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## 2050 planning effort focuses on future transportation

**By Cindy Barks**

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PRESCOTT - The red markings were telling: Indicating major population areas in Arizona, the bright blobs on the map enlarged substantially between 2005 and 2050.

The map was a part of a presentation that Maricopa Association of Governments Senior Engineer Robert Hazlett gave Wednesday night as part of the "Look Forward" series that is going on in conjunction with the community's Vision 2050 planning effort.

This week, the focus was on transportation, and how a skyrocketing population might affect traveling in Arizona in the future.

According to Hazlett's statistics, the state's population could more than double in the next four decades - from approximately 6 million to about 16 million.

In fact, by the year 2050, portions of much of the state could be a part of a "megalopolis" - a corridor of cities that have grown together into one massive population center.

Hazlett's map showed Prescott right in the center of such a corridor.

Referring to it as the Sun Corridor, Hazlett projected that Arizona's megalopolis would run virtually from the Mexican border and northwest to Tucson, Phoenix, Prescott, and ultimately on to Las Vegas.

Already, Hazlett said the Sun Corridor is one of 10 megalopolises in the country, albeit the smallest one. The largest includes East Coast areas such as New York, Philadelphia and Boston, he said.

Hazlett based much of his presentation on the "Building a Quality Arizona" planning effort that the [Arizona Department of Transportation](#) currently is conducting.

He explained that the effort focuses on inter-connectivity throughout the state.

"We're trying very much to understand transportation and not just look at Maricopa County," Hazlett said, adding that what happens in one part of the state also affects others regions.

And transportation inter-connectivity does not end there. Hazlett pointed out that growth in Arizona's neighboring states has a dramatic impact on Arizona as well.

As an example, he brought up the explosive growth that California is projecting. By 2050, he said, that West Coast state could grow to about 60 million people, Hazlett said. That compares with about 36 million currently.

On a smaller scale, Hazlett said growth in Utah and New Mexico also would affect traffic across Arizona. For

instance, he pointed out that projections show that St. George, Utah - currently at about 130,000 people - would grow to about 610,000 in 2050 - for 470-percent growth.

Added Hazlett: "How Arizona behaves and reacts will be how Arizona becomes part of the global economy."

Stressing that slow-growing states such as Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Ohio "would kill for the position we're in right now," Hazlett said the projections give Arizona a unique opportunity to shape its growth.

To prepare, Hazlett said long-term plans that look several decades into the future make more sense than the traditional 20-year plans. Both Prescott's 2050 plan and the state's Building a Quality Arizona look more than four decades forward.

Hazlett's presentation was the second of eight that the 2050 effort plans for the Look Forward series.

William Arnold, chairman of the 2050 effort, noted that the goal of the presentations is to give members of the various working groups unique insights about the future.

Mayor [Jack Wilson](#), who spearheaded the Vision 2050 effort, agreed. "The idea is to open your mind," he told the several dozen people who turned out for this week's presentation at the Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University campus.

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