

# TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

December 20, 2006

The Transportation Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on December 20, 2006 at 5:33 p.m.

## COMMITTEE PRESENT

Scott Somers, Chairman  
Rex Griswold  
Claudia Walters

## COUNCIL PRESENT

Tom Rawles

## STAFF PRESENT

Jack Friedline

1. Hear a presentation, discuss, receive public input and provide direction regarding the South Canal Multi-Use Path Project.

Chairman Somers noted that although the Council has approved this project, the Committee scheduled this meeting to address concerns raised by the neighborhood and to receive input from the area residents. He explained that the action of the Committee would be to provide recommendations to the Council regarding the project.

Deputy City Manager Jack Friedline introduced Deputy Transportation Director Mike James and Engineering Division Landscape Architect Steve Stettler.

Mr. James displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) to update the Committee on the plans and process relative to the South Canal Multi-Use Path Project. He reviewed the history of the Transportation Plan, which the Council approved in June of 2002, and he highlighted two objectives of the plan as listed below:

“Develop an interconnected network of shared use paths along canal banks, utility easements and roadway R/W to link open spaces, parks, rec. facilities and schools throughout the City and into adjacent jurisdictions.”

“Use nationally and regionally recognized standards and guidelines for the planning, design, and construction of bicycle facilities.”

Mr. James stated that the main components of the project include a paved surface that enables use by individuals with all levels of abilities, implementation of lighting for safety and security and signage that provides directions and/or rules. He noted that some misunderstanding exists regarding the location of the project, and he clarified that the first phase of the project is planned for the South Canal and does not include the Eastern Canal. Mr. James added that south of

McDowell Road, the project is on the canal that is referred to as the Consolidated Canal or the South Canal. He noted that future completion of Phases 1, 2 and 3 of the multiuse path includes plans to connect with the Lehi Historic Path. He stated that the City received \$1.5 million in Federal funds from the Congestion Mitigation & Air Quality (CMAQ) Program, which must be utilized for bicycle and pedestrian facilities. Mr. James advised that local funding in the amount of \$94,200 is from the Quality of Life sales tax revenues, and that the City would be responsible for maintenance costs of approximately \$8,000 per mile.

Mr. Stettler listed the public meetings held since the project was initiated in 2000. He added that a Multi-Use Path (MUP) Committee, formed in 2002, made the following recommendations regarding the South Canal Multi-Use Path Project:

- Reduce the height of the light poles.
- Utilize asphalt instead of concrete.
- Move the path further away from the canal.

Mr. Stettler stated that staff presented the final plans at a public meeting held on October 3, 2006. He added that based on concerns expressed at the meeting, timers were incorporated into the lighting system. Mr. Stettler displayed a diagram (see Attachment 1) that depicts a typical cross section of the ten-foot wide path. He noted that lowering the height of the light poles reduced the spacing between the poles to 70 or 80 feet rather than the 100 feet indicated on the diagram. Mr. Stettler advised that the final drawings are scheduled for review and approval by the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) in January of 2007. He said that the bid process and award of the contract by ADOT would occur in March-April of 2007 for construction in the June-August 2007 timeframe. Mr. Stettler advised that the intent of the project is to provide non-motorized access for pedestrians, bicycles and horses. He added that ADOT has provided areas where users of the path could pass safely under Gilbert Road and McDowell Road.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Transportation Engineer Mitch Foy advised that Scottsdale, Chandler and Tempe light the pathways, but the Town of Gilbert does not. He confirmed that the City of Scottsdale has some lighted pathways and others that have no lights depending on the preferences of the neighborhood.

Responding to a question from Chairman Somers, Mr. Foy stated that approximately half of the costs associated with the pathway address the lighting.

Mr. Friedline advised that staff is continuing to address the possibility of reallocating a portion of the South Canal Project funds with representatives of the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG).

In response to a question from Chairman Somers regarding the possibility of redirecting the project funding for lights to another feature such as horse gates, Mr. Friedline said that staff would have to discuss that alternative with MAG representatives, and he stated the opinion that MAG is not likely to agree to that change.

Committeemember Griswold suggested the placement of a barrier to prohibit vehicle access from the road and the installation of a lighted sign that displays the hours of operation.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that staff would have to address many of these issues with ADOT; and that a request to remove the lights from the plan could eliminate the funding for that portion of the project.

Committeemember Walters stated that the reason for holding this meeting was to provide a forum for residents who believed they did not have an earlier opportunity to provide input on the project. She advised that the intent of the Committee is to hear public comment and, if necessary, an additional meeting could be scheduled.

