

# TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 12, 2000

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 12, 2000 at 10:23 a.m.

## COMMITTEE PRESENT

Jim Davidson, Chairman  
Pat Pomeroy  
Claudia Walters

## COUNCIL PRESENT

Keno Hawker

## OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson  
Barbara Jones

## COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

Chairman Davidson welcomed everyone to the Transportation Committee Meeting and apologized for the unanticipated delay in the commencement of the meeting

### 1. Hear an update on the following freeway projects.

#### a. U.S. 60 widening.

Fred Roehrich, a representative of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT), referred to graphics displayed in the Council Chambers and provided a brief overview of this agenda item. Mr. Roehrich explained that in the initial study phase for the widening of U.S. 60, ADOT designed a 16-mile, \$360 million recommended alternate, but a subsequent determination was made that sufficient funds were unavailable to complete build-out. Mr. Roehrich stated that a selected alternate, with a funding level of approximately \$263 million, will include the following improvements: no new right-of-way; HOV connection from I-10 to U.S. 60; HOV lanes from I-10 to Val Vista Drive; two general purpose lanes from the Loop 101 to Gilbert Road; one general purpose lane from Gilbert Road to Val Vista Drive; auxiliary lanes throughout, and noise mitigation and other related construction activities associated with the proposed widening.

Mr. Roehrich commented that ADOT has short-listed four firms to proceed with the development of technical proposals, received authorization to continue with the project and has gained approval by the Federal Highway Administration for its environmental assessment. Mr. Roehrich added that ADOT anticipates receipt of the technical proposals by January 2001, the project will be awarded by March/April of 2001, commencement of construction in late spring of 2001, and an estimated 36-month timetable for project completion.

Mr. Roehrich commented that ADOT is currently endeavoring to coordinate landscaping, aesthetic enhancements and utility issues with the cities of Tempe and Mesa and is also conducting public hearings to provide citizens with necessary input regarding this issue.

Discussion ensued relative to the configuration of the alternate HOV lanes and general-purpose lanes; the proposed design-build project schedule; the fact that three lanes must remain open during peak travel hours while construction occurs, and the fact that funding for Power Road construction will take place after 2006.

Chairman Davidson thanked Mr. Roehrich for his presentation.

b. Update on traffic interchange at Lindsay Road and U.S. 60.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting addressed the Transportation Committee relative to this agenda item. Mr. Krosting explained that Agenda Item a (see above) encompasses the widening project at Lindsay Road, but due to funding and environmental study issues, the traffic interchange at Lindsay Road has not been included.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Krosting clarified that recent studies have demonstrated that a Lindsay Road traffic interchange will prevent traffic overloads at the Val Vista Drive and Gilbert Road interchanges. Mr. Krosting added that discussions have ensued regarding the City's participation in the funding of the traffic interchange, but there has not been a commitment by ADOT to construct such a project.

Chairman Davidson expressed appreciation to Mr. Krosting for his input.

c. Red Mountain Freeway 202 construction progress between Country Club Drive and Gilbert Road.

Mike Zimmick, a representative of ADOT, referred to graphics displayed in the Council Chambers and provided a brief overview regarding this agenda item. Mr. Zimmick explained that two major components of the current construction include the removal of 4 million cubic yards of dirt and also debris excavation, which would subsequently be re-compacted to provide the freeway with a level foundation. Mr. Zimmick indicated that the completion date is currently scheduled for November 2001.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson relative to concerns regarding construction of the freeway at Mesa Drive being above grade to accommodate drainage pipes, Mr. Krosting assured the Transportation Committee that Mesa Drive will remain at grade and the freeway will go under Mesa Drive. Mr. Krosting added that ADOT has apprised the neighbors on the west side of Mesa Drive of the proposed plans and negotiations have occurred relative to the addition of a 10-foot berm to protect the back portion of the surrounding properties. Assistant to the City Manager Jeff Martin stated that in negotiations with ADOT and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), the City of Mesa stressed its opposition to a "rolling profile," and demanded that the freeway be fully depressed.

Discussion ensued regarding the technical aspects of the proposed drainage system and the debris excavation procedure currently being implemented.

