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Fewer Drivers Littering Valley Highways

PHOENIX (April 8, 2015)—A campaign to get Arizona drivers to stop littering may be having an impact. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) reports that the amount of roadside trash collected by maintenance crews has steadily declined since the *Don't Trash Arizona* campaign was jointly implemented by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) in 2006.

At the outset of the *Don't Trash Arizona* campaign in July 2006, ADOT reported collecting an average of 130,443 bags of roadside trash annually. New figures indicate the number of bags collected over the past has dropped the nine-year average to 111,000 bags. From year 2006 to 2014, there has been a 30 percent decrease in roadside litter.

“While the extent of roadside litter varies depending on the specific areas and inconsistencies in littering behavior, we have witnessed a meaningful, tangible decrease in the volume of roadside litter since 2006,” said Patricia Powers-Zermeño, ADOT Adopt a Highway volunteer program manager. “We have not changed the makeup of how our cleanup crews operate. There’s simply less litter to collect, which is an exciting trend.”

Powers-Zermeño believes the decrease in roadside litter can be attributed, at least in part, to the *Don't Trash Arizona* campaign, which discourages Valley drivers from littering while driving, and also encourages drivers to properly secure loads they may be hauling. The campaign specifically targets males 18-34, which are consistently found to be the most likely demographic to engage in littering behavior. Each year, the campaign is evaluated through a scientific survey. The most recent survey indicated an uptick in awareness for the campaign, as well as a 25 percent increase in the number of 18-34 year old drivers who had not littered in the past year.

“MAG is committed to reducing the amount of trash on our roadways by increasing awareness of the environmental, economic, health and safety impacts of roadside litter,” said MAG Chair Michael LeVault, mayor of Youngtown. “It is rewarding to learn that this program is making a difference and that drivers appear to be taking those messages to heart.” The chart to the right shows how many bags of litter have been collected annually by ADOT crews. **The nine-year average equals 111,000 bags per year.**

Of those who admit to littering while driving, food/organic material continues to be the most common type of litter mentioned by residents (39%), followed by small pieces of paper (25%) and other food wrappers (12%). While cigarette butts are mentioned by three percent of respondents, they are the most difficult item for road crews to remove. *Don't Trash Arizona's* 2015 campaign will continue to focus on those problem areas.

About *Don't Trash Arizona*

Don't Trash Arizona is a joint effort between the Maricopa Association of Governments and the Arizona Department of Transportation to address the economic, safety, and health impacts of freeway litter along regional and state highways. The program is funded through Proposition 400, which was approved by voters in 2004. That funding encompasses litter pickup, sweeping, and landscape maintenance, as well as litter education and prevention. *Don't Trash Arizona* seeks to change attitudes, awareness, and most importantly, behavior, when it comes to roadway littering. Visit www.DontTrashArizona.com.

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Number of Bags of Litter Collected Annually