Mr. Friedline clarified that the project would not be jeopardized by eliminating the lights. He advised that staff would continue to address the other issues with ADOT and MAG.

In response to a question from an unidentified member of the audience, Committeemember Griswold stated that although horse gates would prohibit access by unauthorized motorized vehicles, SRP would have keys to unlock the gates and access the canals.

Committeemember Walters stated that SRP has access to and control of the canals.

Chairman Somers advised that the Committee and City staff would address questions during the public comment process.

(Citizen comments are listed according to the position expressed by the speaker and are not necessarily in the same order as presented.)

Mark Freeman, 1118 East Lockwood, Board President of the Lehi Community Improvement Association, advised that the Board voted unanimously in opposition to the installation of lighting on the canal in the Lehi area. He provided a letter (see Attachment 2) dated December 19, 2006, addressed to the Mayor and City Council, which outlines the position of their association. Mr. Freeman also stated that the Lehi community is the best steward for the canal, and he added that Lehi residents pay taxes for irrigation. He reported that the canal located in the Arcadia district of Scottsdale does not have any lights and yet it remains heavily used. Mr. Freeman expressed concern that installing asphalt would increase the use of all terrain vehicles (ATVs) and motorcycles along the canal. He emphasized that the residents want to retain the rural atmosphere of the Lehi area.

In response to a question from Chairman Somers, Mr. Freeman stated that the residents who have horses would prefer the use of decomposed granite rather than asphalt on the path.

Responding to comments from Committeemember Griswold, Mr. Freeman advised that Lehi residents are pursuing a partnership with SRP to clean the canal bank from McKellips Road almost to Gilbert Road.

Additional citizens who came forward to speak in opposition included the following:

Larry Pew, 1564 East Lehi Road (opposes project)  
Florine Cooley, 1260 East Lehi Road  
Paul Hughes, 2254 East Nora Street  
Robert Lillquist, 2505 East Lehi Road (opposes part of the plan)  
Bob Warich, 2663 North Chestnut Circle (opposes lighting)  
Patricia Postle, 1021 E. Knoll Street  
Theresa Carmichael, 2451 North Terrace Circle

Glen Steiner, 2430 North Terrace Circle (opposes project)  
Christopher Lambly, 2451 North Terrace Circle (opposes project)  
Collin Fairclough, 1439 East Hermosa Vista (opposes lighting, supports project)  
Robert Callahan, 2429 Terrace Circle (opposes lighting)  
Allen Otto, 2418 North Harris Drive (opposes project)  
Kevin Gibbons, 2606 North Hall Circle (opposes project)  
Jason Laflesch, 2418 North Harris Drive  
George Carter, 2251 North Ashbrook Circle (opposes project)  
Lori Otto, 2418 North Harris Drive (opposes project)  
Robert Stewart, 2346 East Nora Street (opposes lighting)  
Bob Swanson, 2632 North Hall Circle (opposes project)

Comments made in opposition to the project include the following:

- Asphalt is unacceptable for horses and poses a danger for children riding horses.
- A parking lot at "Dead Man's Curve" would be unacceptable.

Committeemember Walters advised that a parking facility is not included as a part of this project.

Mr. Stettler confirmed that the project plans do not include a trailhead or restroom facilities. He noted that SRP's canal cleaning process would grade through decomposed granite (DG), which would require regular replacement of the material.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that a hard, paved surface is preferred in order to achieve the multi-use concept; that the Multi-Use Pathway (MUP) work group that met several years ago and included Lehi residents recommended that the asphalt be placed closer to the canal to provide a dirt area on the other side for equestrian use; that the three to five feet dirt area along the canal is intended to be a buffer; that the asphalt path is planned to be ten feet wide in order to be multi-directional as recommend by the MUP work group; and that the MUP work group had strict guidelines that required the installation of lights and an asphalt pathway.

Additional comments made in opposition to the project are as follows:

- Lights and horses are not compatible.
- A wider, softer path is required for horses.

Committeemember Walters responded to a speaker's concern by restating that a parking facility and/or trailhead are not included in this project.

Comments by individuals opposed to the project continued as listed below:

- Opposed to lights that may be installed in the parking lot of an office building that may be constructed in the future.
- ATV's and motorcycles cause noise and dust pollution.
- Lights would attract a criminal element to the canal area at night.
- Asphalt is undesirable for jogging.

