

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 21, 1999

The Transportation Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the City Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on July 21, 1999 at 3:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Keno Hawker, Chairman
John Giles
Pat Pomeroy

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD PRESENT

Paul Knowles

COUNCIL PRESENT

Jim Davidson

STAFF PRESENT

C.K. Luster
Shelly Allen
Cindy Barris
Candace Cannistraro
Jack Friedline
Mike Hutchinson
Barbara Jones
Ron Krosting
Keith Nath
Jeff Martin
Patrick Murphy
Tom Remes
Ross Renner
Jim Wright

OTHERS PRESENT

Wulf Grote
Barrett Marson
Marc Sorenson
Others

(The meeting was posted as a proposed joint meeting of both the Transportation Committee and the Transportation Advisory Board. However, the Transportation Advisory Board lacked a quorum, so the Transportation Committee proceeded separately. The sole representative from the Transportation Advisory Board did not vote on any matters.)

Transportation Committee Chairman Hawker welcomed Paul Knowles, Transportation Advisory Boardmember, and Councilmember Davidson to the meeting.

1. Discuss and consider the Governor's Transportation Vision 21 Task Force report.

Assistant to the City Manager Jeff Martin advised that in February 1999, Governor Hull issued an executive order appointing a study committee on transportation entitled the Transportation Vision 21 Task Force. Mr. Martin stated that the Task Force was assigned a broad scope of work and that at the most recent meeting held in Chandler, the Task Force requested written input from the City of Mesa concerning transportation needs.

Mr. Martin noted the importance of the request but spoke additionally concerning the significance of visioning at the local and regional level. Mr. Martin commented regarding the recently updated Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) freeway program, the potential transit election to be held in Phoenix in the Spring of 2000, and effects on surrounding communities should the transit measure be approved.

Mr. Martin reported that the City has begun to review the issue of transportation internally and established a committee of which he is a member and Public Works Manager Jack Friedline is Chairman. Mr. Martin said that the committee has developed various concepts for consideration at the local, regional, and state level.

Mr. Friedline indicated that the City's committee anticipates a presentation to Council in the near future and that it is recommended that the City submit the following comments to the Governor's Task Force on transportation:

- Develop a vision of a quality transportation system locally, regionally, and statewide to act as a foundation for strategic planning.
- Develop a comprehensive transportation plan, with extensive community input on how to achieve a transportation system for the future.
- Coordinate the development and implementation of the plan so that it works seamlessly within each city and regionally.
- Focus on developing additional modes of transportation including bicycles, pedestrian, buses, and light rail, as well as intelligent transportation system (ITS) improvements and park and ride lots. It is also important to address the need of properly maintaining an ever-growing and aging transportation system.
- Identify viable funding sources for these plans. Additional funding may be considered by all levels of government locally, regionally, and statewide. The City of Mesa has set aside \$25 million for freeway acceleration. Consideration should also be given to increasing the state gas tax. With the expiration of the half-cent sales tax for transportation in Maricopa County looming in 2005, long-term planning needs to begin on the possibility of extending this as well.
- Identify additional creative financing techniques so that we may build on the success we have enjoyed with the state infrastructure bank and grant anticipation notes.
- Study possible improvements to the regional freeway system to reduce traffic congestion, particularly at freeway-to-freeway interchanges. Now that construction of the regional system has been accelerated, it makes sense to consider improvements to reduce congestion on sections of the freeway in the central part of the system.
- Any changes to the decision-making process for transportation should not increase the bureaucracy of the process.
- The City of Mesa also continues to make completion of the Santan Freeway to serve Williams Gateway Airport a high priority. Access to Williams Gateway from the freeway is critical, particularly for passenger service.

Chairman Hawker referred to the last item and commented that access from the freeway will initially be critical for economic development rather than passenger service.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of a transportation plan, possible funding requirements/sources, the potential Phoenix transit election, growth within the Valley, efforts to reduce traffic congestion, and feasibility/impact of a light rail system.

Chairman Hawker suggested two additions to the nine comments proposed by staff:

- Request that the Legislature provide a dedicated, reliable funding source.
- Widen the Superstition Freeway (U.S. 60) to the ultimate build of 12 lanes in one phase to avoid a perpetual construction project and provide economies of scale.

The Committee, Boardmember Knowles, and staff spoke regarding potential impacts of widening the Superstition Freeway, concerns expressed by Tempe residents, funding, light rail versus commuter rail, and feasible actions to accelerate commute time utilizing light rail (e.g., limit the number of stops).

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Giles, to recommend to Council that the City submit to the Governor's Transportation Vision 21 Task Force the nine comments prepared by staff and the two additional comments suggested by Chairman Hawker.

Carried unanimously.

Committeemember Pomeroy noted the composition of the Task Force and encouraged efforts to increase representation from the East Valley.

2. Discuss and consider a recommendation concerning the proposed light rail transit alignment from the Tempe border to Country Club Drive.

