects of heat.

In 2023, with funds from the Centers for Disease Control, MCDPH created the first public health program led by Jessica Bell. Through subsequent data and record-breaking heat in 2023, heat relief resources were expanded. He indicated that through a combination of funding, Maricopa County has implemented a plan to significantly expand heat relief efforts in 2024, and expressed appreciation for the members' partnership in the coming months.

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

Chair Gallego noted that City of Phoenix had unanimously voted to add several overnight cooling facilities from previously only one facility. She asked for a show of hands for communities with overnight cooling facilities. She indicated the need for more community cooling facilities and for every city to have a backup plan so people know where to go in case of a power outage or similar event. She noted that City of Phoenix received international attention on the number of heat-related deaths. She urged municipalities to expand cooling centers in their communities, stating that City of Phoenix does not have the capacity for addressing the issue for the region.

Mayor Giles acknowledged the county's leadership on heat relief and expressed urgency for action. He invited Dr. Sunenshine to provide a similar presentation at Mesa's city council meeting. He noted the high number of heat-related deaths, who is disproportionately affected, and expressed urgency toward working together with the county and City of Phoenix to provide heat relief across the region.

Mayor Peterson briefly shared a story about a family who lost air conditioning in their home, noting that unexpected situations come up. She expressed appreciation for volunteers in Gilbert who have provided locations for heat relief and to others who are working on heat relief efforts in their communities.

Mayor Ortega noted seven fatalities in Scottsdale. He stated that the city had a robust public awareness campaign for hydration centers and used their libraries as well. After reviewing numbers with the city's council recently, he noted that they are hoping to change the trend.

Ms. St. Peter noted that Wildfire, a community organization focused on ending poverty, has been actively engaged in heat relief efforts. She invited members to coordinate with MAG if they would like technical support for heat relief efforts, including assistance with setting up donation drives.

Chair Gallego stated that she hopes there will soon be an overnight facility on both the west and east sides of Maricopa County.

With no further discussion, Chair Gallego thanked Ms. St. Peter and Dr. Sunenshine for their presentation.

## **7. Update on Trends in Regional Traffic**

Chair Gallego introduced Wang Zhang, Transportation Data Program Manager, to present this item. This item was on the agenda for information and discussion.

Mr. Zhang began his presentation by noting that monitoring and analyzing regional traffic data is a focus area for MAG, as the information helps inform transportation planning and engineering. He noted that, in the post-COVID period, there has been a notable increase in traffic volumes, congestion, and truck travel, as well as changes in travel patterns.

Mr. Zhang further detailed the level of traffic volume in Maricopa County since 2019, using the traffic level in the first week of March 2020 as a baseline. He noted that traffic volume returned to pre-COVID levels in the spring of 2021 and has continued to increase. Traffic in 2023 and 2024 is the highest it has been since the COVID pandemic, an approximately 10 percent increase.

Mr. Zhang then explained the level of heavy truck travel in Maricopa County since 2019. He noted that there has been more heavy truck travel through the COVID pandemic in 2020, with peak travel during 2022 about 30 percent higher than 2020 levels.

Mr. Zhang next described traffic congestion delay over time with 2020, 2023, and 2024 data. Immediately after March 2020, there was almost no congestion with freeway congestion slowly returning to pre-pandemic levels by the spring of 2023. He noted traffic congestion in our region tends to peak in the spring and fall. The congestion trendline into spring 2024 resembles a similar congestion trendline in spring 2023, affirming that regional traffic is settling into a new normal.

Mr. Zhang explained traffic volume by day of the week using data from 2017, 2019, and 2023. He stated that Friday has typically been the highest traffic day, with weekend days having lower traffic volumes that begin to climb Monday through Thursday. Though patterns during weekdays have stayed relatively similar through the years, data indicates that there is notable increase of traffic volume on Saturdays.

