

Minutes of the
Maricopa Association of Governments
Regional Council
March 26, 2025

This meeting was conducted in person and virtually via Zoom

[Video recording of the meeting](#)

MEMBERS	ATTENDANCE
Apache Junction: Mayor Chip Wilson	In Person
Avondale: Mayor Mike Pineda	Not in Attendance
Buckeye: Mayor Eric Orsborn, Treasurer	In Person
Carefree: Mayor John Crane	In Person
Cave Creek: Mayor Robert Morris	Virtual
Chandler: Mayor Kevin Hartke, Chair	In Person
El Mirage: Mayor Alexis Hermosillo, Vice Chair	Not in Attendance
Florence: Mayor Keith Eaton	In Person
Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation: President Sandra Pattea	Virtual
Fountain Hills: Mayor Gerry Friedel	Virtual
Gila Bend: Mayor Tommy Sikes	Virtual
Gila River Indian Community: Governor Stephen Roe Lewis	Not in Attendance
Gilbert: Mayor Scott Anderson	Virtual
Glendale: Mayor Jerry Weiers	Virtual
Goodyear: Mayor Joe Pizzillo	Virtual
Guadalupe: Mayor Valerie Molina	Virtual
Litchfield Park: Mayor Thomas Schoaf	Virtual
Maricopa: Mayor Nancy Smith	In Person
Maricopa County: Supervisor Thomas Galvin	Not in Attendance
Mesa: Mayor Mark Freeman	Virtual
Paradise Valley: Vice Mayor Ellen Andeen-Keller as proxy for Mayor Mark Stanton	Virtual
Peoria: Mayor Jason Beck	Not in Attendance
Phoenix: Mayor Kate Gallego	Not in Attendance
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 Lisa Borowsky	Not in Attendance
State Transportation Board: Jenn Daniels	Not in Attendance
State Transportation Board: Vacant	N/A
Surprise: Mayor Kevin Sartor	Virtual
Tempe: Mayor Corey Woods	In Person
Tolleson: Mayor Juan Rodriguez	Virtual
Wickenburg: Mayor BG Bratcher	Virtual
Youngtown: Mayor Michael LeVault	Virtual

1. Call to Order

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

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Chair Hartke led the members 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 for the Call to the Audience.

4. Informational Items

Chair Hartke indicated that items 4A and 4B were on the agenda for information only.

He asked if any member had questions or comments regarding these items. None was 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 449 notifications from July 1, 2024, to December 31, 2024.

4B. Update on the Transition to State Contract Service for 9-1-1

This item was on the agenda for information only.

On Thursday, January 4, 2024, the MAG 9-1-1 Study Committee voted to proceed with a transition to state contract services for regional 9-1-1 services which will result in eventual conclusion of the contractual arrangement with the City of Phoenix to provide 9-1-1 services. On Wednesday, January 31, 2024, the MAG Regional Council voted unanimously for the region to proceed with transition to state contract service for 9-1-1. Since that time, the Arizona Department of Administration has worked with public safety answering

points to transition to state contract service for 9-1-1. Periodic updates on the status of the transition of the region to state contract service for 9-1-1 will be provided.

***5. Approval of Consent Agenda**

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

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 Woods moved to approve the Consent Agenda for items 5A through 5G, and Mayor Smith seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following members voting in favor: Mayor Anderson, Mayor Crane, Mayor Eaton, Mayor Freeman, Mayor Friedel, Chair Hartke, Mayor LeVault, Mayor Molina, Mayor Morris, Mayor Orsborn, President Pattea, Mayor Pizzillo, Mayor Rodriguez, Mayor Sartor, Mayor Schoaf, Mayor Sikes, Mayor Smith, Vice Mayor Andeen-Keller, Mayor Weiers, Mayor Wheatley, Mayor Wilson, and Mayor Woods. No response was received from Mayor Bratcher.

***5A. Approval of the February 26, 2025, Meeting Minutes**

The Regional Council, by consent, approved the February 26, 2025, meeting minutes.