Chairman Davidson requested that City Manager Mike Hutchinson provide additional input to the Transportation Committee relative to the manner in which the residents in the area of Mesa Drive were notified regarding the issue of the drainage pipes.

Chairman Davidson thanked everyone for their input.

d. Red Mountain Freeway construction – Gilbert Road to Higley Road.

Joe Warren, a representative of ADOT, presented a brief synopsis of this agenda item. Mr. Warren indicated that the Gilbert Road to Higley Road leg of the Red Mountain Freeway construction encompasses enormous challenges, including appropriate design implementation through one of Arizona's largest archeological sites and also the transfer of millions of cubic yards of embankment material from one side of the project to the other. Mr. Warren said that the project is currently in the design phase and added that ADOT anticipates commencement of construction in the summer of 2001, with completion slated for May of 2003.

Discussion ensued relative to the proposed configuration of the freeway; the fact that Maricopa County has designated Higley Road as a road of regional significance; the fact that Mesa and ADOT are joint participants in this accelerated project, and the fact that once the freeway is open, an estimated 35,000 vehicles will utilize Gilbert Road on a daily basis.

In response to concerns expressed by Chairman Davidson regarding increased traffic congestion in the area of Gilbert and McKellips Roads during the construction phase, Mr. Krosting clarified that with the implementation of necessary improvements to McDowell Road between Gilbert Road and Greenfield Road, it is anticipated that a large percentage of traffic will exit the freeway at Gilbert Road to utilize McDowell Road rather than McKellips Road.

Committeemember Walters spoke in support of enlisting the services of additional police officers to monitor the above-referenced residential areas during the scheduled construction phase.

Chairman Davidson thanked Mr. Warren for his presentation.

e. U.S. 60 and S.R. 202 interchange project.

Eric Crow, a representative of the engineering firm of DMJM, addressed the Transportation Committee regarding this agenda item. Mr. Crow explained that in 1999, an environmental impact study was approved with regard to the U.S. 60 and S.R. 202 interchange, but due to receipt of subsequent feedback regarding the anticipated congestion at the interchange, DMJM has conducted additional study including the creation of a Design Concept Report and an environmental assessment. Mr. Crow noted that 18 alternatives have been developed ranging from full access to all the service interchanges around the interchange, to limiting access points. Mr. Crow added that concerns were voiced by the City's Engineering Department relative to full access at Sossaman Road and Ellsworth Road. Mr. Crow stated that in an effort to gain input from the public regarding the creation of the Design Concept Report and environmental assessment, ADOT is conducting meetings on an ongoing basis with a citizen advisory team. Mr. Crow commented that it is anticipated that the interchange project will be completed by 2007.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Martin noted that there is a four-mile gap between Val Vista Road and Power Road which will be added to the program this coming year, and as part of the study for this interchange, ADOT is also studying to the east and west on U.S. 60. Mr. Martin added that once that study is finished, effort will be expended to program the improvements between this interchange and Power Road. Mr. Martin informed the Committee that the environmental assessment will result in a number of additional improvements and estimated the additional cost to be approximately \$50 million. Mr. Martin stressed the importance of working closely with ADOT and MAG to identify funding for the development of a full urban interchange. Mr. Martin stated the opinion that funding for the four miles to Power Road will be available in the five-year program.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Crow clarified that the proposed interchange will be able to accommodate commercial vehicles.

Chairman Davidson spoke in appreciation of Mr. Crow's presentation.

2. Hear a presentation on the proposed light rail project.

Transit Administrator Jim Wright and Mark Soronson, Environmental Planning Manager for SR Beard and Associates, referred to graphics displayed in the Council Chambers and provided a brief overview of this agenda item. Mr. Soronson outlined two major topics of discussion including the light rail transit (LRT) project end-of-the-line station, currently designated to be located at the East Valley Institute of Technology (EVIT), and also Town Center alignment options. Mr. Soronson explained that the proposed initial phase of construction, commencing at Chris Town Mall in Phoenix, will terminate at a temporary end-of-the-line station situated at the EVIT campus. Mr. Soronson described two design options, including the rail cars remaining in the middle of the street, with Park and Ride facilities which would utilize 25 acres of vacant land currently owned by EVIT, or pulling the train off the street and creating a transit center and a cross platform connection. Mr. Soronson indicated that both concepts were presented at an October 9, 2000 EVIT Board of Directors' meeting, and advised that as a result of recent changes in the Board's administration, it was the opinion of the current Board that the campus would not benefit by the presence of a light rail system. Mr. Soronson added that the Board also indicated that long-term plans exist for the land. Mr. Soronson emphasized that if satisfactory arrangements cannot be made with EVIT, it will be difficult to find an appropriate end-of-the-line station in Mesa.

