

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 7, 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 January 7, 2002 at 3:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Jim Davidson, Chairman
Pat Pomeroy
Claudia Walters

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker
Mike Whalen
Bill Jaffa

OFFICERS PRESENT

Debbie Spinner

1. Discuss and consider the process for review of the 2025 Transportation Plan.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting and Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item. Mr. Krosting said that the Mesa Transportation Plan (MTP) is part of the Mesa 2025 – A Shared Vision process and is being developed in conjunction with the General Plan.

Mr. Wallace stated that the MTP is a multi-modal plan that will be used as a technical tool to help implement the General Plan. He referred to a chart on display in the Council Chambers that illustrated the various elements that will comprise the MTP. He commented on the Street System Plan, the Public Transportation Plan, the Bicycle Plan and the Pedestrian Plan, and noted that the Goals, Policies and Objectives of the MTP are derived from policy language adopted by the Joint Master Planning Committee for the General Plan.

Mr. Wallace referred to and commented on the *Mesa Transportation Plan (MTP) Process Completion Schedule January 2002 – July 2002* that was provided to the Committeemembers. He noted that the schedule calls for development of the first draft plan by February 22, the second draft by April 30, and the final draft by June 10, 2002. He stated that review of the three drafts will encompass seven various Committees and Boards and noted that this Committee will review the plan at least three times prior to June 10, 2002. He also noted that public comment will be solicited during a series of open houses scheduled during March and that the Council will review and consider the final draft of the MTP during July 2002.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the existing master General Plan schedule does not contain all of the dates related to Committee reviews.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the Street System Plan, Mr. Wallace advised that the existing street system will be studied in conjunction with consideration of what is needed for the future.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the necessity of separate reviews of the MTP by the Transportation Committee and the General Development Committee, Mr. Krosting explained that the General Development Committee will be asked to review and provide input regarding the Town Center Transportation Plan and the Transportation Committee will review the entire MTP.

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of conducting joint meetings of the Transportation Committee and the General Development Committee; the purpose and necessity of the separate Technical Report to the MTP; incorporating elements into the Bicycle Plan and the Transportation Demand Management Plan that encourage bicycle commuting; and the Connectivity Workshop planned for the JMPC.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson concerning the fact that the Maricopa Association of Governments recently contracted with the Brookings Institute to conduct a transportation study, Mr. Wallace said that the results of that study will be incorporated into the MTP.

Chairman Davidson requested that staff provide the Councilmembers with a copy of the Brookings Institute study when it is available.

(Mayor Hawker joined the meeting at 3:10 p.m.)

Chairman Davidson acknowledged the presence of Lela Steffey, Chairman of the Joint Master Planning Committee's Technical Advisory Committee on Transportation, and voiced appreciation for her numerous efforts relative to transportation issues.

Ms. Steffey commented on upcoming joint meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee on Transportation and the Transportation Advisory Board and also voiced appreciation for the input provided by Councilmembers regarding the MTP.

2. Discuss and consider previously approved budget reductions eliminating bus route #184 (Power Road) and the peak bus route to Boeing.

Transit Administrator Jim Wright and Transit Coordinator Christine Stava addressed the Committee relative to this agenda item.

Mr. Wright reported that the elimination of bus route #184, which runs along Power Road to the Red Mountain Multi-Generational Center and a reduction in bus route #136 to eliminate service from Gilbert Road to Boeing, were part of the budget reduction process recently conducted in October and November. He noted that these two service cuts resulted in a budget reduction of \$114,000 for this fiscal year.

Mr. Wright reported that Boeing has indicated opposition to the elimination of bus service to its facility and requested that the termination date be delayed for 60 days. Mr. Wright referred to a

letter authored by Bill Pool, Manager of Safety, Health and Environmental Affairs at Boeing, that was provided to the Committeemembers.

Mr. Pool addressed the Committee and provided a brief historical overview regarding bus service to the Boeing facility. He stated that Boeing and the employees who rely upon bus service appreciate Mesa's efforts to provide dependable bus transportation and he noted that bus service is an integral part of Boeing's Travel Reduction Program.

Mr. Pool said that Boeing was advised of the elimination of bus service to Boeing on November 28, 2001 and that a 60-day extension was requested to allow Boeing the opportunity to review available options and provide proper advance notice to employees.

Mr. Pool commented on the route #136 ridership study that was conducted in November 2000 and said that the study is not current and does not accurately reflect the ridership of Boeing employees. He said that Boeing recently conducted a survey of employees who ride the bus and he commented on the results of the study and noted that six employees indicated that they would have to terminate employment at Boeing if the bus service is eliminated. Mr. Pool also commented on the additional area businesses that are served by route #136.

Brad Roberts, a Boeing employee, addressed the Committee and advised that he utilizes the bus service to and from Boeing on a daily basis. He commented on his many years of riding the bus and voiced opposition to the termination of service to Boeing.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the number of trips to and from Boeing on weekdays, Mr. Wright advised that route #136 includes six trips to Boeing in the morning and six trips in the afternoon.

