

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 24, 2002

The Transportation Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on October 24, 2002 at 9:30 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT	COMMITTEE ABSENT	OFFICERS PRESENT
Rex Griswold Janie Thom Mike Whalen	Mayor Keno Hawker	None

1. Discuss and consider the City of Mesa's regional transportation funding priorities.

Assistant Development Services Manager Jeff Martin addressed the Committee concerning this agenda item. Mr. Martin provided an overview concerning the Maricopa Association of Government's (MAG) process of updating the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the Countywide half-cent sales tax for transportation. He noted that one of the initial studies that is being conducted in connection with updating the RTP is the Southeast Valley and Northern Pinal County Transportation Study, which the City is participating in and which is anticipated to be completed by the end of 2002.

Mr. Martin also discussed the High Capacity Transit Study and the Bottle Neck/Choke Point Study. He commented that these three studies plus an additional six studies are being conducted by MAG in preparation for updating the RTP. He noted that MAG has hired a consultant to establish criteria, which will be used to evaluate and prioritize the various projects proposed by Valley municipalities. Mr. Martin advised that it is his understanding that MAG's goal is to develop a plan by September 2003 and that County voters will be asked to approve extension of the transportation half-cent sales tax to fund the plan in the spring of 2004.

Discussion ensued regarding governance issues and the manner in which various proposed projects will be selected for funding.

In response to a question from Committeemember Thom, Mr. Martin explained that the High Capacity Transit Study includes bus rapid transit, light rail and commuter rail.

(Mayor Hawker joined the meeting at approximately 9:40 a.m.)

Mr. Martin referred and commented on the *Draft Mesa Regional Transportation Priorities* (See Attachment), copies of which were provided to the Committeemembers. He outlined 18 proposed projects in three categories: Transit Priorities, Freeway Priorities and Other Modal Priorities.

In response to Mr. Martin's explanation of #1 (Commuter rail service, potentially within the Union Pacific corridor, Williams Gateway Airport to the East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT) and connecting to downtown Phoenix through either the light rail transit connection or commuter rail extension into Phoenix), Chairman Whalen voiced opposition to designating EVIT as the connection point and said that he would prefer that "West Mesa" be listed as the connecting point.

Chairman Whalen commented that Avondale officials have requested that they be allowed to assume the lead and continue discussions with Union Pacific Railroad officials concerning this issue. He added that they have also asked that East Valley officials refrain from discussions with Union Pacific at this point in order to avoid jeopardizing the significant progress that has been achieved to date concerning the implementation of a pilot commuter rail project in West Phoenix. Chairman Whalen stated support for complying with this request and voiced the opinion that the East Valley will benefit from studying the effectiveness of the West Valley's efforts in this regard.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the Town of Gilbert has expressed significant interest in a commuter rail project and the fact that the design of a new residential development near Williams Gateway Airport contains a rail theme.

Mr. Martin stated that #2 (Extension of Light Rail Transit Project (LRT) 2.4 miles into downtown Mesa to Hibbert) is included in the list of projects because it is in the Vision 2025 Mesa Transportation Plan.

Committeemember Thom voiced concerns regarding reports that Tempe may not participate in the LRT project.

In response to questions from Committeemember Thom concerning the status of right-of-way acquisition on Main Street for the LRT project, Mr. Martin reported that staff is in the process of conducting title work and has not yet acquired any property.

Further discussion ensued regarding the Final Design aspect of Phase I of the LRT and funding associated with the project to date.

Committeemember Griswold voiced opposition to including this item on the list of priorities. He commented on the fact that it was excluded from the updated Transportation Plan recently recommended for voter approval by the Transportation Citizen Advisory Board and stated the opinion that including it on the list of priority projects represents a "lightening rod for opposition" to the entire list.

Committeemember Thom concurred with Committeemember Griswold's comments.