Mr. Zhang then showed how traffic congestion patterns during different times of day have evolved since 2020, using the first week of March as a baseline. He noted that at 7:30 a.m., congestion has increased on eastbound I-10 between the Loop 101 (Agua Fria Freeway) and I-17, and it has decreased on westbound US-60 (Superstition Freeway). He noted that congestion has started to increase at noon on freeways around downtown Phoenix. He noted some changes in evening

congestion, including new bottlenecks in the West Valley at the I-10 interchanges with Loop 101 (Agua Fria Freeway) and Loop 202 (South Mountain Freeway). He noted that there is a Proposition 400-funded project to address the congestion near the I-10 and Loop 101 (Agua Fria Freeway) interchange.

In the East Valley, he stated that congestion has decreased on eastbound Loop 202 (Red Mountain Freeway). He noted a new bottleneck forming on southbound I-17 nearing downtown Phoenix in the afternoon, noting that the I-17 is now experiencing congestion both outbound/northbound and inbound/southbound. In the south part of the region, Mr. Zhang noted a new bottleneck emerging in both directions on I-10 between Loop 202 (South Mountain Freeway) and Riggs Road, noting another Proposition 400-funded project to help address the issue in the near future.

He remarked that congestion has decreased on eastbound US-60 in the afternoon.

Mr. Zhang stated that multiple independent studies by nationally renowned research institutes and third-party companies rank the Phoenix metropolitan area as one of the best in terms of the lowest travel times, lowest levels of congestion, and highest travel time reliability and low average costs of delay.

Mr. Zhang concluded that MAG will continue to monitor traffic trends and conditions to inform decision makers and continue regional transportation planning.

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

Mr. Zuercher acknowledged the importance of a regional funding source for transportation, noting that without one, traffic issues would not be sufficiently addressed. The resources provided by Proposition 400 have given the MAG Regional Council tools to address traffic issues, such as the I-10 tunnel to the Loop 202 (Red Mountain Freeway) mini-stack.

Mayor Hartke asked how traffic congestion could be reduced, particularly along the I-10/Broadway curve. Mr. Zhang indicated that more information on commuters' travel choices during the construction will need to be collected, but noted other studies were underway to understand performance along the corridor as well as how people are traveling and the types of trips they take.

Chair Gallego noted that it was exciting to see some areas with less congestion, particularly in the East Valley. She asked if the source of the reduced congestion was due to Prop 400 projects. Mr. Zhang indicated that multiple factors may have contributed to reduced congestion, including Prop 400 projects and changes in people's travel patterns. He indicated that a household travel survey is being

conducted now to acquire more information, such as how many trips people take, where they go, what time they leave home, and what time they get home. He said that new information will be compared to pre-COVID data to assist in better understanding how travel is evolving in the region and how best to reduce traffic congestion. He stated that he believed the investments in the regional freeway system coupled with changes in traffic patterns are the two main factors contributing to changes in congestion.

Mr. Zuercher concurred that investments in US 60 (Superstition Freeway) are a contributing factor to this outcome.

Chair Gallego indicated that it was important to understand the factors contributing to reduced congestion for conversations with constituents and how areas of the greatest congestion, including the I-10 and I-17, will be addressed in the plan. Mr. Zhang affirmed that the greatest areas of traffic congestion are observed on I-10, I-17, and Loop 101, and he indicated that these bottlenecks have funded investments in the region's plan.

With no further questions, Chair Gallego thanked Mr. Zhang for his presentation.

## **8. Air Quality Update**

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

Chair Gallego congratulated Mr. Poppen on a successful meeting with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Assistant Administrator Joseph Goffman, and noted Mr. Poppen's promotion to Environmental Director. She noted that the meeting with EPA came as a request of MAG and amplified by Arizona's two U.S. senators to find solutions for air quality challenges the region is facing. She noted EPA's appreciation of MAG's data and willingness to find solutions, and shared that EPA indicated our region might be the most complicated in the country.

Mr. Poppen began his presentation by affirming the successful meeting with EPA and noting hopeful progress towards the region's challenging issue of ozone. He indicated the region made four requests during the meeting with the EPA.