Discussion ensued regarding the possibility of reducing the number of morning and afternoon trips to Boeing.

Mr. Wright spoke about alternative options to serve Boeing employees, including vanpooling and the possibility of partnering with Boeing to provide the requested bus service. He commented on transit budget constraints and reported that Local Transportation Assistance Fund (LTAF) funds were reduced this fiscal year and will be totally eliminated next fiscal year.

Committeemember Pomeroy spoke in support of extending the termination deadline to allow staff the opportunity to evaluate Boeing employee ridership and explore the options discussed by Mr. Wright.

Committeemember Walters said that although she understands and appreciates the problems associated with finding alternative means of transportation after relying on bus service, she also has concerns regarding the subsidy level provided by the City for this segment of route #136. She spoke in support of extending the deadline to study ridership and urged staff to consider sustainability and ridership distribution with the goal of reducing the number of daily trips along this segment to the Boeing facility.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters regarding the cost of extending the termination date by 30 days, Mr. Wright advised that the monthly cost of operating this segment of route #136 is approximately \$8,000.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Walters, that the January 14, 2002 termination deadline for elimination of transit service to Boeing on route #136, be extended for a period of 30 days and that staff conduct a ridership study regarding this segment of route #136 and present their findings to the Transportation Committee at a future Committee meeting.

Chairman Davidson said that although he fully appreciates the difficulties associated with the current budget, he is opposed to fully eliminating this transit service to one of the City's growing economic development employment centers, which is isolated from other transit routes. He discussed the investment being made in the Light Rail Transit Project and said that the Valley is only beginning to gain momentum regarding public transit. He encouraged staff to work with Boeing to reach a compromise based on current ridership data.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that all public bus service in the United States is subsidized.

Carried unanimously.

In response to concerns voiced by Committeemember Walters regarding the Committee's ability to render a budgetary decision, Deputy City Manager Paul Wenbert advised the Committee that their direction to staff to extend the deadline date for 30 days is appropriate.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that a public hearing will be conducted on the elimination of route #184 (January 16, 2002), and the fact that the Federal Transit Administration requires that a public hearing be conducted whenever bus routes are totally eliminated.

3. Hear an update on the light rail transit (LRT) project.

Mr. Wright and Wulf Grote, Valley Connections Light Rail Transit (LRT) Project Director, addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item. Mr. Wright reported that Real Estate staff will begin property title searches for the affected properties along the Mesa LRT alignment and he noted that the project schedule dictates that the title searches be completed by April 2002. Mr. Wright noted that Federal approval of the Environmental Impact Statement is expected in August 2002.

Mr. Grote advised that obtaining approval of the Environmental Impact Statement is a critical step in the overall project and that land acquisition cannot begin until this process is complete.

Mr. Wright commented on the status of negotiations with the East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT) regarding the Park and Ride Agreement.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the size of the planned Park and Ride facility at EVIT, Mr. Wright advised that 750 parking spaces are planned at the EVIT facility.

Mr. Grote commented on issues that were discussed during a recent project meeting with the Federal Transit Authority (FTA). He advised that the FTA's primary concern at this point is that the Cities of Mesa, Phoenix and Tempe collectively resolve the issue of project governance. He

noted that this issue must be resolved before the FTA will allow the project to move into the final design phase. Mr. Grote reported that LRT staff has been working with the respective City Managers' offices regarding this issue and that the Committee can expect an update regarding project governance in the near future.

Mr. Grote reported that the FTA advised that the project should not expect a Full Funding Grant Agreement until Federal FY 2004 (October 2003) because funds are not expected to be available in the current Federal Transportation Funding Program.

Mr. Wright and Mr. Grote commented on the scheduling of five upcoming public hearings regarding the Draft Environmental Impact Statement, including a hearing scheduled in Mesa on January 29, 2002 at 6:00 p.m. at the EVIT. Mr. Wright noted that staff will personally contact all business owners along the Mesa alignment to encourage attendance at the Mesa public hearing.

Discussion ensued concerning the schedule of project update presentations before the Phoenix City Council and related boards and committees.

Chairman Davidson requested that staff provide the Councilmembers with the complete schedule of project update presentations for the three cities.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the average operating speed of the system, Mr. Grote advised that it is estimated that the average speed of the overall system will be approximately 22 mph. He noted that average speed is affected by numerous factors, including number of stations, level of traffic signal priority, speed of turns and other factors.

Mr. Wright referred to and commented on photographs displayed in the Council Chambers depicting the exterior and interior of the proposed LRT vehicle design. He described numerous vehicle features including wheelchair access and interior bicycle storage. He explained that although the vehicle contains seating for 68 passengers, the "crush" (maximum occupancy) capacity is 200.