Chairman Davidson suggested that the Transportation Committee focus its attention on the EVIT issue and revisit the Town Center alignment options at a later time.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Soronson clarified that the Price Road/101 Interchange is the closest station west of EVIT and the fact that approximately 8 to 10 acres are necessary to provide a transit center operation to accommodate a minimum of 500 to 600 parking spaces.

Committeemember Pomeroy stressed the importance of Park and Ride access and suggested that members of the Council meet with EVIT Board members in an attempt to resolve this issue. Mr. Soronson concurred with Committeemember Pomeroy and noted that the Board expressed doubts regarding community support for this issue.

Chairman Davidson remarked that in defense of the EVIT Board members, the community has not given clear direction regarding transportation issues. Chairman Davidson agreed that the Transportation Committee should meet with the EVIT Board members to address this matter.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that funding is currently available to complete the environmental impact statement to Mesa Drive, and the fact that although Tempe and Phoenix possess the necessary dedicated funding to match federal grants for project construction, Mesa's funding is not yet in place.

Chairman Davidson stated that it is imperative that EVIT be cognizant of the community's commitment to bring light rail to Mesa.

(Committeemember Pomeroy was excused at 11:55 a.m.)

Committeemember Walters concurred with Chairman Davidson and noted that due to the fact not all of the members of EVIT reside in Mesa, it is imperative that the Transportation Committee explore the concerns of the board members.

Chairman Davidson thanked Mr. Soronson and Mr. Wright for their presentation.

3. Hear a report on the proposal to add additional aesthetic features to freeways in Mesa.

Senior Civil Engineer Ron Taylor, Public Art Coordinator Kate O'Mara and Mr. Martin presented a brief overview of this agenda item. Mr. Martin explained that City staff and ADOT have engaged in a series of meetings regarding the addition of architectural enhancements to the Superstition and Red Mountain Freeways. Mr. Martin noted that staff has also contractually retained Carolyn Braaksma, a Colorado artist who previously worked on the Pima Freeway aesthetic improvements, to develop design concepts which will ultimately be presented to ADOT and the City Council for approval. Mr. Martin added that staff has concerns relative to ADOT's proposed landscaping which has been deemed unacceptable by neighbors in the surrounding areas, and said that the City continues to meet with ADOT in an effort to remedy that situation.

Mr. Taylor noted that in a recent visit to the Valley, Ms. Braaksma met with City and ADOT staff and toured the Phoenix freeways in an effort to gather data and is currently in the process of concept development. Ms. O'Mara remarked that Ms. Braaksma is a concrete artist and primarily designs aesthetic features to be incorporated into sound walls and retaining walls. Mr. Taylor commented that ADOT has expressed concerns regarding the potential enhancements, including maintenance, safety and driver distraction, and also noted that City staff will address such issues. Mr. Taylor stressed that the acceleration of Ms. Braaksma's concept development is due to the U.S. 60 design-build process and that the concepts must be integrated into the technical proposals.

Committeemember Walters spoke in support of freeway enhancements and commented that attractive landscaping is a critical component of the overall driving experience.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Martin explained that in an effort to prevent the freeway landscaping from appearing too sparse, ADOT is not only attempting to retain a portion of the originally planted vegetation, but also incorporating new planting.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Ms. O'Mara remarked that Ms. Braaksma will present alternative design concepts, including a variety of price ranges, for Council's approval.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Martin explained that it is anticipated that ADOT will hold public hearings to obtain citizen input regarding the art enhancements, landscaping and sound walls. Mr. Taylor assured the Transportation Committee that Ms. Braaksma is cognizant that the coordination of the landscaping and the artwork is critical to complete the project.

Chairman Davidson spoke in appreciation of staff for their presentation.

4. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee adjourned at 12:15 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 12th day of October 2000. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2000

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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