

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

DRAFT

HELD ON MARCH 18, 2014

TAB Members Present

Dawn Fortuna, Chairperson
Bruce Hallsted, Vice Chairperson
Ron Barnes
Ian Bennett
Kay Henry
Jim LeCheminant
Ian Murray
Troy Peterson
Ron Wilson

TAB Members Absent

Jennifer Love (Excused)
Mike Schmidt (Excused)

Others Present

Alan Sanderson
Renate Ehm
Sabine Ellis
Mark Venti
Jim Hash
Jodi Sorrell
John Wesley

Chairperson Dawn Fortuna called the March 18, 2014 Transportation Advisory Board meeting to order at 5:30 pm.

Item 1. Approval of the minutes of the Transportation Advisory Board meeting held on January 21st, 2014.

Board Member Kay Henry moved to approve the minutes as written. Board Member Jim LeCheminant seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Item 2. Items from citizens present.

None.

Item 3. Hear a presentation and discuss the Roadway Element of Part II of the Mesa Transportation Plan Update, and the integration of the Mesa Transportation Plan Update (Part III – Circulation and Integration), the General Plan Update, and the Transit Master Plan Update.

Senior Transportation Engineer Mark Venti introduced himself and Planner II Jim Hash to the Board. Mr. Venti explained they would be covering the initial portion of Part II of the Transportation Plan covering roadway elements. Mr. Venti began discussing the existing positions of the roadway network, explaining how the majority of the new lanes/roadway network are in place today due to new freeways that came into the area since the last plan (2002-2012). Using tools such as travel time, traffic volumes, and levels of service, Mr. Venti explained that the City of Mesa is working with the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) to develop models for future roadway networks. Mr. Venti described the four categories used to develop the future network: ongoing street improvements, MAG travel demand model, closing gaps and encouraging connectivity, and the Complete Streets program.

Mr. Venti explained that MAG has a roadway model, but the model MAG presented to the City was different than what the City had identified. Mr. Venti explained to the Board that the City of Mesa and MAG will continue to fine-tune the models and present the rest of the chapter to the Board once it is complete.

Planner II Jim Hash explained that the City of Mesa had been looking at MAG data to assist in developing the roadway network. Mr. Hash explained that the MAG data had identified a decrease in traffic volumes occurring in the City of Mesa between the existing Transportation Plan and the Plan in development however, along with the decrease in traffic volumes there is a definite increase in demand for multimodal transportation. Mr. Hash outlined findings from public meetings that identified public interests to include a more balanced and integrated system encouraging a better quality of service to traverse the City by various modes of transportation including walking, cycling, and transit services, as well as driving. This public input was used to help develop a plan that would provide residents the opportunity to travel throughout the City using whatever mode they choose and encourage the use of alternate modes of transportation that would improve air quality and congestion around the City. Mr. Hash explained that this is just a portion of Part III of the Plan, and that Transportation will continue to develop an integration plan encouraging a finely woven transportation network.

Mr. Hash went on to explain the General Plan hierarchy and discussed how the City develops sub-area plans, like the Transportation Plan and Transit Master Plans, for areas that directly influence land use and how those plans influence and help to develop the General Plan. Mr. Hash continued by explaining to the Board that the information presented is the first piece of the last chapter and that he and Mr. Venti hoped to have the rest of the chapter ready for the next Board meeting.

Chairperson Fortuna then solicited questions from the information presented.

Board Member Ian Bennett asked staff to define multi-modal transportation and how the data was gathered when the determination was made that the City experienced decreased traffic volumes. Mr. Hash began by answering Board Member Bennett's question about multi-modal transportation. He explained that input was tallied from the public outreach information that was gathered to determine the increase in demand for different modes of transportation. Mr. Hash described multi-modal transportation as any combination of modes used throughout the day, other than a single occupant vehicle, to travel through the City. This could include walking, biking, or using public transit. Mr. Hash described the hierarchy of the different modes of transportation in response to Board Member Bennett's question.

Mr. Venti then addressed Board Member Bennett's question on data gathering. He explained analysis, described traffic patterns observed, and explained that the analysis did not go into comprehensive detail to determine where the trips were going. In response to Board Member Ron Barnes' question regarding the way in which the MAG and the City of Mesa models were different in regard to the roadway network plan, Mr. Venti explained the MAG model for roadway network and future land use, and that the City of Mesa found the MAG roadway network had not taken into account several significant impacts and changes, especially in the southeastern part of the City. Mr. Venti explained that these changes include the move of a terminal at the Phoenix-Mesa Gateway airport and roadway alignments in the Eastmark development area. Mr. Venti explained that the City communicates with MAG roadway

conditions needing to be identified in the MAG model, and in return, MAG evaluates the reconfigured network and works with the City to update the model.

Board Member Troy Peterson pointed out that the circulation maps handed out at the meeting did not specifically identify where future light rail plans are headed, but did identify some areas where light-rail was planned. Mr. Venti explained to the Board the maps presented at this meeting were developed taking into account existing conditions.