***5B. Conformity Consultation**

This item was on the agenda for consultation.

MAG is conducting consultation on a conformity assessment for an amendment and administrative modification to the Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2030 MAG Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) and MOMENTUM 2050 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The amendment and administrative modification involve changes to several projects, including Freeway Life Cycle Program (FLCP) projects, General Roadway projects, Arterial Life Cycle Program (ALCP) 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.

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

The Regional Council, by consent, approved amendments and administrative modifications to the FY 2025-2030 MAG TIP, Regional Strategic Transportation Infrastructure Investment Plan (RSTIIP), and MOMENTUM 2050 MAG RTP.

The FY 2025-2030 MAG TIP was approved by the MAG Regional Council on January 22, 2025, the MOMENTUM 2050 MAG RTP was 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 the Northeast Valley Transportation Planning Study**

The Regional Council, by consent, approved Kimley-Horn and Associates for the Northeast Valley Transportation Planning Study and if negotiations are not successful, that MAG pursues negotiations with its second choice, Kittleson and Associates.

The MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) and Budget includes \$500,000 for the Northeast Valley Transportation Planning Study. The purpose of this study is to assess the capacity and connectivity of the existing and planned transportation networks and evaluate them against forecasted travel demand. This analysis will be used to prioritize currently planned projects and identify additional projects or strategies needed to address gaps in the area's future transportation network. A request for proposals was advertised on January 8, 2025, with a total of four proposals received by the February 5, 2025, deadline. On February 20, 2025, a multijurisdictional evaluation team met and recommended the selection of Kimley-Horn and Associates. Additionally, the evaluation team recommended that if negotiations with Kimley-Horn and Associates are not successful, MAG pursue negotiations with the second highest scoring consultant, Kittleson and Associates.

***5E. Consultant Selection for the Fiscal Year 2025 Regional Systems Management and Operations Plan Update**

The Regional Council, by consent, approved Kimley-Horn and Associates for the FY 2025 Regional Systems Management and Operations Plan Update and if negotiations are not successful, that MAG pursues negotiations with its second choice, Iteris Inc.

The MAG FY 2024-2025 Biennial UPWP and RSTIIP Budget includes \$500,000 for the update to the Regional Systems Management and Operations Plan, which was previously developed in 2018. The plan will assess the current state of transportation infrastructure and identify Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) needs in the region to develop a

framework for identifying smart investments. The plan will serve as a guide for short-term and long-term essential transportation technology/ITS infrastructure components and resources for the operation and management of critical elements of the region's transportation system.

A request for proposals was advertised on January 21, 2025, with a total of two proposals received by the February 19, 2025, deadline. On March 3, 2025, a multijurisdictional evaluation team met and recommended the selection of Kimley-Horn to conduct the study. Additionally, the evaluation team recommended that if negotiations with Kimley-Horn and Associates are not successful, MAG pursue negotiations with the second highest scoring consultant, Iteris Inc.

***5F. Proposition 479 Arterial Life Cycle Program Policies and Procedures**

The Regional Council, by consent, approved the Proposition (Prop) 479 ALCP Policies and Procedures.

On June 23, 2021, the MAG Regional Council approved the RSTIIP to serve as the basis for the extension of Prop 400, Maricopa County's dedicated half-cent sales tax for transportation. The RSTIIP represents the list of projects and programs funded through the extension and other revenues available to the region.

The Prop 479 ALCP provides funding for major arterial streets and serves as the financial management tool for the arterial street component of the RSTIIP. A working group of member agency staff was convened in June 2024 to discuss and develop the framework and policies for the Prop 479 ALCP. An update was provided to MAG policy committees in January 2025 to provide an overview and discussion on outstanding policy items. Since that time, the input that was received has been incorporated and final policies have been developed for consideration.

5G. Officer Appointment for the MAG Building Codes Committee

The Regional Council, by consent, appointed the MAG Building Codes Committee chair through December 31, 2025.

According to the MAG Committee Operating Policies and Procedures, officer appointments for technical and other policy committees are made by the MAG Regional Council for two-year terms with succession of positions occurring through the ascending order of officers. Appointment to fill the vacancy of the MAG Building Codes Committee chair is requested.