The first request of EPA was to explain why ozone has increased in the region despite a decrease over time in the emissions that cause ozone to occur. He noted some theories attribute higher ozone levels to the impacts of wildfires, meteorology, or changes to the way ozone chemistry occurs. However, he indicated that additional input from EPA on understanding this ozone science will help policymakers make decisions about how to effectively reduce ozone in the region and comply with federal standards.

The second request of EPA was for a paradigm shift on how the EPA Region 9 Office currently reviews ozone impacts from wildfires, as the region, including the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), Maricopa County Air Quality Department, MAG, and Pinal County Air Quality Control District, submitted 33 events of wildfires causing ozone exceedances but only three were accepted as having a high level of evidence. Mr. Poppen noted that Assistant Administrator Goffman can help by providing direction to EPA Region 9 staff on how to evaluate ozone exceedances impacted by wildfires.

The third item requested of EPA was to revise EPA policy and guidance regarding international emissions to reflect Clean Air Act statutes. With the current guidance, Mr. Poppen indicated that there are additional and unnecessary hurdles the region must cross to exclude emissions from international sources in current policy and guidance. The ability to exclude international emissions may keep the region from being bumped-up to a higher and stricter ozone classification in the future.

Mr. Poppen congratulated Maricopa County on their presentation to EPA on the importance of approving rules 204 and 205, which allow new industries as well as those that want to expand to obtain emission offsets. He noted they are hopeful that EPA will approve those rules so that affected industries can obtain the necessary offsets needed to locate here or expand, which can allow for continued economic growth in the region.

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

Mr. Zuercher added that he believes the investments the Regional Council has made over the years in air quality staffing and modeling has distinctly contributed towards a better understanding of the region's air quality issues. He indicated that the data Mr. Poppen presented to EPA was clear and credible. He noted that other cities including Chicago, Philadelphia, Houston, and Dallas, as well as the State of Connecticut are in a similar situation with ozone as the Maricopa region, but that this region is at the forefront in the western U.S., along with sister agencies in Salt Lake City, Denver, Colorado Springs, and Fort Collins. He expressed appreciation for the resources the Regional Council has put towards air quality planning and for the efforts of U.S. senators Sinema and Kelly in getting EPA to listen to the region's business and government leadership regarding air quality challenges.

Chair Gallego noted that members should be aware that there has been significant news related to litigation in air quality with Mr. Zuercher noting it was regarding particulate matter 2.5 (PM-2.5).

Mayor Hartke asked if solutions had been identified for businesses to get reduction credits to offset emissions. Mr. Poppen affirmed that EPA is in the process of reviewing rules 204 and 205, and he is hopeful that they will approve them. He

explained that approval of Rule 205 would allow facilities to get emission reduction credits from non-traditional sources like electric vehicle fleets operating in Maricopa County. He noted EPA is still reviewing Rule 204.

Mr. Zuercher clarified that EPA's mindset is based on heavily industrialized areas like Chicago, Philadelphia, and Houston where credits can be issued from existing industrial processes, but he indicated that the solution does not work for this region since it does not have legacy, smokestack industries. He explained that the rule would allow a company to receive an emission reduction credit for converting their fleet of diesel trucks to electric or hydrogen vehicles. He noted that Intel was a forerunner in Chandler in doing this, and Maricopa County has been trying to get this rule approved so vehicle fleets, such as bus fleets in school districts, can be replaced with cleaner technology.

Chair Gallego added that their application for the Climate Pollution Reduction Grant program will be submitted soon and thanked Audra Koester Thomas, Chief of Staff, and her team for their work in that area.

Mr. Poppen then provided a brief update on the PM-2.5 lawsuit. He noted that, historically, lawsuits that have challenged existing standards have not been successful in with courts upholding the EPA's standards. He noted that implementation of the PM-2.5 standard would likely occur two years into the future, and it might be another year or so before that lawsuit is heard and acted on by the courts.