Responding to a question from Chairman Somers, Mr. Friedline stated that the \$8,000 a year (per mile) maintenance expense would be funded by Highway User Revenue Funds (HURF).

Comments in opposition to the project continued as follows:

- Project will jeopardize the safety and security of the neighborhood.
- The City's Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget on the website lists a construction expenditure of \$700,000 for this project and annual maintenance is listed at \$170,000.

Mr. Foy advised that the City has received a Federal grant in the amount of \$1.5 million, which accounts for approximately 95 percent of the project's funding. He said that the other five percent would be funded by Quality of Life sales tax revenues. Mr. Foy stated that based on the Parks and Recreation Department's experience in maintaining over two miles of existing canal pathways, staff calculates the maintenance expense at \$8,000 per mile. He added that staff is in the process of correcting the CIP information.

In reply to a question from Chairman Somers, Mr. Foy stated that these funds must be utilized to address issues related to pedestrians or bicyclists or forfeited to another municipality.

Mr. Friedline advised that the \$8,000 designated for maintenance expense could be utilized to address other transportation issues, and he added that no General Fund dollars are allocated in the CIP budget for transportation issues.

Additional comments presented by individuals in opposition include the following:

- Project will obstruct views.
- Project will increase traffic in the neighborhood.
- Communication process with the residents regarding the project was poor.
- Bicycle lanes exist on the public streets.

Chairman Somers advised that the light poles would be fourteen feet high with shielded lights.

Chairman Somers noted that Doug Mathews, 1037 East Knoll Street, left the meeting, but he provided a letter (see Attachment 3) outlining his opposition to the project.

Comments in opposition to the project continued as follows:

- Project will increase litter and trash in the area.
- Notice for this meeting was not provided twenty days in advance.
- Costs to the community are undetermined.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that the proposed project is a part of the Master Plan that was developed in 1998-1999; that the MUP system was developed many years ago with the intent that individuals could eventually traverse from the northern section of Mesa to Chandler; that a canal path in the area of Brown Road and Mesa Drive is paved and lighted; that the difference between the canal path in the area of Brown Road and Mesa Drive and proposed path is that the Lehi area is in closer proximity to the canal and this area has a greater grade differentiation; and that paved and lighted canal pathways also exist in other parts of the community.

Mr. Foy advised that a large segment of the population enjoys this type of amenity, and he noted that these plans were researched, analyzed, prioritized and developed by the Parks & Recreation Department over a period of years and were included in the Parks Master Plan. He stated that the Transportation Department recently assumed responsibility for the implementation and maintenance of the canal pathways. Mr. Foy said that most of the canals in the City are scheduled for improvements at some point in the future with connections planned to extend to the Granite Reef Dam, to other pathways in the County and in the Town of Gilbert in addition to connecting to the Lehi Historic Pathway.

Public comment in opposition to the project continued as listed below:

- Many area residents lost property due to the freeway construction.
- ATV's and dirt bikes that presently use the north side of the canal will migrate to the south side.
- Illegal dumping has been observed in the area of the canal.
- The availability of funding does not justify implementing a project opposed by the residents.
- If lighting were necessary, landscape lighting would be more appropriate.

Individuals who completed cards in opposition, but indicated they did not wish to address the Committee are listed below:

Web Baker, 1554 East Lehi Road (opposes lighting, supports project)  
Rob Zimmerman, 665 East Lehi Road  
L. Felgemaker, 1061 East Knoll Street  
Pat Felgemaker, 1062 East Knoll Street  
Leslie Steiner, 2430 North Terrace Circle  
Kelly Petersen, 2138 North Stapley Drive  
Christie Petersen, 2138 North Stapley Drive  
John & Giulia Guzzardi, 2130 North Stapley Drive  
Dave & Ann Bowers, 2162 North Stapley Drive  
Jinx & Eddie Johnson, 2453 North Lazona Drive (opposes lighting)  
Kathy Webster, 2222 East Nora Street (opposes lighting, supports project)  
Julie Brady, 3044 North 38<sup>th</sup> Circle

Citizens speaking in support of the project are listed below:

Jeff Rush, 2625 North 24<sup>th</sup> Street  
Hank Woodrum, 2750 East Kenwood Street  
Dora & John Sommer, 2366 North Sinaqua Circle

Comments presented in support of the proposed included:

- Horses are rarely present on the canal north of McDowell Road.
- Lights would increase safety and security on the canal.
- Asphalt would be desirable for bicycle usage.
- Runners prefer a paved pathway.
- The City of Phoenix has gates installed along the canals to prevent access by ATV's and motorized vehicles.
- Pavement will improve dust and noise control.