***6. Arterial Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program Policies and Procedures**

Chair Hartke introduced Patrick Stone, deputy transportation director, to present on this item. This item was on the agenda for action.

Mr. Stone began by explaining that this program is one of the first two new competitive programs developed under the RSTIIP and is fully funded with federal funds allocated to the region. Mr. Stone acknowledged the collaboration of member agencies and MAG staff in developing the policies. Funding for the program includes \$25 million per year or \$500 million over the life of the RSTIIP. Pending successful approval of the policies, Mr. Stone highlighted that the initial call for projects for fiscal years 2026, 2027, and 2028 would begin on Friday, and a technical review and scoring of applications would be conducted by the MAG Street Committee. He noted that a total of \$150 million would be programmed for projects during those fiscal years between the two competitive programs, with \$96 million toward this program in the upcoming call for projects.

Mr. Stone explained that the program's main goals are to improve overall roadway safety with well-maintained road surfaces, provide for the safety of all roadway users, promote safe mobility by prioritizing features compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, and maintain the region's current transportation infrastructure. Mr. Stone stated the program's objective is to enhance regional mobility by upgrading current roadways and implementing improvements to improve mobility. He then outlined the program eligibility, including roadway facilities on the regional arterials or mile grid system, roads connecting freeways, highways, or other controlled access corridors, and other key arterial corridors. A major update from previous programs is the allowance of funding for all project phases, from predesign to construction, with a 70 percent maximum regional and 30 percent minimum local required funding match. He noted that feedback from the working group and policy committees led to the decision not to impose funding limits on applications. He highlighted that after the potential project selection approval in June, the working group would debrief on the process later this year. Mr. Stone detailed other considerations of the program, including that all federal requirements apply, such as environmental, right of way, and construction requirements, that the project administration fee charged by ADOT is eligible for regional funding, but that enhancements and betterments are not eligible, and that agencies requesting construction funding only will need to ensure the project is developed to federal standards and have any right of way acquired or a plan to do so.

Mr. Stone described the project evaluation criteria, with 60 percent of scoring based on quantitative measures such as pavement quality, traffic volumes, and safety data, while 40 percent is qualitative including the project's alignment with the program's goals and objectives, unique attributes, emphasis on safety, and community engagement efforts.

Mr. Stone outlined next steps for the program, including approval of the policies and procedures, opening the call for projects for a total of approximately \$96 million, hosting

two workshops for agency staff, accepting applications until May 6, 2025, reviewing and ranking proposals through the MAG Street and Transportation Review committees, and seeking final approval from the Regional Council in June, with award notification letters anticipated June 30, 2025.

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

Chair Hartke asked whether this funding reallocation would impact the sequencing of the discrete arterial projects included in the plan. Mr. Stone clarified that the program is new and provides funding for new arterial projects which would not affect projects currently identified in the RSTIIP.

Executive Director Ed Zuercher clarified that the program was different than the Arterial Life Cycle Program, and that this funding opportunity will not return for another three years. He also noted that Pinal County agencies are eligible to apply due to the program's federal funding source.

Chair Hartke indicated that there were no requests to speak received for the agenda item.

MAG staff indicated that there were no online written public comments received for the agenda item.

Chair Hartke requested a motion to approve the agenda item. Mayor Wilson moved to approve the Arterial Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program Policies and Procedures, and Mayor Eaton seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following members voting in favor: Mayor Anderson, Mayor Bratcher, Mayor Crane, Mayor Eaton, Mayor Freeman, Mayor Friedel, Chair Hartke, Mayor LeVault, Mayor Molina, Mayor Morris, Mayor Orsborn, President Pattea, Mayor Pizzillo, Mayor Rodriguez, Mayor Sartor, Mayor Schoaf, Mayor Sikes, Mayor Smith, Vice Mayor Andeen-Keller, Mayor Weiers, Mayor Wheatley, Mayor Wilson, and Mayor Woods.

