

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Earth Month: Help Maricopa County Be Litter-Free This April**

**PHOENIX (March 5, 2014)** April is known for spring showers, a day of foolery, and more recently, support for a sustainable environment. Named as “Earth Month” for 44 years, April serves as a reminder to protect the environment. One easy solution is to simply refrain from littering. The Maricopa Association of Governments’ (MAG) *Don’t Trash Arizona* campaign urges drivers in the Valley to make a difference this Earth Month, and every other day of the year, by committing to be litter-free.

“From degrading the beautiful desert landscape to contaminating the Valley’s water supply, littering cups, cigarette butts and other trash is harmful to the environment,” said MAG Chair and Mesa Mayor Scott Smith. “Every piece of trash thrown from a vehicle adds up to make highways ugly, unhealthy and unsafe.”

On average, Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) crews pick up an average 500 bags of litter from Valley freeways each day, or 1.6 million tons of letter every year. Additional litter facts include:

- Cigarette butts are the largest source of litter on highways, followed by beverage containers, paper, plastic and improperly secured cargo loads.
- Debris on roadways causes 25,000 accidents each year and more than 80 deaths across the U.S.
- Biodegradable items such as banana peels and apple cores are not always considered litter by motorists. But not only does unsightly litter attract other litter, biodegradable items can take months or years to fully decompose and pose a danger to wildlife that is attracted to the roadway.
- Litter clean-up in Maricopa County costs taxpayers \$3 million each year.

Keeping the Valley’s freeways litter-free is as simple as keeping trash inside the vehicle. To make it even easier, here are a few tips and products:

- Be prepared and have a litterbag handy while on the road. *Don’t Trash Arizona* will send a free litterbag to Arizona residents who request one through the [website](#). Keep a second bag for recyclable items such as paper and plastic.
- Do not just toss trash and other objects into truck beds as it will fly out while driving. Secure loads with straps, ropes and bungee cords or cover the entire bed with a tarp or net.
- Use a portable ashtray in order to store cigarette butts until they can be properly disposed of in a trash can.
- Become a [campaign advocate](#) and print *Don’t Trash Arizona* stickers, posters and more from the website. Businesses can also show support by hosting banner ads on their websites, which are also available online.

### **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](http://www.DontTrashArizona.com).