Chairman Whalen stated the opinion that in connection with priorities #2 and #3, a need exists to identify a high capacity transit corridor along Main Street that would run from the end point of

Phase I of the LRT project to the eastern City limits. Chairman Whalen voiced concerns regarding including Phase II of the LRT in the regional plan after eliminating the project from the City's Transportation Plan and stated support for eliminating #2 from the list of priorities. He added that designating a high capacity corridor and associated funding without designating the specific mode of transport allows for flexibility in the future. He also stated the opinion that due to concerns associated with ending Phase I of the LRT project at EVIT, an immediate need exists to address this issue with Valley Metro Rail. Chairman Whalen also discussed the fact that the City will have the opportunity to reconsider extending the LRT system after evaluating the effectiveness of Phase I.

Mayor Hawker stated support regarding Chairman Whalen's suggestion and commented on the benefits associated with having a high capacity transit corridor available to utilize in connection with future transit technology.

Mr. Martin commented on #4 (Transit center at end of LRT line in downtown Mesa), and said that based on previous comments regarding #2 and #3, this item would be modified as "Transit Center" only, and exclude the LRT and location references.

Discussion ensued concerning the impact of deleting \$130 million (#2) from the list of Transit Priorities; and the fact that staff would discuss the Committee's suggestions concerning transit priorities with MAG staff, modify the priority list and place this on a future agenda for further Committee direction.

Committeemember Griswold commented on the future growth anticipated in conjunction with Williams Gateway Airport and stressed the importance of securing regional funding for #8 (Williams Gateway Airport Parkway extending from the Santan Freeway at the Hawes Road traffic interchange east to Pinal County; Santan Freeway improvements to provide connection with WGA Parkway at Hawes Road traffic interchange) and for acquiring right-of-way as soon as possible for this project.

Mr. Martin reported that a study being conducted by Parsons Brinkerhoff concerning the Hawes interchange recently revealed that additional right-of-way is required and that as a result, staff recently requested that MAG designate approximately \$7 million to acquire the additional right-of-way.

Chairman Whalen voiced concerns regarding reports that ADOT's list of proposed projects being provided to MAG in connection with this issue does not include any of the projects in the East Valley that are currently being studied by Parsons Brinkerhoff, including the Hawes Road traffic interchange.

Discussion ensued regarding reports that ADOT's priority list being submitted to MAG is heavily weighted with West Valley projects.

In response to a question from Committeemember Thom concerning #11 (New traffic interchange on US 60 at Lindsay Road), Mr. Martin commented on the consideration given to this project in conjunction with the current US 60 improvements being conducted by ADOT.

Committeemember Thom stated opposition to #11.

Chairman Whalen voiced the opinion that it would be appropriate to seek public input concerning #11.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen concerning #14 (Landscape US 60 east of Ellsworth), Mr. Martin reported that the current problem associated with freeway landscaping maintenance costs is the result of a State budgetary issue.

Discussion ensued regarding the importance of expansion of the 101 Freeway in the future, whether this project is included on another MAG member's list, impacts of high volume traffic on the 101 Freeway on Mesa motorists and the fact that existing freeway expansion is being considered as part of the Bottleneck/Choke Point Study.

In response to questions and concerns voiced by Chairman Whalen and Committeemember Griswold concerning noise complaints resulting from extension of the Red Mountain Freeway and the fact that ADOT is not using rubberized asphalt on the freeway, Mr. Martin advised that although funding for rubberized asphalt is not included in ADOT's current program, it is anticipated that surfacing all of the regional freeways with rubberized asphalt will be considered a high priority in conjunction with the RTP. He noted that ADOT has received requests to apply rubberized asphalt on freeways from all communities in the region.

Chairman Whalen voiced concerns regarding the fact that construction of a Red Mountain Freeway traffic interchange at Mesa Drive is not included as a Freeway Priority and commented on the history and controversy surrounding this issue.