***7. Arterial Widening Program Policies and Procedures**

Chair Hartke reintroduced Mr. Stone to present on this item. This item was on the agenda for action.

Mr. Stone noted that this presentation was similar to the aforementioned arterial rehabilitation program, and he would focus on the differences between the two. He explained that the Arterial Widening Program is one of the two competitive programs federally funded under the RSTIIP and highlighted the great member agency participation in the program's development efforts. The program has an annual allocation of \$15 million and a total of \$300 million available over the life of the RSTIIP.

The call for projects would be issued on Friday, with funding spanning three years, and the MAG Street Committee would review applications in May.

Mr. Stone outlined the goals of the arterial widening program, including widening existing roadways to increase capacity, establishing new arterial roadways, and improving connectivity between high-demand capacity roadways and activity centers to support economic development. Additionally, the program prioritizes safety for all roadway users, supports economic competitiveness and growth through strategic transportation investments, and maintains existing regional infrastructure. The program's objective is to increase regional mobility by improving capacity on existing roadways and allowing for the expansion of the network while also focusing on mobility. Eligibility requirements align with those of the arterial rehabilitation program, covering the entire arterial roadway network.

Mr. Stone detailed key program highlights, stating that all four project phases are eligible with a maximum 70 percent regional funding support. There are no caps on applications or funding requests, and all federal requirements apply. The administration fee charged by ADOT is an eligible cost, and applicants should ensure their projects are appropriately sequenced if applying for construction-only projects. Of note, enhancements and betterments are not eligible for funding.

Mr. Stone moved on to the evaluation scoring criteria, noting that based on earlier feedback provided by policy committees, the scoring distribution had been adjusted from an initial 75/25 quantitative/qualitative split to a 65/35 ratio. The quantitative assessment includes traffic volume, roadway reliability, and crash data, while the qualitative assessment notably incorporates economic development considerations.

Mr. Stone outlined the next steps for the program, stating that the application and approval process follows the same schedule as the arterial rehabilitation program. He explained that the policies are being considered this month with approval of the project rankings and funding scenarios targeted for presentation in June to the Regional Council. Total funding available for this call for projects is approximately \$55 million, and applications are due on May 6 with MAG Regional Council approval expected in June.

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

Mayor Wilson asked if Pinal County was eligible to apply. Mr. Stone confirmed that all member agencies within Pinal and Maricopa counties are eligible, as the program is funded with the region's federal funds.

Chair Hartke indicated that there were no requests to speak received for the agenda item.

MAG staff indicated that there were no online written public comments received for the agenda item.

Chair Hartke requested a motion to approve the agenda item. Mayor Smith moved to approve the Arterial Widening Program Policies and Procedures, and Mayor Orsborn seconded the motion.

The motion passed with the following members voting in favor: Mayor Anderson, Mayor Bratcher, Mayor Crane, Mayor Eaton, Mayor Freeman, Mayor Friedel, Chair Hartke, Mayor LeVault, Mayor Molina, Mayor Morris, Mayor Orsborn, President Pattea, Mayor Pizzillo, Mayor Rodriguez, Mayor Sartor, Mayor Schoaf, Mayor Sikes, Mayor Smith, Vice Mayor Andeen-Keller, Mayor Weiers, Mayor Wheatley, Mayor Wilson, and Mayor Woods.

8. Update on the Proposition 479 Transit Life Cycle Program Implementation Activities

Chair Hartke introduced Arminta Syed, policy and initiatives program manager, to present on this item. This item was on the agenda for information and discussion.

Ms. Syed began by providing context for the Transit Life Cycle Program (TLCP), noting that it is the management tool for the transit investments in the RSTIIP. Ms. Syed explained that the TLCP has the largest policy shifts of any life cycle program between Prop 400 and Prop 479, with funding considerations for operations and capital, and the transition of program management from Valley Metro to MAG, which will involve establishing implementation and management procedures. Ms. Syed emphasized that because of these reasons, the transition from Prop 400 to Prop 479 would be complex and that the goal of the presentation was to give a high-level overview of the program in advance of upcoming in-depth conversations around TLCP policy development activities.

