

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 20, 2005

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 20, 2005 at 9:25 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT	COUNCIL PRESENT	OFFICERS PRESENT
Claudia Walters, Chairman Kyle Jones Mike Whalen	None	Paul Wenbert

(Items on the agenda were discussed out of order, but for purposes of clarity will remain as listed on the agenda.)

1. Discuss and consider alternative strategies for traffic calming in neighborhoods.

Transportation Director Jeff Kramer introduced Senior Transportation Engineer Renate Ehm and Assistant Traffic Engineer Dan Cleavenger, who were prepared to address the Committee relative to this agenda item.

Ms. Ehm referred to a PowerPoint presentation displayed in the Council Chambers and provided a brief overview of alternative strategies for traffic calming in Mesa's neighborhoods, an item included in the Council's 2004-05 Priority Work Plan. She explained that the City currently has an Interim Speed Hump Policy that specifies the conditions under which a street may receive speed humps and stated that the Council requested that staff research other cost-effective methods as alternatives to such devices.

Ms. Ehm offered a short analysis of a study conducted by staff regarding the effectiveness of speed humps before and after the devices were installed on 39 street segments in Mesa. Her comments included, but were not limited to, the following: that the average speeds decreased by 4.3 miles per hour and the 85th percentile speed dropped by approximately 6 miles per hour following the installation of speed humps; that the 85th percentile is the speed by which 85% of traffic is traveling and is used to gauge the maximum speed that the majority of reasonable and prudent drivers travel on a street segment; that the cost for the installation of one speed hump is approximately \$3000; that over 600 speed humps have been installed in Mesa, all of which were fully or partially funded by the City; and that over the last 19 months since residents became responsible for the full cost of installation, no resident-funded speed humps have been installed.

Ms. Ehm commented that in terms of effectiveness, staff has determined that the next best alternative to speed humps is a combination of traffic circles, chicanes (curb extensions that alternate from one side of the street to the other to form S-shaped curves) and median deflector islands. She explained that these devices require drivers to "zigzag down the street," thereby causing them to deflect horizontally. Ms. Ehm stated that although construction costs vary significantly, an effective set of the devices would cost approximately \$40,000.

Ms. Ehm displayed a series of photographs depicting examples of traffic circles, chicanes and median deflector islands in Chandler, Phoenix, Scottsdale, Paradise Valley, and the City of Austin, Texas.

In response to a question from Committeemember Jones, Ms. Ehm clarified that Planning staff has encouraged developers to incorporate traffic calming devices into their projects if they cannot design the street system with short segments or curves in an attempt to lower speeds. She cited, as an example, the Las Sendas subdivision wherein the developer installed two median deflector islands and a roundabout traffic circle on Hawes Road.

Chairman Walters stated that during Transportation staff's presentation to the Council earlier in the week regarding various funding scenarios for Mesa's Transportation Plan, there was no allocation made for a speed hump program. She commented that if, conceivably, a ballot question is presented to Mesa voters regarding a sales tax increase, with certain funding earmarked for the Transportation Master Plan, it may be the presumption of the voters that funding would be available to implement a speed hump program.

Chairman Walters questioned whether staff has considered the number of streets that might qualify for speed humps, what the dollar amount would be, and whether it would be possible to "swap out," for instance, \$50,000 from one project in order to reinstitute a City-funded speed hump program. She added that if, in fact, developers are encouraged to incorporate traffic-calming devices into their designs, there is a strong likelihood that the number of speed humps needed throughout the community would be somewhat limited.

In response to Chairman Walters' comments, Mr. Cleavenger stated that in his opinion, the City could provide a speed hump program for approximately \$100,000 to \$200,000. He noted that the associated costs would include the traffic counts conducted by staff to assess whether a street would qualify, the installation of the speed humps, and signage.

Chairman Walters expressed concerns regarding the fact that when staff discusses this issue, it is in reference to "where we are today" and commented that because of Mesa's overwhelming budget crisis, the City has fallen farther behind in many programs over the last three years.

(Committeemember Jones left the meeting at 10:16 a.m.)

In response to Chairman Walters' concerns, Mr. Kramer stated that if staff was given policy direction to implement a City-funded speed hump program with a specific amount of allocated funding, they would do so. He stated that the speed hump program was not listed on Mesa's Transportation Plan as a high priority item simply because it "did not rise to the level of a critical need" in order to maintain the City's transportation system.

Chairman Walters thanked staff for the presentation and commented that Councilmember Griswold had expressed significant interest in this matter.

Mr. Kramer advised that the item was agendaized for action by the Committee and requested input from the members in that regard. He stated that it is staff's recommendation that the City maintain the existing Interim Speed Hump Policy whereby the installation of speed humps is resident-funded.

Chairman Walters apologized for inadvertently informing Committeemember Jones that the agenda item was an update and not one that required action by the Committee.

