

**Office of Economic Development**  
Economic Development Advisory Board  
MEETING MINUTES

Date: May 6, 2008: 7:32 A.M.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Brian Campbell, Chair  
Christian Alder  
Theresa Carmichael  
Dale Easter  
Jim LeCheminant  
Steve Parker  
Steve Shope  
Ted Wendel  
Steve Wood

EX-OFFICIO

Mayor Keno Hawker (excused)  
Chris Brady (excused)  
Jack Sellers  
Charlie Deaton

STAFF PRESENT

Betsy Adams  
Shelly Allen  
William Jabjiniak  
Mike James  
Jodie Sorrell

MEMBERS ABSENT

None

GUESTS

Marc Soronson  
Terri Benelli

**1. Chair's Call To Order**

Chair Brian Campbell called the May 6, 2008 meeting of the Economic Development Advisory Board to order at 7:32 A.M. at the City of Mesa Council Chambers, Lower Level, 57 E. 1st Street, Mesa, Arizona 85201.

**2. Approval of Minutes from April 1, 2008 board meeting.**

Chair Campbell called for a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting held on April 1, 2008.

**MOTION:** Jim LeCheminant moved that the minutes from April 1, 2008 be approved as written.

**SECOND:** Dale Easter

**DECISION:** Passed unanimously

**3. Introduction of new Mesa Community College President Dr. Shouan Pan**

Dr. Shouan Pan, President of MCC, thanked the EDAB board for the opportunity to come before the board and share his vision for a partnership with the City. The mission

of the college is not only to serve students, but also prepare them for transfer to a four-year institution. The major mission is to support economic development of the city and work with businesses to help in their training of the workforce development. MCC would like to partner with EDAB to see how MCC can become a productive force and a catalyst for continued workforce development and training. He applauded the boards' vision and purpose to continue to look to the future. Education today continues to be one of the vital forces to sustain the economy of the region. He wants a more active participation through his staff and to learn the needs of businesses in the city. His focus is on student success – that is the true mission. MCC is very interested in being a part of the group.

Chair Campbell thanked Dr. Pan for coming. He shared a concern that an aviation business had for workforce development and education incentives. Education of their workforce was one of their primary goals and issues. The lack of being able to respond with scholarship money or other incentives that would help retain businesses and promote education within our institutions fell short. The Chair suggested MCC staff work with city staff to identify the scholarship and partnership opportunities so that when businesses inquire of incentives the city already has a program available.

Dr. Pan pledged the support of MCC and the nine other colleges within the Maricopa Community College system.

#### **4. Central Mesa High Capacity Transit Study Alternatives Update**

Mr. Mike James, Deputy Transportation Director, introduced Mr. Marc Soronson, Consultant for the Valley Metro Rail, Inc.

Mr. Soronson, Consultant for Valley Metro, stated that the extension for Mesa is to be complete and opened in 2015. The 20-mile starter line is connected to the existing Regional Bus Transit Service. The funding sources for the High Capacity Transit System is derived primarily from State sales tax revenue and the Federal Transit Administration. The Central Mesa Study is in the first stage of the Federal Planning Process. The primary purpose of the planning process is, to define the route or alignment and define the appropriate transit technology(s) for the study area.

The transit technology options considered in this study are:

- Light Rail (LRT)
  - Electrified overhead wire
  - Dedicated right-a-way
  - 3 car train with 525 passenger capacity
- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)
  - Exclusive lanes and roadway (50% minimum during peak periods)
  - 1 bus with 60 to 80 passenger capacity; and/or
  - Traffic signal priority

- Special design
- Substantial stations
- Special branding/identity
- Frequent service (10-minute peak, 15-minute off-peak)
- Local Bus System

Light Rail (LRT) and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) have been determined as the alternative modes from Sycamore Street to Horne Avenue. BRT is the alternative mode from Horne Avenue to Power Road/Superstition Springs Center. Also, they have been conducting a traffic analysis for traffic conditions to 2030, and most importantly conducting one-on-one meetings with Downtown stakeholders, property owners and business owners.

A preliminary engineering analysis has been completed concerning the right-of-way with special attention to making sure the utility issues are settled to stay on target with the construction schedule. One major concern was the location and size of a storm drain running below the surface of Main Street. A video surveillance was conducted and a structural engineer reviewed the findings of the video. The result is that the walls of the 84" storm drain are sufficiently stable to withstand the construction and weight of the light rail vehicle. Therefore, the storm drain will not have to be relocated.