Chairman Hawker indicated that he had a potential conflict of interest in connection with the matter now under discussion which he wanted recorded in the minutes of the meeting, and because of such conflict of interest, he would refrain from voting upon or otherwise participating in any manner in connection with same. Chairman Hawker yielded the gavel to Committeemember Pomeroy for discussion of this item.

Transit Administrator Jim Wright introduced Marc Sorenson, Deputy Project Manager, Steve Beard & Associates, and Wulf Grote, Director of Capital Improvement, Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA).

Mr. Wright advised that two light rail alternatives (Main Street and the Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way) were presented to the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) for consideration in May 1999. Mr. Wright reported that more than 3,500 meeting announcements were mailed to residents and that following input from citizens, the TAB recently recommended the Main Street alignment. Mr. Wright requested the Committee's endorsement of the recommended alignment.

Mr. Wright displayed a map of the proposal and clarified that the recommendation from TAB addresses the light rail segment from the Tempe border to Country Club Drive. Mr. Wright indicated that options for the Town Center segment will be reviewed and presented later this year.

It was moved by Committeemember Giles, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, to recommend to Council approval of the Transportation Advisory Board's recommendation to select Main Street as the potential light rail alignment from the Tempe border to Country Club Drive.

Upon a tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Giles-Pomeroy

NAYS - None

ABSTAIN - Hawker

Committeemember Pomeroy declared the motion carried unanimously by those voting.

Committeemember Pomeroy yielded the gavel to Chairman Hawker.

3. Discuss and consider a recommendation concerning proposed improvements at Country Club Drive and the U.S. 60 (Superstition Freeway) interchange.

Supervising Engineer Ross Renner outlined a proposal by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to widen the Country Club Drive traffic interchange at the Superstition Freeway (U.S. 60). Mr. Renner stated that the City's estimated contribution for the project is \$1.3 million (federal aid monies), with the remainder to be funded by ADOT.

Mr. Renner referred to schematics and noted that the proposed project consists of widening Country Club Drive and the overcrossing structure at U.S. 60 to accommodate three (3) through lanes and dual left-turn lanes in each direction with a raised median.

In response to a question from Chairman Hawker, Mr. Renner said that it is his understanding that the current abutments will accommodate the proposed future widening of the Superstition Freeway.

Committeemember Giles stated support for the proposal but expressed concern additionally regarding traffic congestion along Mesa Drive. In response to a question from Committeemember Giles, Transportation Director Ron Krosting indicated that interchange improvements are anticipated in the future at Alma School Road, Dobson Road, and Mesa Drive when funding becomes available.

Discussion ensued concerning traffic counts, improvement costs, and funding sources.

Mr. Krosting responded to questions from Councilmember Davidson pertaining to freeway access and types of vehicles/traffic patterns along Country Club Drive.

Committeemember Giles encouraged efforts to expedite improvements at the Mesa Drive interchange and suggested seeking support from Chandler and Gilbert because freeway interchanges additionally assist residents from those communities.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Giles, to recommend to Council approval of the Arizona Department of Transportation's recommended alignment for widening the Country Club Drive traffic interchange at the Superstition Freeway (U.S. 60).

Carried unanimously.

The Committee and staff spoke briefly regarding the feasibility of utilizing freeway acceleration funds to expedite improvements.

Committeemember Pomeroy stated support for plans to avoid construction at more than one interchange simultaneously. Committeemember Giles indicated support for simultaneous construction in the event the interchanges are not adjacent.

Committeemember Giles noted the importance of informing the public concerning the project and encouraged efforts to minimize negative impacts on surrounding properties.

4. Discuss and consider a recommendation concerning proposed improvements on Broadway Road from the RWCD Canal to Power Road.

Engineering Design Director Peter Knudson distributed schematics to the Committee and described a proposal for improvements along Broadway Road from Power Road to the RWCD Canal. Mr. Knudson stated that more than 250 notices were distributed to residents and a public hearing was held recently to present the preferred alignment. Mr. Knudson reported that the alignment and public/staff comments were subsequently presented to the Transportation Advisory Board, who recommended approval of the preferred alignment. Mr. Knudson requested the Committee's endorsement of the proposal.

Committeemember Pomeroy questioned the scope of the project. Mr. Knudson said that the proposed improvements will replace the open drainage ditch with a new underground box culvert, increase the number of traffic lanes from four to six (three in each direction), install a raised median in the center of the street, install sidewalks on both sides of the new roadway, and install bus pullouts or shelters at various locations.

Mr. Nath noted that in most areas of the project, the curb has been moved closer to the center of the street, providing an increased area for sidewalks and landscaping behind the curb.

In response to a question from Committeemember Giles, Mr. Knudson spoke concerning the public hearing held recently and stated that suggestions from citizens were incorporated into the plan whenever feasible.

It was moved by Committeemember Giles, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, to recommend to Council approval of the preferred alignment for improving Broadway Road from Power Road to the RWCD Canal.

Carried unanimously.