Committeemember Whalen stated that he would prefer that the current Speed Hump Policy remain as is, unless the City receives a "financial windfall" that would cause that policy to change. He requested that staff promptly research the cost to implement "a reasonable" speed hump program and added that it might be an appropriate ballot issue to include as part of the Mesa Transportation Plan.

Chairman Walters concurred with Committeemember Whalen's comments and said she does not want to change the current speed hump policy at this time. She expressed interest in reviewing the Transportation Department's financial modeling for the Mesa Transportation Plan with regard to the number of speed humps that could be installed, for example, if \$50,000 in funding was "swapped out" from another program in order to accomplish that goal. Chairman Walters stated that in her opinion, this program is of enough importance to residents in the community that it might be appropriate to include it as a priority in the Mesa Transportation Plan.

Mr. Kramer assured the Committee that with a suggested line item, for example, of \$50,00 to \$100,000 for a City-funded speed hump program, staff would endeavor to include it as a priority in the Mesa Transportation Plan.

It was moved by Committeemember Whalen, seconded by Chairman Walters, to recommend that the full Council consider utilizing monies from future revenue sources to be dedicated to a City speed hump program.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES - Walters-Whalen
ABSENT - Jones

Chairman Walters declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

Chairman Walters thanked staff for the presentation.

2. Hear an update on bus stop improvements.

Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace introduced Transportation Engineer Mitch Voy and Transit Coordinator Mike Davis. He spoke regarding Mesa's Bus Stop Master Plan, which was completed in September 2004 and has been used as a guide to implement various bus stop improvements throughout the City. Mr. Wallace explained that at the time the master plan was developed, Mesa had 683 bus stops, including shelters at 114 locations and said that today, that number has increased to 735 bus stops with shelters at 138 locations.

Mr. Voy referred to a PowerPoint presentation and displayed a variety of photographs depicting art shelters throughout the City. He explained that the shelters afford Mesa the opportunity to

rebuild its personality and create a more dignified environment for the bus riders. Mr. Voy added that the newest art shelter would be located outside of Banner Baywood Hospital.

Mr. Davis continued with the presentation and indicated that in the next two years, staff would implement four bus shelter projects resulting in 60 new bus shelters. He noted that 30 shelters would be designed on a smaller scale to accommodate space constraints and maximize funding. Mr. Davis stated that the projects would include four pullouts, various amenities, and the addition of solar lighting at 40 existing shelters and all new shelters. He added that the total cost of all bus stop improvements is approximately \$1.8 million (funding includes Federal, State and local resources).

Mr. Davis informed the Committee that regional Proposition 400 funds would be available to the City for the installation of bus pullouts and passenger shelters along designated "super-grid" bus routes. He reported that over the next five years, funding would also be available for shelters and bus pullouts along Main Street, Southern Avenue, Country Club Drive and Gilbert Road.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the cost of an existing bus shelter (which measures 9 feet by 18 feet) is approximately \$22,000; that the smaller shelters, as proposed by staff, would cost between \$3,000 and \$6,000 and possibly include some type of free-standing panel in order to provide sufficient shade for citizens waiting at the shelters; and that staff has developed a list of 125 locations for the proposed bus shelters and that the list would continue to be prioritized/refined as the process continues.

In response to a question from Committeemember Whalen, Mr. Wallace clarified that the above-mentioned bus stop improvements have been budgeted as part of the capital portion of the Quality of Life Program and said that the Committee will receive future updates as the projects move farther along in the process.

Chairman Walters thanked staff for the update.

3. Hear an update on Proposition 400 implementation and project planning.

Transportation Director Jeff Kramer reported that the purpose of this agenda item is to provide the Committee with an update on recent activities and progress to implement Proposition 400 transportation improvements in the City of Mesa.

Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace introduced Senior Transportation Planner Patrick Pittenger and Transportation Program Manager Maria Deeb. Mr. Wallace provided a brief historical overview of Proposition 400.

Mr. Pittenger referred to PowerPoint presentation displayed in the Council Chambers and discussed various freeway, arterial street and transit projects in Mesa that are part of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). He explained that with regard to freeway improvements, US 60 would be widened by one lane in each direction from Gilbert Road to Val Vista Drive and by three lanes in each direction from Val Vista Road to Power Road (to begin in November 2005 and completed in the spring of 2007). Mr. Pittenger noted that bridge widening projects on interchanges at Stapley Drive, Val Vista and Gilbert Road have been completed and Higley Road is scheduled for completion in the summer of 2007.