Ms. Syed provided historical context of regional transit funding policy, outlining lessons learned from Prop 400, which was based on the 2003 RTP that initially took a long-range, plan-based approach, with regional funding identified for regional bus operations and capital and rail capital investments. Prior to Prop 400, transit service varied throughout the region, due mainly to unevenness in local funding. The plan-based approach sought to remedy this by committing regional funding to enable a consistent level of service for key routes across the region. Ms. Syed explained how the plan-based model was vulnerable to market risk and did not account for changes in economic conditions, such as revenues, costs, and demographic changes, which deviated from the original plan assumptions. During the Great Recession of 2008, there were significant reductions in revenues collected, which forced significant cuts to core transit routes and made the plan-based commitment unable to be met. A key takeaway from this experience was that the long-range plan-based approach was better suited to capital programs, given the

comparatively longer time horizon associated with capital projects. As a result, there was a forced shift to a fixed allocation-based funding approach.

Ms. Syed stated that the Prop 400 fixed allocation-based model—where allocations were fixed at calculated shares for regional fixed route, express, and paratransit bus services—provided financial stability but its static nature did not allow the region to respond to changes in transit demand. To illustrate this point, she presented a chart showing the percentage of 2019 revenue miles and ridership, highly varied among the West, Central, and East valleys. She highlighted another issue with the fixed allocation-based approach, which was that there was an inherent incentivization of locally focused service rather than regionally focused service, such as express service. This focus on localized service went against the original intent of the Prop 400 plan, and resulted in disparities in levels of service across jurisdictions. She emphasized the critical role local funding will continue to play in providing transit service due to the significant gap between projected regional funding and identified regional transit needs. To illustrate this point, she showed a map of the region's bus routes, of which over half were funded locally. She stated that even if the entire half-cent sales tax were allocated exclusively to transit, the revenue collected would still be insufficient, so local funding contributions continue to play a critical role in providing transit service.

Taking the lessons learned from the two approaches, Ms. Syed explained that a major focus during RSTIIP development for the Prop 479 program focused on regional transit funding policy, and direction was provided to explore a more flexible option that would allow a response to changes in market demand over time and encourage investment to enhance performance. Ms. Syed stated that as a result, the new Prop 479 TLCP centers on a formula-based approach for distributing bus operation funds.

Ms. Syed described the structure of the Prop 479 TLCP, which includes components such as bus operating assistance, regional services, bus capital, and high-capacity transit programs, with revenue sources such as Federal Highway Administration funding, the dedicated half-cent sales tax, and Federal Transit Administration formula funding. Regarding bus operating assistance, the new formula-based approach will allocate funding to jurisdictions cyclically, providing flexibility to respond to changes in the market. The allocations will be calculated based on the performance of routes, specifically ridership and revenue miles, to incentivize investment in productive and efficient service. To minimize uncertainty caused by the transition to a new policy framework, a baseline allocation is provided for stability. Ms. Syed also noted that funding was also available for new routes to serve emerging markets through a seed program. She then outlined the regional services program, which would have dedicated funding set aside to provide these services rather than having jurisdictions fund them using their bus operations assistance allocation. She noted that this approach would help to ensure prioritization of and consistency in providing truly regional services that span multiple jurisdictions, including express bus, Americans with Disabilities Act paratransit, and regional transit operations support. She also highlighted the bus capital program, which would continue

Prop 400 policies, including 100 percent regional funding for bus purchases, and the high-capacity transit program, which outlines discrete projects to be funded.

Ms. Syed outlined the next steps for the Prop 479 TLCP, including development of a fiscally balanced program incorporating updated revenue forecasts and updating costs, working with Valley Metro to identify and update program component needs and funding over the life of the program, adjusting capital projects and phasing as needed, and establishing implementation and management procedures. These activities are being conducted in coordination with the Prop 479 TLCP working group, which consists of member agency representatives. The committee will receive additional updates over the coming months, with the first detailed discussion to cover the bus operating assistance program in June. After all four components have been discussed, the Draft Prop 479 TLCP and Draft TLCP Policies and Procedures will be presented in the fall for approval. She further explained that the Prop 400 funding policies will remain in effect through FY 2026, with new policies under Prop 479 taking effect in FY 2027 at the earliest.