- Individuals racing along the canal in motorized vehicles are Lehi residents.

Individuals who completed a card in support of the project, but indicated that they did not wish to address the Committee include:

Beverly Prestwich, 1013 East Knoll Street  
Carl Jim Hook, 2326 East Nora Street  
Aarons Kucera, 2350 East Kael Circle

Committeemember Walters noted that the Council is continually attempting to balance their decisions regarding the budget and determining which items to fund. She advised that presently Public Safety has the highest priority and accounts for 60 percent of the City's budget. Committeemember Walters stated that canal paths are not to be utilized for motorized vehicles except with the permission of SRP.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Deputy City Engineer Kelly Jensen advised that the pathway is designed with six inches of base material beneath the asphalt. He stated that the expected life of the pathway is twenty to thirty years with routine maintenance and repairs.

Mr. Friedline explained that this project was initiated as part of a plan for multi-use paths that provide interconnectivity between Valley communities. He stated that the intent was to provide a positive, quality of life amenity for the community as a whole.

Committeemember Walters advised that she has supported the pathways and utilizing these existing assets in the community. She noted that the difference in this project is the proximity of the homes to the canal and the grade differentiation. She added that supporting the lights would be inconsistent with her support for the Lehi Sub-Area Plan. Committeemember Walters added that although the project is an asset for the entire City, she does not want the project to be a detriment to a particular area of the City. She expressed the opinion that asphalt is the feature that enables the pathway to be useable for bicycles and enables people to traverse throughout the community in a safe manner. She suggested that signs be posted limiting the hours of use, and she noted that the City of Scottsdale is implementing this type of signage.

Additional discussion ensued regarding the options available regarding lower light poles; that lower light poles may require a greater number of lights placed closer together; and that eventually this section of the canal would provide 3-1/2 miles of trail system without crossing an arterial street.

Deputy Transportation Director Dan Cleavenger advised that the City employs a standard treatment to address arterial, at-grade crossings that includes a ten-foot wide median area with a refuge area that enables users to cross half of the street at one time. He added that the City could also install advance warning signs or a traffic signal, as necessary.

Committeemember Walters suggested that the Committee utilize separate motions to address these issues. She explained that the Committee's recommendations would be considered by the Council, at which time members of the public will have the opportunity to express their views.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Councilmember Griswold, to recommend to the Council that lighting be removed from the plans for the South Canal Multi-Use Path Project.

Chairman Somers expressed the opinions that an inverse relationship exists between the level of lighting and crime and that the presence of lighting reduces criminal activity. He also acknowledged that one standard of lighting might not be appropriate for the entire City. Chairman Somers advised that the Committee's recommendation would be considered by the full Council.

Chairman Somers called for the vote.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – Griswold-Walters  
NAYS – Somers

Chairman Somers declared the motion carried by majority vote.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Chairman Somers, to recommend to the Council that asphalt be retained in the plans for the South Canal Multi-Use Path Project.

Committeemember Walters advised that she would continue to review information on this aspect of the project prior to consideration by the Council.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – Somers-Walters  
NAYS – Griswold

Chairman Somers declared the motion carried by majority vote.

It was moved by Committeemember Griswold to recommend to the Council that the South Canal Multi-Use Path Project be cancelled.

Chairman Somers declared the motion failed for lack of a second.

Mr. Friedline summarized the information that the Committee has requested of staff:

- Clarify the maintenance costs.
- Obtain crime statistics on the completed sections of canal multi-use paths (including information from Phoenix and Scottsdale on areas with and without lights).
- Contact and work with the Salt River Project (SRP) regarding the litter present in the tunnel and the motorized vehicle issue.
- Update the Capital Improvement Project (CIP) information on the City's website related to the maintenance costs.
- Determine if the asphalt can be shifted or changed to better accommodate equestrian activity.
- Review the time schedule with ADOT and MAG with reference to the entire project.
- Consider reducing the width of the pavement from ten feet to eight feet.

- Review and obtain information on the DG bike issue.
- Clarify the funding source for maintenance of the path.

In response to a question from a member of the audience, Committeemember Walters advised that the amount of Federal funding available each year is undetermined. She also explained that the City must operate within the MAG allocation process with respect to these projects.

Chairman Somers thanked everyone for participating in the meeting.

2. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee Meeting adjourned at 8:23 p.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 December 2006. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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Attachments (3)