Mr. Pittenger further commented that earlier this summer, the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Regional Council adopted the Arterial Life Cycle Program (ALCP) policies

and procedures. He explained that the document is intended to govern the manner in which MAG and other member agencies manage arterial projects in the RTP over a 20-year period. Mr. Pittenger stated that for each project, Mesa would be required to enter into a project agreement with MAG that would outline cost estimates and the individual responsibilities of MAG and the City. He added that the Council would review all project agreements prior to their execution.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that Mesa has advanced several projects that were originally scheduled for construction in Phase 4 of the 20-year process, but by doing so, the City will not be repaid until Phase 4; that MAG will use the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to account for inflation over time instead of a Construction Cost Index (CCI); that the City is conducting a corridor modeling study to determine the extent of the improvements to be done on Southern Avenue, Mesa Drive and McKellips Road, including whether it is appropriate to implement intersection improvements only; and if the Council wishes to pursue such a component, staff could request MAG to implement an amendment to the RTP.

Mr. Pittenger briefly highlighted initial ALCP street improvement projects including intersection improvements at Dobson Road and Guadalupe; Country Club Drive and University Drive; Gilbert Road and University Drive; as well as improvement projects on Broadway Road (Dobson to Country Club), Power Road (Guadalupe to Galveston), and Greenfield Road (Baseline to Southern).

Chairman Walters questioned whether staff has engaged in "what if" discussions regarding potential cost increases for concrete, asphalt, and petroleum products and the impact that would have on current cost estimates for various projects.

Responding to Chairman Walters' inquiry, Mr. Kramer advised that staff repeatedly addresses such concerns on a regular basis and in particular, material shortage problems including concrete, steel and petroleum products. He explained that the projects of greatest concern to staff are those that are not being accelerated, because as inflation increases on construction materials and right-of-way costs (for example, 12% to 18%) and the regional share increases less than 3% per year, the City will continue to "get farther behind every year as we wait."

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that Proposition 400 requires a 30% local match for each arterial street project; that staff has performed revised cost estimates of various projects and determined that such costs are likely to exceed the original estimate and the local match will exceed the 30%; that the City currently does not have a funding stream to finance Mesa's portion of the local match, and if such funding is not available, MAG will allocate Mesa's share of the Proposition 400 funding to implement projects in other communities and delay the City's projects until such time as Mesa has sufficient funding to meet the local match.

Mr. Wallace advised that relative to transit issues, staff has worked for several months with other communities to reach consensus on the Transit Life Cycle Program (TLCP). He explained that a major item of concern was the manner in which project cost savings would be reinvested into the TLCP. Mr. Wallace stated that the specific language that will be considered by the RPTA Board is to allow an agency to access 85% of its cost savings in two years, with the remaining 15% of the savings placed into reserve to ensure that adequate revenues are available to fund the programmed service. He added that the RPTA is proceeding with several bus purchase contracts to alleviate a series of service problems experienced during the past summer.

Chairman Walters thanked everyone for the informative presentation.

4. Hear an update on the Intelligent Transportation System.

Signal System Supervisor Jan Siedler displayed a PowerPoint presentation in the Council Chambers and provided an update of completed, current and planned Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) projects in the City of Mesa. She explained that the purpose of ITS is to deploy technology and management strategies that improve the safety and efficiency of Mesa's roadway system. Ms. Siedler advised that Mesa gains a variety of benefits from using ITS such as real time traffic control for signals and emergency vehicles, transit incidents, special events, evacuations and Homeland Security.

Ms. Siedler highlighted a series of completed ITS projects including the Advanced Transportation Management System Update; the Transportation Management Center; the ITS Telecommunications Master Plan Update; Stapley Drive Conduit and Fiber; and the ITS Strategic Plan.

Ms. Siedler also reviewed current ITS projects in the design or early construction stage as follows: ITS Real Time Adaptive Control in southeast Mesa; Main Street project; ITS Freeway West Loop and East Loop Projects; Broadway Road Conduit and Fiber Project; and the Sonex to Icons Conversion, Phase 1.

Ms. Siedler discussed future ITS projects such as Gilbert Road Conduit and Fiber Project; Power Road Smart Street Instrumentation; Emergency Vehicle Automation Vehicle Location System; ITS Freeway East Loop Project; Sonex to Icons Conversion; Wireless Camera and Advanced Traffic Management System Access Project.

Ms. Siedler indicated that Transportation staff met with representatives of other City departments to develop the ITS Strategic Plan. She noted that the Plan defines advanced technology and communications solutions to transportation challenges within the City over the next decade and beyond. Ms. Siedler added that the estimated cost for the current ITS projects is \$8.9 million (\$5.8 City-funded and \$3.1 million Federal monies), and the estimated cost for planned ITS projects is \$13 million (\$8 million City-funded and \$5 million Federal funding).

Discussion ensued relative to the current "gridlock" conditions in the area of Power Road and Southern Avenue and the manner in which the Real Time Adaptive Control project would assist in alleviating traffic congestion and automatically adjust traffic signal timing based on traffic volumes.

Chairman Walters thanked staff for the presentation.

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee Meeting adjourned at 10:38 a.m.

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 20th day of October 2005. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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