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

Chair Hartke acknowledged the ongoing nature of this item and thanked Ms. Syed for her presentation.

9. Development of the MAG Fiscal Years (FYs) 2026-2027 Biennial Unified Planning Work Program and Budget

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

Mr. Zuercher explained that MAG operates on a two-year budget cycle. The Biennial UPWP and Budget is required by ADOT and federal agencies and is reviewed in the spring before final approval by the Regional Council in May. MAG staff presents the UPWP development process in stages.

Mr. Zuercher reviewed the UPWP development timeline, beginning with the overview presented in February on budget development and member dues. He noted that overall, MAG dues and assessments have been reduced, though the impact to specific member agencies varies based on those who previously paid 9-1-1 assessments.

Mr. Zuercher then discussed proposed compensation increases and staffing changes for fiscal years 2026 and 2027. He indicated that over the past two years, MAG has undergone a deliberate restructuring to improve operational efficiency. This includes consolidating the transportation division, integrating the regional analytics division into the transportation and information technology divisions, and eliminating the economic development function as a result of the sunseting of the Economic Development

Committee by MAG Regional Council. Additionally, office and clerical services were adjusted to align with modern workplace needs, and the human services division transitioned to a new community initiatives division. As a result of these restructuring efforts, Mr. Zuercher indicated he would be proposing the budget reflect a reduction from 126 to 120 full-time equivalent employees. Mr. Zuercher proposed a 3.5 percent average annual compensation increase for each fiscal year to retain and attract high-quality staff. Raises would be performance-based. He emphasized MAG's commitment to balancing operational efficiencies while rewarding high performance and ensuring that resources are directed toward projects and services that benefit member agencies.

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

Chair Hartke commended Mr. Zuercher on his tactfulness and efficient decision making in restructuring MAG.

10. Air Quality Update

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

Before turning to Mr. Poppen, Chair Hartke informed the membership about U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Administrator Lee Zeldin referencing Arizona's ozone situation at this year's National League of Cities Conference. To this end, Senator Kelly had coordinated his visit to Arizona, where he met with elected officials and other stakeholders. Chair Hartke acknowledged an EPA visit to the region under previous leadership, and he felt like the region's situation was heard and was optimistic about ongoing coordination efforts.

Mr. Poppen provided additional detail on the discussion with Administrator Zeldin, noting the unique opportunity MAG had to discuss our region's air quality concerns directly with a cabinet level official. The discussion with Administrator Zeldin began with Maricopa's ozone nonattainment area, which is nearly the size of the state of Connecticut and is 10 parts per billion (ppb) over the EPA 2015 ozone standard of 70 ppb. Mr. Poppen highlighted MAG's role in air quality as the designated Lead Air Quality Planning Organization for Maricopa County and portions of Pinal County. He explained that MAG develops a plan to meet EPA standards and the counties and state focus on setting and enforcing rules and control measures in the plan. Mr. Poppen presented a chart on declining manmade emissions from ozone-forming air pollutants, emphasizing that while local manmade emissions have significantly decreased over the years, ozone levels have not responded accordingly. The region was once at 75 ppb but since 2017, ozone concentrations have had an upward trajectory, for which MAG believes is at least partially due to wildfires. Mr. Poppen noted that this upward pattern has also been observed in other areas of the Intermountain West, such as Denver and Salt Lake City. He emphasized

that most of the ozone in the nonattainment area is from uncontrollable natural sources, including international or interstate transport, which is consistent in both EPA and MAG modeling.

