

Summary of June 25, 2009 Comments on the Population and Land-Use White Paper

By Bob Cook

1. The relevant scenario comparison is between Status Quo and Smart Growth. What would be very useful for regional infrastructure planning is to have a detailed cost-benefit comparison between business-as-usual and a smart growth strategy.
2. To compare business as usual to enhanced open space, increased density and transit-oriented development scenarios may be informative in order to learn about these separate impacts on where growth will likely occur but it does not inform us about how to plan infrastructure under emerging real-world conditions.
3. Adding an additional one million people to the region under the Status Quo scenario would appear to be closer to impossible rather than "Most Easy" since business-as-usual has shown to be the most expensive and least efficient urban form in terms of total costs and benefits.
4. We are facing absolutely critical sustainability challenges in this region. This white paper did not address any other population growth assumptions except for "doubling our population." We are seriously unprepared for any slower growth scenarios playing out.
5. The committee has heard many presentations from the local scientific and academic community. These presentations show that population growth in the future could decline because of:
 - Water shortages
 - Increasingly higher energy and water costs/prices
 - Increasingly hotter and drier climate
 - Grassification of our local Sonoran Desert ecosystems
 - Higher fire danger in mountains and newly formed grasslands
 - Growing unemployment due to slowdown of development industry
 - The "herd dynamic" to join others escaping increasing hardship