

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

APPROVED

HELD ON AUGUST 20, 2013

TAB Members Present

Dawn Fortuna, Chairperson
Ian Bennett
Kay Henry
Jim LeCheminant
Ian Murray
Troy Peterson
Mike Schmidt
Ron Wilson

TAB Members Absent

Ron Barnes (Excused)
Bruce Hallsted, Vice
Chairperson, (Excused)

Others Present

Randi Davis
Renate Ehm
Sabine Ellis
Lenny Hulme
Amanda McKeever
Sgt. David Meicke
Alan Sanderson
Al Zubi

Chairperson Dawn Fortuna called the August 20, 2013 Transportation Advisory Board meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Item 1. Approval of the minutes of the Transportation Advisory Board meeting held on June 18, 2013.

Board Member Kay Henry noted that a title was incorrect on page four. Board Member Ian Bennett moved to approve the minutes with the correction noted. Board Member Kay Henry seconded the motion and it passed unanimously. Board Member Troy Peterson abstained due to his absence at the June 18 meeting.

Item 2. Acknowledge incoming Board Member, Mr. Ian Murray.

Board Member Ian Murray introduced himself and gave a brief history and background about himself. The Board then introduced themselves and gave brief backgrounds about themselves. Chairperson Fortuna welcomed Board Member Murray to the Board.

Item 3. Introduce Interim Transportation Director, Lenny Hulme.

Traffic Engineer Alan Sanderson explained that Transportation Department Director Dan Cleavenger has been asked to act as the Interim Water Resources Director and as a result Deputy Transportation Director Lenny Hulme has been acting as the Transportation Director in the interim. Mr. Hulme gave a brief background about himself and his experience in the Transportation Department.

Item 4. Items from citizens present.

None.

Item 5. Hear a presentation and discuss the Arizona Department of Transportation Passenger Rail Corridor Study.

Carlos Lopez from Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) explained he would be providing an update on the passenger rail corridor study process. He began by giving a brief history on how the passenger rail corridor study came about. He explained that the rail study is focusing on connecting the two metropolitan areas in and between Tucson and Phoenix.

Mr. Lopez explained that ADOT is working on this study with the Federal Railroad Administration and Federal Transit Administration. He then described three deliverables of the study. Those include an alternative analysis, the environmental impact, and a service development plan. Mr. Lopez explained that the environmental document is scheduled to be available for public comment in early 2014, and that the study is scheduled to be completed with a preferred route identified by spring 2014. Mr. Lopez explained that once the preferred route is identified, additional planning work will be done.

Mr. Lopez went on to describe the intercity and commuter rail service components of the study. He explained that the study is implementing both services, and that preliminary assessments show express service, which would skip stations, would take between 1.25 to 1.5 hours to travel between Phoenix and Tucson. Mr. Lopez stated that trips that stopped at all of the stations would take approximately two hours.

Mr. Lopez then described the feasible alternatives. He explained there were originally over 100 alternatives, but that seven were considered feasible. Mr. Lopez said that the seven feasible alternatives provided a range of alternatives, including one bus service that travels the Interstate 10. The remaining alternatives were rail connections. Mr. Lopez explained that the alternatives accessed communities in Pinal County including Maricopa and Florence, and in Maricopa County. The alternatives followed the Interstate 10 corridor and others offered east valley connections. Each of the alternatives follow the same corridor from Picacho Peak to Tucson and vary only in their connections and routes north of Picacho Peak.

Mr. Lopez detailed the public outreach methods utilized to obtain input from the public and from agencies such as the City of Mesa. Mr. Lopez reported that over 6600 surveys were received from public outreach events and online, and overall there is support for rail. Mr. Lopez explained that many comments were received in regards to the congestion on Interstate 10 and safety.

Mr. Lopez then summarized the public's alternative preferences. The publically preferred routes were the most direct route, routes that provided east valley connections and an intermediate route. Mr. Lopez explained that agencies showed similar results for preferences.

Mr. Lopez explained that a technical analysis was done concurrently and that there are not any ridership numbers available at this time. Mr. Lopez explained that travel demands are being developed at this time, and the demand numbers will enable the study team to develop accurate ridership numbers. Mr. Lopez explained that alternatives that access the east valley have the highest market potential and that trends show that east valley connections have higher ridership potential.

Mr. Lopez then summarized the six major criteria used to evaluate and compare the alternatives.

Mr. Lopez explained that in the Spring 2012, the seven alternatives were narrowed down to three. Those alternatives include following Interstate 10, following the Union Pacific rail corridor, and a dedicated new passenger rail system that would access Phoenix Mesa Gateway Airport and then follow the US-60 into Phoenix.

Mr. Lopez concluded by describing the next steps and schedule, and then offered to answer any of the Board's questions.

Based on Board Member Ian Bennett's question, Mr. Lopez explained that the alternatives that follow the Union Pacific rail corridor would be within the Union Pacific right-of-way, but not on Union Pacific rails. Mr. Lopez explained that new tracks would need to be added. Mr. Lopez then explained the coordination between ADOT and Union Pacific, the feasibility of using their right of way, and the potential conflicts.

Mr. Lopez responded that the only high capacity connection between Arizona's largest metropolitan areas is Interstate 10 when Board Member Wilson asked the objective of the rail corridor service.

Mr. Lopez then touched on the cost of each alternative in response to Board Member Henry's question. Mr. Lopez explained that utilizing existing tracks is being considered and that station locations would be placed so that there would be light rail and bus rapid transit connections.

Based on Chairperson Fortuna's questions, Mr. Lopez detailed the alternative that would allow connection to Phoenix Mesa Gateway Airport. Mr. Lopez went on to discuss the population demands of the connections and explained that the study is the first step in providing passenger rail service.