Mr. Zuercher explained that PM-2.5 are fine particles and noted that the region complied with the previous EPA standard. However, with the standard being lowered a few of the region's monitors are now not in compliance and will result in the designation of new nonattainment areas. He indicated that the National Association of Manufacturers and others are also litigating the new standard, arguing that it is unreasonable. Mr. Poppen noted that the implications of nonattainment would begin in 2026. He stated that ADEQ started the public process of developing recommendations to the Governor on which areas of the state should be designated as attainment or nonattainment, with future discussions on determining nonattainment areas based on the monitoring data and emission sources.

Mr. Zuercher asked Mr. Poppen to explain what contributes to PM-2.5. Mr. Poppen indicated that residential woodburning in the winter and especially on holidays, as well as commercial and consumer fireworks, can cause high PM-2.5 spikes. He noted that throughout the year, PM-2.5 emissions typically come from any combustion activity including tailpipe emissions, industrial facility emissions, and fires, as well as any process that disturbs soil, such as construction activities and agricultural activities. He indicated that the seasons also play a role in higher levels of PM-2.5, stating that fall and winter months have much higher PM-2.5 due to the

effects of meteorology in trapping pollution in the atmosphere during those months, along with the increases from residential woodburning and consumer fireworks.

With no additional questions, Chair Gallego thanked Mr. Poppen for his presentation.

## **9. Executive Director's Report**

Chair Gallego introduced Mr. Zuercher for this item. This was on the agenda for information.

Mr. Zuercher recognized Gila River Indian Community Governor Lewis for being an invited guest of First Lady Jill Biden for the March 7, 2024, State of the Union Address, for his leadership on infrastructure, including construction of new schools and the innovative solar-over-canal project.

Mr. Zuercher announced that the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community was awarded nearly \$50 million for the Pima Road widening project, which is a joint effort with the City of Scottsdale and supported by Prop 400 program Arterial Life Cycle Program funds that serve as the local match for the project.

Mr. Zuercher recognized the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Maricopa County Department of Transportation (MCDOT). He stated that one of the first projects completed was a \$14,000 bond issued to build a road from Phoenix to Prescott. He showed a picture of the agency's partners at the celebration, including the Federal Highway Administration, Arizona Department of Transportation, and MAG, and congratulated Maricopa County Supervisor Galvin and MCDOT on the celebration event.

Mr. Zuercher stated that April is distracted driver awareness month. He noted information will be coming from MAG as part of its safety efforts and with the See Me AZ education effort. He requested that agencies contact MAG staff if they are interested in receiving materials.

Mr. Zuercher noted that Cox cable and other outlets will begin airing public ads regarding the *Home is where it all starts*® educational campaign on April 2, 2024. He stated that the campaign focuses on changing how people talk about housing and thanked the three-member agency sponsors, Avondale, Fountain Hills, Paradise Valley, for contributing funding for the campaign. He directed members to contact Amy St. Peter with any questions.

Mr. Zuercher noted that nearly 1.3 million pounds of trash were cleaned from Maricopa County freeways in 2023. He indicated that this would not have happened without Proposition 400 funding, which funds the freeway trash pickup

efforts. While less trash was picked up in 2023 compared to previous years, that equates to nearly 94,000 bags of litter.

Mr. Zuercher then highlighted some regional transportation system milestones. He showed a picture of the first section of the “outer loop”, known today as Loop 101 (Agua Fria Freeway), between Northern to Peoria avenues, the first segment to open in 1988. He then noted that April marks two years since the interim opening of State Route 24 from Ellsworth Road to Ironwood Drive. While not fully built, he noted increased demand in that area and celebrated the wide range of efforts at MAG, from transportation safety, housing and homelessness, air quality, and major construction of projects.

Chair Gallego congratulated MAG and the partners involved in those milestones.

## **10. Legislative Update**

Chair Gallego introduced Audra Koester Thomas, Chief of Staff, to report on this item. This was on the agenda for information and discussion.

Ms. Thomas reported that last week was the final week of regular committee hearings and stated that appropriations committees meet this week. She said that it appears budget conversations have not necessarily advanced, and there are some rumors of an extended break. MAG will continue to follow to see those discussions emerge.