The work to be completed by June is as follows:

- Construction cost estimates
- Rider-ship forecasts for BRT and LRT
- Travel Times
  - Evaluation and comparison of BRT, LRT alignments in the Mesa Town Center
    - Initial market assessment
    - Screen Tier 2 alternatives
    - Final definition alternative report

An activity that is very important to this process is the ongoing Stakeholder meetings with the Downtown Mesa property and business owners. Valley Metro and the City of Mesa will hold a business forum on June 12, 2008 from 6:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. at the East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT) to focus on addressing many of the construction issues concerning both BRT and LRT. The discussion also will focus on procedures that can fast-track construction and minimize the impact on the adjacent businesses. The next public meeting will be held in late August to discuss with the community alternatives from the final analysis.

The Tier 2 alternatives are as follows:

- Sycamore to Horne/Mesa Dr.
  - BRT Main St. 2 Lane – Median running between Country Club and Mesa Dr./Horne with exclusive guide way, 4 lanes (2 lanes each direction) from Sycamore to Country Club and 2 lanes (1 lane each direction) in Mesa Town Center
  - BRT Main St. 4 Lane – Exclusive guide way between Country Club and Mesa Dr./Horne with mixed traffic through Mesa Town Center, 4 lanes (2 outside lanes each direction) from Sycamore through Mesa Town Center
  - LRT Main St. 2 Lane – Median running between Country Club and Mesa Dr./Horne with exclusive guide way, 4 lanes (2 lanes each direction) from Sycamore to Country Club and 2 lanes (1 lane each direction) in Mesa Town Center
  - LRT Main St. 4 Lane – Median running between Country Club and Mesa Dr./Horne, with exclusive guide way, 4 lanes (2 lanes each direction) from Sycamore through Mesa Town Center
  - LRT 1<sup>st</sup> St. – Median running between Country Club and Mesa Dr./Horne with 4 lanes (2 lanes each direction) from Sycamore to Country Club, double track north on Morris St. to 1<sup>st</sup> St., 2 lanes (1 lane each direction) on 1<sup>st</sup> St. to Pomeroy and then double track back to 4 lanes (2 lanes each direction) on Main St. to Mesa Dr./Horne
  - LRT 1<sup>st</sup> Ave. – Median running between Country Club and Mesa Dr./Horne with 4 lanes (2 lanes each direction) from Sycamore to Country Club, double tracks south on Morris St. to 1<sup>st</sup> Ave., 2 lanes (1 lane each direction) to Hibbert St. and then double track back to 4 lanes (2 lanes each direction) on Main St. to Mesa Dr./Horne
- Horne/Mesa Dr. to Superstition Springs Center
  - Skip-Stop Express BRT

Mr. Soronson stated that many criteria are being evaluated, such as; projected number of riders; roadway impacts and traffic operations over a 20 year period; long term and present day land use compatibility; potential economic development benefits; travel markets that are served; environmental issues;

design and constructability issues; and developing capital and maintenance cost estimates.

A special set of evaluation criteria was developed for the Town Center area based on feedback from the Stakeholders Groups in the area. The Stakeholders stated that they wanted as little impact as possible to the streetscape that is in place, such as the sidewalks, curbs and landscaping. Sustainability of the economic development element was also very important. Maintaining the on street parking on Main Street was more of a priority to the Stakeholders, than preserving bicycle lanes. There were mixed comments concerning keeping the median, but they wanted to maintain the pedestrian crosswalks.

The market analysis group has researched the relationship between the mass transit investment and property value enhancement, using case studies from Dallas, San Francisco, San Diego, Los Angeles and Atlanta. For the most part, residential office and retail uses benefit from the mass transit investment, but the greatest benefit is derived from being located within a quarter mile of the stations. However, it is not just the investment of the mass transit component that will push economic development forward, but many associated programs put forth by the City such as appropriate zoning and zoning overlays to support a denser form of development pattern. In Dallas, the value of office space located near the stations appreciated 53% faster than areas at a distance from the stations, as well as residential appreciated 39% faster and retail rents appreciated 167% higher.

Mr. Steve Wood asked how often the bikes lanes are used and would it be possible to maintain the bike lanes and street parking.

Mr. Soronson commented that they were going to try to keep all and were aware of the issues.

Mr. Jack Sellers commented that the alternative route chosen, if extended, would impact the desired density of the downtown area if extended. He also suggested looking at the zoning requirements including height requirements that would be appropriate.

Mr. Bill Jabjiniak suggested that Valley Metro and the consultants reach out to coordinate with Gordon Sheffield in the City of Mesa's Planning and Zoning.