Discussion ensued regarding #16 (Higley super street improvements connecting US 60 to the Beeline) and the fact that construction of a bridge over the Salt River is included in this project; #17 (Bridge crossing at Gilbert Road over the Salt River) and #18 (Bridge crossing at Dobson Road over the Salt River); the possibility of developing a connecting roadway between the Red Mountain Freeway/Loop 202 and the Beeline Highway; the possibility of developing an outer loop (303) freeway and the fact that opposition to an outer loop freeway exists in Scottsdale and the West Valley.

Chairman Whalen discussed the possibility of developing a parkway along the Ellsworth corridor from the 202 Freeway to the Beeline Highway.

Mayor Hawker spoke in support of considering Chairman Whalen's suggestion concerning development of an Ellsworth corridor parkway as a long-range project.

Mayor Hawker voiced concerns regarding the inequity associated with the amount of sales tax revenue Mesa will contribute to the region over the life of the extended half-cent sales tax program, if approved, and the estimated amount of priority projects proposed for submission to MAG. He commented that based on the current list of projects, Mesa would effectively be a tax donor for transportation improvements in other areas of the region.

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of utilizing tax revenues generated by Mesa in conjunction with an extended regional half-cent sales tax for transit improvements outlined in the City's Transportation Plan in the event Mesa voters do not approve the City Transportation Plan sales tax increase.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the City of Phoenix has discussed the concept of acquiring discretionary power over a portion of the sales tax revenue generated by Phoenix; the logic associated with allowing communities in the region to have discretion over a portion of sales tax generated by their respective communities; and benefits associated with a regional approach to prioritizing projects to be funded from the extended regional half-cent sales tax program.

Mr. Martin estimated that the regional sales tax extension, if approved by voters, would generate \$9 billion over the life of the program, and said that Mesa represents 13% of the region's population, or the equivalent of \$930 million. He noted that although the total value of projects on the list is approximately \$700 million, this figure does not include the estimated cost of the commuter rail service project (#1), which is anticipated will be an expensive project.

Mr. Martin voiced concerns regarding compromising the regional nature of the RTP and an extended County-wide transportation tax program to be submitted to voters and voiced the opinion that the business community will likely oppose funding various local projects selected by local authorities throughout the Valley.

Committeemember Thom commented that there is significant East Valley opposition to funding an inordinate share of regional transportation projects that do not benefit the East Valley.

Chairman Whalen stated support for redesignating the \$130 million identified under item #2 into an alternative public transit category.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that staff will amend the list of projects pursuant to Committee input and schedule another meeting within two weeks for further Committee consideration.

Committeemember Thom reiterated her opposition to #11.

It was moved by Committeemember Thom, seconded by Committeemember Griswold, that item #11 (New traffic interchange on US 60 at Lindsay Road) be removed from the list of priority projects.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Griswold-Thom

NAYS - Whalen

Chairman Whalen declared the motion carried by majority vote.

(Chairman Whalen declared a recess at 10:45 a.m. and reconvened the meeting at 10:52 a.m.)

2. Discuss and consider ways to minimize the impact of street construction in Mesa.

Capital Improvement Program Administrator Anthony Araza addressed the Committee concerning this agenda item. He stated that although minimizing impacts on local businesses, motorists and Mesa residents during street construction projects is a high priority for the City,

developing amenable solutions that satisfy all affected parties while maintaining the City's construction goals is also a significant challenge.

Mr. Araza outlined the City's existing policies designed to minimize construction impacts, including: allowing the contractor to work nights and weekends to meet or accelerate deadlines; lane restrictions and intersection closures above what is stated in the contract; liquidated damages for projects that exceed contract timelines; and the use of stop work orders.