Ms. Thomas provided an update on bills MAG has been tracking. House Bill (HB) 2279, a strike everything bill regarding homeless service and drug free zones, was passed out of the Senate Appropriations Committee yesterday on party lines. Senate Bill (SB) 1238 is also still alive, and she noted there has been lots of conversations around these bills, with many of MAG’s member agencies already having weighed in.

Ms. Thomas stated that continuing resolutions are a notable feature of this year’s legislature. While passed out of the House, she reported that no action has yet been taken on in the Senate on House Continuing Resolution (HCR) 2050, which is a proposed constitutional amendment that would prohibit any government entity from restricting the manufacturing or sale of any device based on fuel source. She noted that this was similar to a provision that was included in statute last year as part of SB 1102, also known as enabling legislation.

Ms. Thomas reported that SB 2545 and SB 2546 are scheduled for a third reading today in the Senate. She stated that these bills would exempt any model year 2018 vehicle or newer from emission inspections, which has implications for the region’s air quality planning and attainment work, including the State Implementation Plan (SIP). She indicated concerns regarding the bills’ implication on the SIP, noting that

vehicle emission checks in Maricopa County are required for the SIP, and EPA is unlikely to approve such a provision.

Ms. Thomas noted that last Friday, SB 1184 failed in the House Transportation Infrastructure Committee. The bill was a 2-year continuation of ADOT that included several additional policy provisions. She noted that the House passed HB 2037, a clean 8-year continuation for ADOT, but this bill was not heard by the Senate's Transportation Technology and Missing Children's Committee. MAG awaits future conversation about this as well as several other agency continuations. She noted that without action, ADOT and other agencies waiting for reauthorization would terminate on July 1. She emphasized that ADOT is a critical implementing partner of MAG's investment plan, and MAG supports a clean continuation of the agency.

Chair Gallego asked if members had any questions. None were noted.

**11. Request for Future Agenda Items**

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

**12. Comments from the Committee**

Chair Gallego asked the members if there were any comments. None were noted.

**Adjournment**

Chair Gallego indicated that the next meeting of the Regional Council would take place on April 24, 2024. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:36 p.m.

\* Matters for which the State Transportation Board ex officio members may vote.

## Regional Council

### PUBLIC COMMENT REPORT

**Comments Received From:** February 28, 2024 **to** March 27, 2024

**Date Received:** 3/24/2024 8:23:05 PM

**Name:** Jeff Caldwell

**City/State:**

**Comment:** 3. Call to the Audience

Since Item 8 is not for action. Public Comment time must be used for it. Maricopa has reduced pollution, yet our pollution is increasing because of particulates coming from other states and countries. We should not be forced to penalize ourselves for improving our own conditions we control.

Maricopa County Association of Governments is an unelected body that is not a real government entity. Members of MAG are not elected, rather they are appointed. MAG needs to be abolished in its current form and should be a traditional nonprofit. Stop implementing Road Diets, expanding Bus Rapid Transit, and expanding Light Rail. These policies put small businesses out of business, increase crashes and serious injuries, increase traffic and pollution. Valley Metro's revenue from ridership is only 16%. 81% comes from Member Cities and Federal Funding. Public Transit is failing, and MAG needs to stop propping up failing industries. These policies do not generate the results Maricopa County residents want to see.

5B & 5C: One of Momentum 2050's goals is to get folks out of their cars. MAG's website states under Momentum 2050, "Transportation Demand Management (TDM) utilizes strategies and policies to maximize travel options. MOMENTUM commits \$250 million to optimize the region's existing transportation infrastructure, maximizing the investments we've already made. Robust regional TDM strategies in conjunction with well-designed infrastructure can significantly improve congestion and encourage people to get out of their cars - saving time and frustration for us all."

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## **Report Parameters**

*Date Generated:* 3/27/2024 9:34:04 AM  
*Committee:* Regional Council  
*Meeting Date:* 3/27/2024 11:30 AM  
*Excluded Before:* 2/28/2024 9:30 AM