Christian Alder asked what the biggest concern is to the businesses in Downtown Mesa.

Mr. Soronson responded that the biggest concern is the impact on the businesses during the length of time for construction of the route. He also said that Metro is considering maintaining the streetlights in the median. Historic Preservation requested to keep the historic streetlights.

Mr. Alder commented that the businesses were concerned about the impact of the construction and if businesses were just making it month to month now, how much of an emphasis or weight is placed on the input of those short-term businesses that might not be there next month or in the next two years? What is the right balance and is it a long-term sustainability versus a short-term business that might not be there next month?

Mr. Soronson replied that change does occur over time and businesses come and go, property owners come and go. The Downtown area is in a transition with property ownership. The new owners have new interests in things that the long time owners haven't had an interest in. Consideration is being given to all concerned.

Chair Campbell encouraged Metro to be sensitive to the people and businesses during the process of construction as it is a difficult process for the people and businesses. He also asked how confident they were that there would not be any problems in construction involving the utilities.

Mr. Soronson commented that there are no guarantees on anything, but felt confident with the video of the storm drain line indicating stability.

Chair Campbell asked how difficult would it be to extend the line to 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue?

Mr. Soronson responded that turns are difficult and more expensive for curving track, plus it slows down the speed to approximately 5 miles per hour to make the turn safely.

Chair Campbell commented that he was invited to take a test ride on the system that Valley Metro is doing for the LRT on the systems that are going to be opening soon. From a personal experience his comment at that point was there was not enough parking. It is remarkable how easy and convenient it is to travel in that mode. He suggested that on some of the test drives to invite some of the business people that have endured the construction process to show that there is a light at the end of the tunnel. He also wanted to know about the accuracy of the MAG drive time estimates.

Mr. Soronson responded that they were very concerned about the drive time projections. The main reason being the way the MAG model was calibrated based on existing data. It was calibrated against the 2000 On Board Bus Survey or drive time to the local bus. To overcome that is to bring in data from Salt Lake City and use the drive access coefficients to better predict drive access to the express bus or rail using the Salt Lake City conditions.

Mr. Dale Easter encouraged the consultants to look at systems that have been in place for 10 or 20 years in addition to the Salt Lake City system, which has been

in place for less than 10 years. Experience on other systems has been that the parking lots are overrun after being established for a number of years.

Chair Campbell thanked Mr. Soronson and Mr. James for the presentation and encouraged that hard copies be given to the EDAB members and staff for future reference.

## **5. Directors Report**

Mr. William Jabjiniak commented that less staff would be attending EDAB meetings, as it was not productive for all the staff to attend.

He explained the Elliott Fiesta Project as a positive way of working together with a developer and city staff. The developer went before Planning and Zoning and received their approval for a shopping center with several big box retailers. When it was presented to the City Council, the Council looked at it and said they did not want another big box shopping center. The developer was willing to modify the plans. He was able to modify his plans promptly and move through the process quickly with assistance from the staff. The project will allow for development of a retail power and employment center and is moving forward. It will be going to City Council on May 19<sup>th</sup>. This is just an example of what can be accomplished working together and having a more business friendly approach. The City Council is to be commended for standing firm for what was needed and wanted in the area for the betterment of District 6.

Chair Campbell commented that Marty DeRito was the developer and was willing to work with the City to modify his plans. He commended the city staff and Mr. Marty DeRito for helping to make it a homerun.

Mr. Jabjiniak commented on the project at McDowell/Ridgecrest also known as Parcel 51. The request for modification to the Las Sendas Development Master Plan was presented to City Council on May 5<sup>th</sup>. This request will allow the development of a mixture of multi-family, retail, resort, and office uses. Details in the Development will be important. There is controversy with the project and a legal protest was filed. It is to go before City Council in 2 weeks with a  $\frac{3}{4}$  vote required due to the legal protest filed.

Chair Campbell commended the staff for not shying away, but standing firm in having a quality development with quality jobs and job creation in Mesa.

## **6. Other Business**

Chair Campbell reminded the Board members of the next EDAB meeting on June 3, 2008 at 7:30 a.m. He also commented that June 3<sup>rd</sup> would be the last meeting for several of the outgoing Board members.

**7. Items from Citizens Present**

Ms. Terri Benelli asked where to find agenda postings on the city website.

Chair Campbell responded that it is posted in several different places other than just under the Economic Development website.

**8. Adjournment**

Chair Campbell adjourned the meeting at 8:38 a.m.

Submitted By:

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William J. Jabjiniak  
Economic Development Department Director  
(Prepared by Betsy Adams)