In regards to Chairperson Fortuna's questions about funding, Mr. Lopez explained that no funding is identified at this time for design or construction, and that it will take many years to implement this plan. Mr. Lopez said that ADOT will be looking for partnerships with agencies and federal partners.

Mr. Lopez responded to Board Member Peterson's questions about the rail's connection to Nogales that the current focus is to connect Phoenix to Tucson. There have not been any discussions with Mexican partners at this point, but there have been high level discussions about ports of entry improvements and freight connection movements.

When Board Member Bennett asked about the source of the estimate numbers, Mr. Lopez concluded by describing the methods for determining ridership estimates.

Chairperson Fortuna thanked Mr. Lopez for his time and the information he provided.

Item 6. Hear verbal updates regarding the Southern Avenue and Country Club Drive and the Southern Avenue and Stapley Drive Intersection Improvement projects.

Mr. Sanderson gave a brief background and explained that there was surplus from the 2008 Bond Program due to the economy slow down. Approximately two years ago, City Council approved staff proceeding with two additional intersection improvement projects with the surplus. Since then, the surplus funds have been used to design the intersections, but the construction to improve them has not been done as costs have increased. Mr. Sanderson explained that the two intersections were not included in the 2013 Bond Program and that the only large street project included is at Mesa Drive and Broadway. Mr. Sanderson explained that the Country Club Drive and Southern Avenue intersection has been tentatively pushed out to 2020 for construction, and that the Stapley Drive and Southern Avenue intersection has been pushed out to 2019 for construction. Mr. Sanderson said that these dates are subject to revision as future priorities are assessed, and that designs will be finished up and put on hold to await future funding.

Item 7. Hear a verbal update regarding the request to rename Hibbert to Martin Luther King, Jr. Lane from University Drive to 5th Place.

Mr. Sanderson explained that organizer Mr. Moon has asked for additional time to engage the community. Mr. Sanderson said that Mr. Moon is looking at a new location instead of the originally proposed location. The new location would be a quarter mile segment on 3rd Place. Mr. Sanderson stated that staff is awaiting additional information from Mr. Moon, and would be meeting with him to get an update in the near future.

Item 8. Discuss and take action on staff recommendation to continue the use of Driver Speed Feedback Signs where a street qualifies for speed cushions, but the neighborhood survey indicates insufficient support for speed cushions to be installed.

Senior Transportation Engineer Al Zubi began explaining staff's recommendation to continue using Driver Speed Feedback Signs (DSFS) in neighborhoods where there is insufficient support for cushions. He explained that DSFS are used as a tool to lower speed and the desired effect of using them. He described evaluations and studies reviewed by staff, and explained that results showed that in many cases there is an initial reduction in speed, but eventually drivers get used to the sign and go back to original driving speeds.

Mr. Zubi described the DSFS installations that were evaluated and the process by which they were evaluated and that the goal of the evaluation is to see if there is a long term reduction of speeds after the DSFS installations. Mr. Zubi said that the signs had a favorable effect after three years of installation, but were not as effective as speed cushions. Mr. Zubi then reviewed the findings of the evaluations and concluded that staff recommends the City to continue the use of the signs in cases where criteria for the installation of a speed cushion are met, but there is insufficient support for its installation.

Mr. Zubi responded to Board Member Henry's question that the signs are bought by the City, and not leased, and that the signs are a one-time expense.

Board Member Bennett's question as to the cost of the signs and if they are solar operated prompted Mr. Sanderson to explain the elements and price of the signs.

When Board Member Murray asked how often the signs' batteries are replaced, Mr. Hulme explained that similar solar batteries are replaced around every five years and that the cost of the batteries are lower when compared to traditional batteries.

Mr. Zubi and Mr. Sanderson explained the methods for evaluating the effectiveness of the DSFS based on Board Member Peterson's question. They explained that the DSFS are still effective throughout Mesa after three years, which is different than other cities' experiences with them.

When Board Member Peterson asked about rotating the DSFS after the effectiveness begins to decline, Mr. Sanderson explained that some of the residents who lobbied for them, may object to the removal of the signs.

Board Member Bennett moved to continue the use of the Driver Speed Feedback Signs where a street qualifies for speed cushions, but neighborhood survey indicates insufficient support. Board Member Henry seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

Item 9. Discuss and take action on staff recommendation to increase the speed limit from 35 mph to 45 mph on Mountain Road from Mesquite Street to Ray Road.

Mr. Sanderson began by giving a little background on the street segment. He explained that Mountain Road is a collector street that has been developed and has changed from a two lane road to a five lane thoroughfare. Mr. Sanderson explained that by raising the speed limit on the segment, it would be consistent with the surrounding area. Mr. Sanderson noted that there are a couple of schools in the area, but that driver speeds would not change in front of them.

Ms. Ellis elaborated further on Mr. Sanderson's explanation. She gave further details including the 85th percental speed, adjacent land uses, proximity of schools, levels of activity, adjacent speed limits, traffic volumes, roadway function and roadway geometrics. Ms. Ellis explained that staff does not expect an impact on driver speeds around the school as there are all-way stops by the schools, and for all of the reasons she explained, staff is recommending raising the speed limit. Ms. Ellis concluded by offering two alternatives to raising the speed limits which were not recommended by staff.

Board Member Henry stated that she supported the raising the speed limit. Board Member Bennett moved to increase the speed limit to 45 mph on Mountain Road from Mesquite Street to Ray Road. Board Member Schmidt seconded the motion and it passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:48 pm.