5. Discuss and consider a recommendation concerning Gilbert Road and University Drive intersection improvements.

Committeemember Giles indicated that he had a potential conflict of interest in connection with the matter now under discussion which he wanted recorded in the minutes of the meeting, and because of such conflict of interest, he would refrain from voting upon or otherwise participating in any manner in connection with same.

Mr. Knudson outlined a proposal for improvements at the intersection of Gilbert Road and University Drive, which represents the next phase of construction along Gilbert Road. Mr. Knudson stated that the project will continue the raised median/widen two bridges and will impact a significant portion of right-of-way. Mr. Knudson estimated the cost of the project at \$5.3 million and said that if approved by Council, construction is scheduled to begin in the Spring of 2001.

Mr. Knudson reported that approximately 470 notices were distributed for a public meeting held recently and that approximately 50 citizens attended.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy, Mr. Knudson said that the proposed design will provide three lanes in each direction and dual left-turn lanes. Mr. Knudson indicated that walls will be erected along residential properties.

The Committee and staff spoke regarding comments received from citizens and the anticipated impact of the project. Mr. Nath stated that staff will consider alternatives to mitigate losses relative to right-of-way acquisition.

Chairman Hawker questioned future plans to continue widening Gilbert Road north to the Red Mountain Freeway. Mr. Nath said that an additional project is scheduled to install improvements from McKellips Road to the Red Mountain Freeway but reported that the portion of roadway between University Drive and McKellips Road has not been included to date in the five-year capital improvement program.

Chairman Hawker expressed concern regarding effects on traffic in the event the segment of roadway between University Drive and McKellips Road is not improved and suggested a review of the impact of the Red Mountain Freeway to date on existing interchanges. Mr. Krosting commented that traffic from the Red Mountain Freeway is anticipated to exit onto McDowell and McKellips Roads.

City Manager Charles Luster noted staff's concerns pertaining to the portion of Gilbert Road from the Red Mountain Freeway north to the Beeline Highway.

Discussion ensued relative to traffic counts, anticipated right-of-way acquisition, and the feasibility of reducing medians to minimize effects on property owners. Mr. Nath responded to questions from Councilmember Davidson regarding median landscaping.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Chairman Hawker, to recommend to Council approval of the preferred alignment for the Gilbert Road and University Drive intersection improvement project.

Upon a tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Hawker-Pomeroy
NAYS - None
ABSTAIN - Giles

Chairman Hawker declared the motion carried unanimously by those voting.

6. Discuss and consider a proposed recommendation concerning improvements at the Alma School Road and Main Street intersection.

Mr. Knudson presented a proposal to improve the Alma School Road and Main Street intersection. Mr. Knudson stated that the project will widen the intersection to accommodate double left-turn lanes east and west on Main Street and that right-turn lanes and bus pullouts will be provided on all four corners. Mr. Knudson reported that the total cost of the project is estimated at \$1.9 million and that if approved by Council, construction is scheduled to begin in February 2001 (anticipated duration of four months).

Mr. Knudson advised that a public hearing concerning the project was held recently, for which approximately 360 notices were distributed, and that public comments and staff's responses were presented to the Transportation Advisory Board.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy, Mr. Knudson said that improvements will be installed only along the east side of Alma School Road south of Main Street.

Chairman Hawker spoke concerning previous construction at this intersection and questioned the appropriateness of commencing further improvements given the possibility of the light rail alignment along Main Street. Mr. Krosting noted current traffic volumes and commented that the intersection presently experiences unacceptable delays and congestion for various traffic movements. Mr. Krosting indicated that minimal information is available at this time pertaining to configuration of the light rail system.

Discussion ensued pertaining to the potential Phoenix transit election to be held in the Spring of 2000, the time frame available prior to the advertisement for bids for this project, and the anticipated impact of a light rail system on traffic lanes and right-of-way.

Chairman Hawker expressed a reluctance to proceed if the intersection will be affected in the future by the light rail system. Mr. Krosting advised that a consultant has been asked to consider the general dimensions of light rail stations and necessary right-of-way.

Committeemember Giles questioned the feasibility of delaying action pending the results of the proposed Phoenix transit election. Mr. Krosting noted impacts relative to traffic congestion should the project be postponed.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy to recommend to Council approval of the preferred alignment for improving the Alma School Road and Main Street intersection while continuing to research/plan relative to a light rail system.

In response to a question from Committeemember Giles, Mr. Krosting stated that light rail potentially would not be completed to Dobson Road until 2004 and to the downtown area until 2006/2007. Mr. Nath commented that should the City proceed with engineering plans at this time, the majority of the information would remain viable even if modifications were required for a light rail system.

Committeemember Giles stated support for the proposal given staff's intent to continue to study and plan in view of a light rail system and the time frame involved before advertising for bids. Committeemember Giles seconded the motion.

Carried unanimously.

7. Adjournment.

It was moved by Committeemember Giles, seconded by Chairman Hawker, that the meeting of the Transportation Committee adjourn at 4:36 p.m.

Carried unanimously.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the meeting of the Transportation Committee of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 21st day of July 1999. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 1999

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK