

# REGIONAL TRANSIT PROBLEM DEFINITION

Fact Sheet #3  
September 2008

## MAG Regional Transit Framework Study



Maricopa County contains one of the fastest-growing metropolitan areas in the nation, with nearly 700,000 new residents added between 2000 and 2006. While the county has a population of approximately 3.8 million today, regional forecasts indicate that it may be home to 6.1 million people by 2030. In 2004, county voters approved funding for a long-range Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) with funding for public transit. However, the funded improvements will be insufficient to keep up with regional growth. Extensive development is predicted on the edge of the urban area and beyond, where few or no transit services are currently planned.

An approach with consideration of all modes of transportation, including public transit, is essential to address the region's growing transportation demand. To develop such an approach, the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), as the regional transportation planning agency in Maricopa County, must first identify and prioritize future transit needs for the entire region. This is the purpose of the MAG Regional Transit Framework Study and the immediate problem to be addressed.

### KEY DEFICIENCIES

Through research and stakeholder input (such as community focus groups and surveys), the MAG study team has identified the following regional transit deficiencies:

- Transit demand exceeding capacity  
*(in areas and corridors with high demand for service)*
- Limited service expansion *(as funded and programmed in the twenty-year RTP)*
- Capital deficiencies *(i.e., insufficient fixed infrastructure, facilities and vehicles)*
- Unmet needs for convenient services
- Unserved undeveloped areas *(with a need for rural or inter-community service)*
- Unserved growth areas
- More broadly dispersed employment  
*(making conventional transit less efficient and more costly to provide)*
- Congested roadways  
*(slowing transit service; making it less efficient and less appealing)*
- Economic competitiveness *(which is becoming more dependent on good public transit)*
- Lack of funding for new transit investments

In general, deficiencies of the public transportation system in Maricopa County fall within three overlapping categories: *service area coverage, passenger convenience, and funding.*

### SERVICE AREA COVERAGE

Most population growth is projected to occur in areas outside the Loop 101 and 202 freeways—areas that currently have little or no transit service. While the RTP provides for some expansion of service areas, geographic coverage will still be limited, as will hours and frequency of service. Addressing future transit needs on the periphery of the metropolitan area will require consideration of both residential and employment concentrations.

## PASSENGER CONVENIENCE

Regional focus groups and surveys revealed many forms of inconvenience that discourage transit ridership among those who have other travel options. These include long waits at transfer points, safety and security concerns (e.g., lighting, safe crosswalks, visibility), lack of amenities at many transit stops, absence of real-time arrival information, overcrowding, roadway congestion (causing longer and less reliable travel times), and inadequate capacity at park-and-ride lots. The RTP addresses only some of these issues at a limited number of locations. Paradoxically, improved transit can be the victim of its own success: attracting more riders can lead to vehicle overcrowding and capacity problems at passenger facilities.

Demand-responsive transit (dial-a-ride) faces its own unique challenges. This type of service relies on a multiple of providers serving individual jurisdictions, resulting in inconsistent fares, eligibility requirements and hours of operation. Substantial inconvenience and lost time can result for persons who wish to travel from one community to another.

## FUNDING

Not only is transit funding modest compared with many peer regions; it also comes from a mix of regional and local sources. As a result, the level of service will continue to vary from one community to another, even when the RTP improvements have been fully implemented. A truly seamless and consistent regional system would require regional funding beyond the level provided through the RTP.

## AREA-BASED TRANSIT DEFICIENCIES

The MAG study area was divided into fourteen subareas, as Figure 1 shows, in order to analyze the types of existing or expected deficiencies in each part of the region. Nearly every subarea has clear deficiencies in the level and availability of transit service. At least four subareas experience vehicle overcrowding, six are deficient in existing travel speeds, and eight are projected to experience travel demand exceeding transit service capacity.

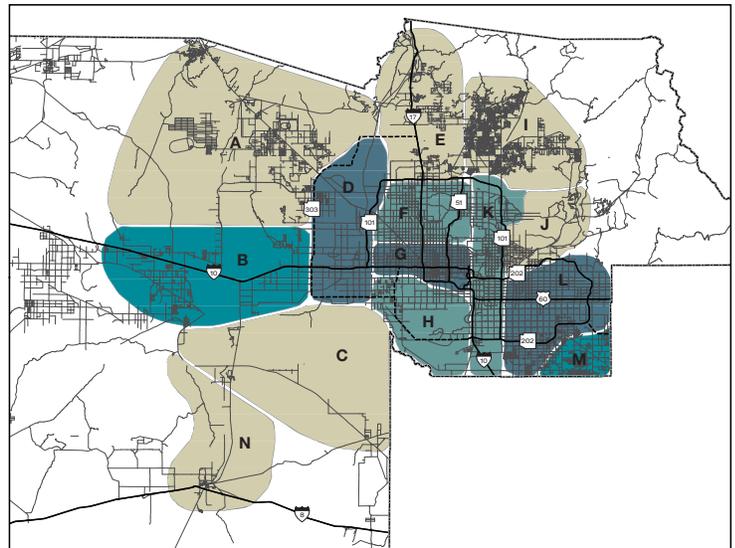
## REGIONAL TRANSIT NEEDS

The analysis of transit deficiencies led the MAG study team to identify four categories of regional transit needs:

- New and Expanded Transit Services
- New Service Corridors
- Higher-Speed Travel Opportunities
- New Revenue Sources

In its next phase, the MAG Regional Transit Framework Study will define and evaluate alternative scenarios to meet these needs and enhance regional mobility through an improved transit system.

**Figure 1: Regional Subareas With Transit Deficiencies**



### Regional Subareas with Transit Deficiencies

#### Regional Subareas by Transit Deficiencies

- Includes 2 Deficiency Categories
- Includes 3 Deficiency Categories
- Includes 4 Deficiency Categories
- Includes 5 Deficiency Categories

#### Freeways/Expressways & Major Roads

- Existing
- Planned
- Major Roads

Source: HDR Engineering, Inc., 2008

Sub Area	Area-Based Transit Deficiencies				
	Population & Employment Growth	Transit Service Levels/Availability	Transit Service Performance (overcrowding)	Regional Travel Demand	Existing Travel Speeds
A - Northwest	●	●			
B - West	●	●		●	
C - Southwest	●	●			
D - West Central	●	●		●	●
E - North	●	●			
F - North Central	●	●	●	●	●
G - Central	●	●	●	●	●
H - South Central	●	●	●	●	●
I - Northeast	●	●			
J - East	●	●			
K - East Central	●	●	●	●	●
L - Southeast I	●	●		●	●
M - Southeast II	●	●		●	
N - South	●	●			

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

About the study or how to get involved, visit [bqaz.org](http://bqaz.org) and select "MAG Regional Transit Framework Study" or Contact Kevin Wallace of Maricopa Association of Governments **phone:** 602-254-6300 **e-mail:** [kwallace@mag.maricopa.gov](mailto:kwallace@mag.maricopa.gov)