

Questions and Answers About the MAG Regional Transportation Plan

Q: How was the plan developed?

A: The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) has spent the past few years conducting intensive transportation studies, talking to thousands of citizens and working with local agencies to identify future transportation needs. This input was used in the creation of the new Regional Transportation Plan, which will guide transportation investments in the region for the next 20-30 years. Projects have been identified and the plan has been tested to meet performance goals such as safety, mobility, and air quality requirements. The Regional Transportation Plan was developed in cooperation with the Arizona Department of Transportation and Valley Metro, and safeguards are in place to prevent cost overruns and to provide citizen oversight.

The plan was approved unanimously by the Transportation Policy Committee and Regional Council.

Q: What's included in the plan?

A. Here are just a few of the key components of the Draft Regional Transportation Plan.

- New and improved freeways with better access and more capacity.
- More transportation choices.
- Improved streets and intersections to help relieve congestion.
- Expanded commuter options for easier rush-hour travel.
- Extensions to the planned light rail system.
- More bus service with less waiting.

Freeways/Highways = 57% of total regional funds.

- Additional lanes on Loop 101, Loop 202, I-10, I-17, SR 51, US 60.
- New freeways, including Loop 303, the I-10 Reliever, Williams Gateway Parkway and the South Mountain Loop.
- New or improved traffic interchanges.
- New carpool (HOV) lanes.
- Grand Avenue improvements.
- Maintenance (litter control/landscaping).
- Freeway management system.
- Neighborhood noise mitigation.

Transit = 32% of total regional funds (15% bus, 15% rail, 2% other transit).

- 27.7 miles of new light rail expansion beyond the 30 miles being funded by cities.
- A regional bus plan known as a “supergrid.” The supergrid concept includes new or enhanced service on 30 routes, plus the creation of 10 new routes.
- Improvements to express/bus rapid transit service, including enhancements to 26 existing BRT/Express routes and the creation of 14 new BRT routes.
- A tripling of paratransit services for Americans with disabilities.
- 32 new passenger facilities (including 20 park-and-ride lots).
- More than 2,100 new buses, 1,000 new Dial-a-Ride vehicles and more than 1,400 new commuter van-pool vehicles.
- Commuter rail implementation planning.

Street Improvements = 9% of total regional funds.

- Northern Avenue Parkway.
- Rio Salado Parkway.
- Sonoran Parkway.
- Major street and intersection improvements across the Valley.
- Intelligent Transportation Systems such as “smart” signals that sense traffic conditions.

Other Programs = 2% of total regional funds

- Safety planning.
- Regional planning programs.
- Bicycle projects.
- Pedestrian facilities.
- Programs to reduce travel and improve air quality.
- Rideshare programs.

The full plan and executive summary are available online.

- [Download Final Regional Transportation Plan \(Adopted 11/25/03\)](#)
- [Download Final Regional Transportation Plan Executive Summary](#)

- [Download “A Transportation Plan for the Future” \(Single Page Summary Flier\)](#)

Q: How will the plan be approved by the community?

A: The Arizona state legislature is currently considering legislation authorizing the plan to be included as a ballot question in a countywide election in 2004. The governor must sign a bill by February 3 for the measure to be included in the May 18 election. If the Governor signs the bill by February 3, let's just talk about the fact that the legislature had to approve a bill to allow Maricopa County to vote and the Governor is expected to sign the bill.

Q: Light rail seems to be a lightning rod issue in the debate over the transportation plan, with some legislators advocating for a separate vote on light rail. Why do proponents of the plan say it's important to keep the plan intact? Can we tailor this question to why must the plan be voted on as is rather than vote on each component?

A: In creating the regional transportation plan, MAG followed the procedure outlined by the legislature. The plan was developed with the input of thousands of citizens and has support from cities Valleywide. Some cities want more and improved freeways, others wanted more rail or transit improvements. The plan works because there is something for everyone – no matter where they live in the Valley. If citizens were allowed to vote on each element separately, it would jeopardize the entire plan. Can we add something about how a balanced transportation network depends on the efficiency of different ways to travel around the valley. A piecemeal approach will cause Maricopa County to have disjointed network of transportation options that could contribute to higher pollution levels in the valley, fewer options for moving around the valley, unreliable services, etc....

Q: What does the community think about the plan?

A: Polls indicate that most voters would support an extension of the half cent sales tax, and that they believe in a balanced transportation system, with equal attention given to freeways, roadways, rail and bus. In a poll taken in December 2001 of 1,009 voters by the Behavior Research Center eight out of ten people said they would support the extension of the current half-cent sales tax for transportation. The support was strong within all geographic areas of the Valley.

According to poll results, voters appear to recognize that there is a need for continued transportation funding to accommodate projected growth in the region, with more than 60 percent stating they do not believe there are enough funds

available to cover needed transportation improvements in Maricopa County over the next 20 years.

Seventy-five percent of those polled indicated a belief that congestion will get worse without additional funding.

Voters supported a mix of transportation improvements. When asked how they would prioritize spending, voters indicated they would spend about 57 percent on freeway and surface street improvements, and 43 percent on transit.

Among the specific transportation improvements receiving the highest spending priorities were: timing traffic lights to improve traffic flow (79%); improving safety on streets and freeways (72%); improving dial-a-ride transit service (65%); adding more left turn arrows on main streets and roads (62%); adding more bus pullouts (57%); expanding bus service to more areas of the Valley (55%); completing high occupancy vehicle lanes of freeways (54%); increasing the capacity on congested major streets by adding more lanes (52%), and expanding the frequency of bus service (52%).

A second random-sample telephone poll of 600 registered voters was conducted by Behavior Research Center on behalf of the Transportation Policy Committee in August 2003. The poll indicated that 75 percent of Maricopa County voters would support the extension of the current half-cent sales tax for transportation, if the election were held today.

The support was strong within all geographic areas of the Valley. Voters were also asked to rate their overall transportation spending priorities. Freeway, major street improvements and bus service were the highest-rated priorities, with six to seven in ten giving each a high priority. Light rail and Dial-a-Ride services received high priority ratings from 45 percent and 39 percent, respectively, while another fifth to a third rated each as "moderate" priorities. Voters also showed support for regional improvements, with 89 percent reporting that they favor a transportation system that improves how people get around the entire Valley, and only nine percent favoring one that improves how people get around their area of the Valley.

When asked the likelihood of utilizing various transportation modes in the future, 94 percent of respondents indicated they or a member of their family would use freeways, 55 percent indicated they would use light rail, 49 percent bus service, and 25 percent Dial-a-Ride.

Where can I learn more about the transportation plans for my specific community?

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