Discussion ensued regarding the safety concerns dictating interior bicycle storage, and the FTA's concerns regarding the issue of project governance.

Mr. Wright reported that the Tempe City Council has made a recommendation regarding the design of the Tempe Town Lake Bridge and that the estimated cost of the recommended design is within the \$15 million budgeted for the bridge. He noted that the bridge is one of the shared costs of the overall system.

Chairman Davidson voiced appreciation to Mr. Wright and Mr. Grote for the update.

4. Discuss and consider a proposed letter to ADOT regarding mitigation efforts related to the Red Mountain Freeway from Recker to Power Roads.

Committeemember Walters requested that staff comment on the five Red Mountain Freeway design modifications proposed in Councilmember Jaffa's draft letter to the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) dated January 8, 2002 (See Attachment).

Mr. Krosting commented on each of the five proposed modifications, including: 1) ADOT determined that narrowing the Power Road off-ramp to one lane until the ramp passes all the related houses would result in excessive traffic congestion, especially with the end-of-freeway condition at Power Road; 2) ADOT is still considering the request to alter the alignment of the Power Road off-ramp, which would likely require a modification or an exemption to their design standards; 3) ADOT has indicated that they cannot move the location of the main line freeway any more than what has occurred and that doing so would create negative impacts; 4) ADOT's urban area design standards dictate auxiliary lanes from ramp to ramp; and 5) ADOT has indicated that they will work with property owners on a case by case basis regarding the replacement of existing property line walls with sound walls.

Chairman Davidson voiced concerns regarding the Committee's role in connection with the letter.

Councilmember Jaffa commented on his involvement with a citizen group concerned about mitigating freeway impacts to the Power Road/Recker Road area, and the previous public meetings with ADOT concerning freeway impacts on this area. Councilmember Jaffa said that there is concern that the letter will not be seriously considered by ADOT without the endorsement of the Transportation Committee and the Council. He added that he is in the process of drafting a second letter, which addresses citizens' concerns for additional mitigation measures at the Recker Road traffic interchange and west of the interchange.

Chairman Davidson commended Councilmember Jaffa for his on-going efforts to assist citizens with these concerns. Chairman Davidson stated that although he appreciates the efforts and concerns, he cannot support the letter without first being fully apprised by ADOT and staff regarding the implications of the modifications proposed in the letter.

Committeemembers Walters and Pomeroy concurred with Chairman Davidson's comments.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed modification to narrow the Power Road off-ramp to one lane until the ramp passes all the related houses; ADOT's previous response to this proposed modification; the similarities of the planned Power Road off-ramp to the existing McKellips Road off-ramp; and the history of modifications to the McKellips off-ramp resulting from high traffic volumes.

Chairman Davidson stated that although he does not support the letter in whole at this time, he supports reducing the Power Road off-ramp to one lane as proposed and requested that staff provide him with the documentation from ADOT regarding their opposition to this proposed modification. Chairman Davidson indicated that he and Councilmember Jaffa would discuss this matter further with ADOT.

5. Adjournment.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, that the Transportation Committee meeting adjourn at 4:10 p.m.

Carried unanimously.

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 7th day of January 2002. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

Attachment
pjt

DRAFT

January 8, 2002

Mr. Joe Warren
Project Manager
Valley Project Management
Arizona Department of Transportation
205 S. 17th Avenue, #295 MD 614E
Phoenix, AZ 85007-3212

Dear Mr. Warren:

I am writing to express resident, City staff and my concerns about mitigation for the section of the Red Mountain Freeway from Recker to Power Roads.

It is our understanding that certain freeway design issues shall be made shortly. We request that the following freeway design issues be further addressed by ADOT prior to any final decisions and that you communicate your tentative decisions to us.

- Narrow the Power Road off-ramp to one lane until the ramp passes all the related houses as discussed by the residents at which point it could be widened to two lanes.
- Alter the alignment of the Power Road off-ramp to move it as far north as possible as previously discussed with us.
- Center and straighten the eastern portion of the freeway between Recker and Power Roads to attempt to equalize the distance on the north and south sides of the freeway between the property lines and the edge of pavement of the freeway and exit ramps.
- Eliminate the auxiliary lane between Recker and Power Roads.

We also discussed numerous issues related to the sound walls including but not limited to removing the existing resident property-line walls on the south side of the freeway corridor and installing a new sound wall further to the north with the new sound wall becoming the residents' north property line. It is our understanding that sound wall decisions cannot be made until the noise study is completed which is anticipated to be in August 2002.

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For future communication to interested parties, we have attached minutes from our November 7, 2001 meeting and a list of e-mail addresses for many of the interested residents.

Thank you for your consideration of these issues. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Bill Jaffa
Mesa City Councilmember

cc: Mayor and City Council
Mike Hutchinson, City Manager
202 Recker to Power Mailing List

Attachments