Mr. Poppen outlined key requests made to the EPA, beginning with requested changes to EPA's guidance on implementing the Clean Air Act's relief provisions on international emissions, referred to as Section 179B guidance. Requested changes included that there should be no test that international emissions must be greater than domestic emissions and no test that international emissions must be higher or different on exceedance days. He explained that under the current guidance, EPA has granted relief only border areas, but he indicated that even in non-border areas non-local international emissions are still preventing the region from being able to attain the standard. Additionally, Mr. Poppen stated a third request for changes to guidance, specifically that there be no distinction required between international manmade and natural emissions.

He then detailed the request for an expedited approval processes to exclude ozone exceedance days caused by wildfires. He showed a smoke map for July 27, 2018, where nearly the entire Western U.S. was covered in heavy smoke, and he stated that EPA had considered this day as having low evidence of wildfire impacts. Administrator Zeldin appeared receptive to these requests and indicated that EPA changes could be forthcoming.

Chair Hartke asked if there was any evidence that the recent Los Angeles wildfires had contributed to the region's exceedance days, and Mr. Poppen responded that the region was not impacted by those fires because the predominant wind direction blew wildfire smoke west to the Pacific Ocean.

Lastly, Mr. Poppen touched on the impacts if the imposition of near-term sanctions on major industrial facilities and the withholding of federal highway funds were to occur. He emphasized the need for a timely decision from the EPA on keeping the region in a Moderate nonattainment status. He stated that the impending scheduled sanctions, if implemented, would actually result in increased transportation congestion for example, would be counterproductive for improving air quality.

Mr. Poppen summarized the requests to EPA, including revisions to the guidance for Clean Air Act Section 179B and the prompt approval of wildfires/exceptional events, which would allow MAG to submit an ozone plan that addresses Moderate Area requirements. Additionally, he stated that full EPA approval of Maricopa County rules 204 and 205 will generate local emission reductions credits that industry can use as well as for their expansion in the region.

Mr. Poppen explained that MAG is working with a consultant on a revised Moderate Area plan that includes a demonstration of the impact from international emissions as required by Section 179B. He noted that the Arizona Department of Environmental

Quality (ADEQ) made a request that EPA continue their work in funding efforts that support ozone science, such as the Ground Level Ozone Research (GLOR) study, and working with EPA scientists to understand ozone better.

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

Mayor Eaton asked if MAG was working with the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management for wildfire projections as they work on the plan to submit to EPA. Mr. Poppen stated that MAG works with Maricopa County and ADEQ on exceedances, in which he indicated that their meteorologists have some interaction with the forest service, but that projecting future wildfire season risks could be an area to consider in the future.

Mayor Orsborn acknowledged the national attention Arizona has received regarding ozone, prompting a visit from Administrator Zeldin and discussion with regional stakeholders. He asked if there was any way to move from Moderate down to Marginal attainment. Mr. Poppen indicated that the region could move from a nonattainment area to a maintenance area one in attainment, but he is not aware of an example where a region was reclassified to a less-stringent nonattainment classification from a stricter one. Mayor Orsborn suggested a conversation with EPA to investigate if backward movement to the Marginal level could be possible. Mr. Poppen concurred with this statement.

Chair Hartke echoed Mayor Orsborn's suggestion and asked when EPA would provide a response to the requests. Mr. Poppen responded that Senator Kelly's staff had sent EPA the compiled requests and he indicated that EPA would identify the things they could do in the short term and which items would take longer, but Mr. Poppen was confident that a Moderate Area plan could be submitted and approved.

Chair Hartke asked about the EPA's downsizing and if there was consideration of local scientific contribution and collaboration with EPA scientists. Mr. Poppen indicated that downsizing was projected to occur in the Office of Research and Development and that Administrator Zeldin had indicated more reliance on state and tribal submissions on their scientific evidence. However, he highlighted that continued efforts on understanding ozone science will continue to be critical and valuable for the region.

Chair Hartke asked if the GLOR study will identify emissions that will help with the region's planning in any case. Mr. Poppen concurred that the study would be helpful for planning.