Mr. Araza outlined and commented on staff's five recommendations designed to further minimize impacts of street construction projects, including: 1) *Legislative Changes* - work with other Valley cities to broaden legislation on alternate project delivery methods (APDM), allowing local governments more options for contracting; 2) *Utilize Alternate Contract Techniques* - for selected projects employ Incentive/Disincentive and/or Lane Rental on a trial basis; 3) *One Party Control* - employ this technique, which provides Mesa's contractor with control over all facets of a street project including relocating outside utilities, on selected projects; 4) *Construction Time Frame* - expand construction window from mid-January to mid-November each calendar year for all street construction projects; and 5) *Barricade Coordinators* - add two Barricade Coordinators to help enforce and manage traffic barricading on Mesa's streets.

Mr. Araza voiced the opinion that #1 *Legislative Changes* is the most critical recommendation. He discussed the fact that although legislation was enacted in 2000 that allows municipalities to utilize APDM's, street projects currently have a minimum \$10 million threshold in this regard. He noted that the City rarely conducts a street project that exceeds \$10 million and added that the City would benefit from being allowed to utilize APDM's for street projects.

Discussion ensued regarding utilizing One Party Control (#3) on selected projects and the fact that this technique would allow the City's contractor to be responsible for all work within the construction limits including the relocation of outside utilities, such as Salt River Project, Quest and Cox; that these utility companies would be billed for their respective project work; and that it is anticipated that using one contractor to conduct all utility relocations will minimize delays and reduce costs.

Mr. Araza reported that in conjunction with staff's recommendation to add two staff Barricade Coordinators (#5), it is anticipated that 50% of the annual costs for these 2 positions will be spread over the City's various CIP projects as a construction administration cost. He added that staff proposes to increase right-of-way permit fees by 10% to cover the remaining costs associated with the proposed two positions. He noted that right-of-way permit fees in Scottsdale, Chandler and Phoenix are at least twice the cost of permit fees in Mesa.

Committeemember Griswold spoke in support of being able to use alternative construction techniques/tools, particularly when constructing street projects in commercial areas and in conjunction with freeway development projects.

In response to a question from Committeemember Thom concerning the fact that staff's recommendations for construction contract awards automatically include an additional 10% for change orders, City Engineer Keith Nath provided a brief overview concerning Council's previous direction in this regard. He reported that on average, the City's construction contracts are increased 2-3% for change orders.

Committeemember Thom said that she supports all of staff's recommendations except the addition of two Barricade Coordinators (#5).

In response to a question from Committeemember Thom concerning the necessity of adding two Barricade Coordinators, Mr. Nath commented on the challenges associated with ensuring that proper barricading is conducted by contractors in conjunction with permit work throughout the City.

Chairman Whalen voiced support for continued staff efforts to lobby the Legislature to reduce the minimum threshold in conjunction with the use of APDM's for street projects.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen with regard to utilizing Incentives/Disincentives and Lane Rental contract techniques under the City's current contract bid process, Mr. Araza stated that although road user costs must be studied by staff and incorporated into Incentive/Disincentive contract amounts, it is possible to employ these techniques under the City's current bid process, with Council policy direction to do so. Mr. Araza also confirmed that expanding the City's construction time-frame window from eight months to ten months only requires Council policy direction.

Chairman Whalen stated that the addition of two staff Barricade Coordinators is a budget discussion issue.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen concerning recommendation #3, *One Party Control*, Mr. Nath reported that staff has had previous discussions with local utility entities concerning this issue and they indicated willingness to participate in this method of conducting utility relocations on a trial basis. Mr. Nath added that with Council direction to do so, staff intends to utilize this method as a test project in conjunction with the Gilbert Road/University Drive intersection-widening project.

It was moved by Committeemember Griswold, seconded by Committeemember Thom, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendations relative to minimizing the impacts of street construction in Mesa, be approved.

Committeemember Thom reiterated her opposition to the use of raised medians in street projects.

Deputy City Manager Paul Wenbert advised Committeemember Thom that staff would provide a report concerning this issue in the near future.

Carried unanimously.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee meeting adjourned at 11:15 a.m.

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I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Transportation Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 24th day of October 2002. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

Attachment
pjt