Mr. Zuercher emphasized that the policy direction given by the group over the past two years has led to significant progress in addressing air quality concerns. He highlighted the unprecedented visit of the EPA administrator within his first two months in office, which he attributed to the unified voice of mayors and the business community. He noted

that the consistent messaging developed in MAG meetings has been echoed by business partners, demonstrating the effectiveness of their coordinated efforts. Mr. Zuercher also discussed the growing collaboration with Intermountain West cities such as Denver, Salt Lake City, and Las Vegas, and he commended Mr. Poppen and his team for their leadership nationally in air quality planning. He highlighted a recent meeting where MAG convened representatives from these cities to share information about the GLOR study. He credited the group's policy direction for enabling these advancements.

Mayor Orsborn asked if the presentation was available on the MAG website or could be distributed via email. Mr. Poppen confirmed that the presentation could be distributed.

With no further questions or comments, Chair Hartke thanked Mr. Poppen for his update.

11. 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 began with an acknowledgment of the significant decision made by the Regional Council to allocate \$150 million to improve the region's arterial network.

Mr. Zuercher shared that a virtual public meeting had been held earlier in the month for the US 60 (Grand Avenue) Loop 303 to SR 74 corridor study, with participation from ADOT, Peoria, Surprise, and MAG staff. He explained that this study was critical for regional connectivity, especially given the increasing activity surrounding the BNSF Railway and its effects on Wickenburg and surrounding areas.

Mr. Zuercher announced that Governor Hobbs and Arizona Forward honored MAG with the Governor's Award for Arizona's Future earlier in the month. This award recognized the RSTIIP and Prop 479, and he noted that Mayor Orsborn and Mayor Gallego had accepted the award on behalf of MAG.

Lastly, Mr. Zuercher acknowledged Chair Hartke's bold fashion choices, referencing the previous month's attire of ruby red shoes for his state of the city address and, recently, an emerald, green hat in celebration of St. Patrick's Day.

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

Mayor Sartor thanked Mr. Zuercher and the MAG team for their work on the US 60 (Grand Avenue) Loop 303 to SR 74 corridor study, emphasizing that this study will have a significant impact on the City of Surprise and the broader northwest region.

With no further comments, Chair Hartke thanked Mr. Zuercher for his report.

12. Legislative Update

Chair Hartke introduced Samantha Klakulak, government relations project manager, to present on this item. This item was on the agenda for information and discussion.

Ms. Klakulak noted that the legislative session was in its 11th week and final official week for hearing bills in the opposite chamber. She highlighted SB 1086, which pertains to transportation system performance and ADOT. She explained that the bill was being heard in the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee that afternoon. This legislation introduces new performance factor definitions and weights, bypassing ADOT's current project and programming process, which aligns with federal laws. She warned that the proposed changes could jeopardize both current and future programs as well as federal funding. Additionally, with regard to Prop 479 implementation, its passage could restrict policymakers' ability to select quality outcome-based projects while also jeopardizing certain transit projects in the region.

Next, Ms. Klakulak discussed House Concurrent Resolution 2035 and its counterpart, Senate Concurrent Resolution 1004, which prohibit vehicle mileage tracking taxes. She noted that the Senate version had already passed out of the Senate, while the House version had been heard in the Committee of the Whole. Because these resolutions are identical, they could move through their respective chambers without additional hearings. She mentioned that the House Government Committee was currently reviewing the Senate Bill version of this measure, rather than the resolution.

Ms. Klakulak then addressed SB 1128, which focuses on air quality causation within state boundaries. The bill was heard the previous day in the House Natural Resources, Energy, and Water Committee, where it failed on a 5-5 vote. This bill requires ADEQ to consider factors such as emissions transported from other states and the effects of solar radiation or heat when revising the state's implementation plan or related rules.

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

13. Request for Future Agenda Items

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

14. Comments from the Committee

Chair Hartke asked the members if there were any comments.

Chair Hartke mentioned that he thought he saw Dianne Barker, a regular public speaker at Regional Council meetings, at the St. Patrick's Day parade, and Mayor Pizzillo also complimented him on the color of his hat.

Adjournment

Chair Hartke indicated that the next meeting of the Regional Council would take place on April 23, 2025. There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 12:42 p.m.

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