Chairperson Dawn Fortuna expressed that the Board would like to see maps specific to the different roadway elements as well as having a map that identifies all transportation elements within the City. Traffic Engineer Alan Sanderson explained to the Board that the information being presented by Mr. Venti and Mr. Hash was specific to the roadway element, and that the Transit Plan is a separate element developed by the Transit department. On maps that identify only a single element, Mr. Sanderson suggested including clarifying notes that communicate the maps are showing only one part of a multi-part system. Chairperson Fortuna emphasized the importance of a map combining all elements, but reiterated for the purpose of the Transportation Plan evaluation, a map showing just roadway elements would be best. Mr. Venti expressed that the future maps for the purpose of evaluating the Transportation Plan would include only relevant roadway elements.

Board Member Ron Wilson asked staff if forecasts could be made for the Level of Service maps that identify what areas may change categories in the future. Mr. Venti explained that the information provided on the Level of Service Map came from 2012 data and that physical shape of the network is changing. Once the City completes its evaluation of the Plan with MAG, a forecast will be done to identify how many more people may be living or working in certain areas, and what future developments could be expected. Mr. Venti went on to say that estimates could be made that identify how many people will be going in and out of different areas as well as estimates on how many people use transit and other modes of transportation, like bicycling.

As there were no other questions regarding the Transportation Plan, staff continued with an overview of the City's General Plan.

Mr. Venti introduced John Wesley, Planning Director with the City's Development and Sustainability Department. Mr. Wesley described the relationship between the General Plan and the Transportation Plan. He identified the General Plan as a guide to sustaining and improving key elements within the City of Mesa in the following areas: land development, neighborhoods, employment areas, and commercial and entertainment areas. Mr. Wesley pointed out that during public outreach citizens expressed the desire for more connectivity and mobility throughout the City. Mr. Wesley went on to explain how the General Plan provides a mode in which to transform the City of Mesa and help with creating a "sense of place". He told the Board about the different visions and guiding principles that will help focus policies, goals and strategies on what is most important to the City of Mesa. He expressed that some elements of the plan would include ways to attract employers, help to develop commercial areas to be as vibrant as they once were. Mr. Wesley explained that the Transportation Plan plays an important role in affording the city an opportunity to be able to get goods, services and employees in and out and provide structure for development. The Transportation Plan is needed to help identify ways of connecting activity areas to a transportation system and how

the City can engage street and transit systems in the best way possible. Mr. Wesley described the importance of having the airports, roadways, and railways and how transportation and transit help guide land use. He further explained how studying the City's population density assists in identifying the best ways to utilize transportation and transit systems to best meet the goals identified in the General Plan. Mr. Wesley then explained the General Plan review process and the intent to have the General Plan on the November ballot.

Board Member Kay Henry asked what would happen if the General Plan did not get voted in. Mr. Wesley explained that previous General Plans within the City of Mesa have always been approved by voters. While Council will take action to approve the Plan in July, the vote is not until November. Mr. Wesley described the challenge in keeping the General Plan at the forefront of people's minds as they prepare to vote in November.

Board Member Ian Bennett asked about pedestrian routes, and Mr. Wesley explained that the sidewalk and trail system are more detail specific in the sub area plans. Board Member Bennett expressed that while people may be expressing a desire for more walkable areas, they may still use existing conditions to get to their destination and he wondered if the City is focusing too much on sidewalk and trail systems. Mr. Wesley explained that more research would go into determining where new infrastructure is needed and explained that discussions would also be had with the Planning and Zoning Board. Mr. Wesley expressed that citizens seem to be walking all year round and that if they are already walking and the City can make it easier for them to get around, citizens may end up using whatever new infrastructure is put in place.

Chairperson Dawn Fortuna noted how the sub areas being identified and discussed how citizens are expressing interest in intermodal opportunities, but pointed out that some areas may not be suitable for some modes. Mr. Wesley confirmed that there are areas of Mesa that have an affluent character and they may not want mixed use modes of transportation, and assured the Board that the City would work to identify those and other unique areas. Mr. Wesley also noted that there are many other areas that could be improved by offering multiple modes of transportation to make getting from one area of town to another easier.

With no further questions regarding the General Plan, staff went on to discuss the Transit Master Plan.

Transit Director Jodi Sorrell addressed the Board and introduced Matthew Tonton, a technical consultant for the Transit Master Plan.

Ms. Sorrell explained that the Transit Plan had been shared with the Board before and the intent of this presentation was to offer some specifics about improvements. The main themes of the Transit Plan involves developing transit centers, connecting activity areas, prioritizing frequency over coverage and balancing local and regional transit needs.

Mr. Tonton summarized items of the Transit Plan presented in November 2013 and discussed the different elements affecting transit including existing ridership, City changes over time and characteristics of land use. Mr. Tonton explained that the Transit Plan is looking at a high capacity transit network that is compatible with the City. The City will create a transit system identifying the different land uses compatible with different transit systems, taking into account

high priority corridors where investments in the transit system can be maximized. Mr. Tonton explained that the Transit Plan will be predicated on the pedestrian environment, as the majority of transit rider's access transit services by walking. He further explained that the Transit Plan will tie into the General Plan, taking into account a map of the existing system and arterial grid, as well as analyzing data that shows how the system is performing today. The map of the existing system also shows the common metric used to measure transit, which is ridership.

Mr. Tonton identified on the map the routes that have the best ridership, where the light rail is currently, and he highlighted Route 61 on Southern Avenue. Mr. Tonton went on to explain that ridership can also be identified by looking at boardings by stop location and identifying key boarding locations throughout the City. He pointed out that on the map, the bulk of the key boarding locations are in the western party of the City and that today's transit system is performing well. Mr. Tonton noted that there is already a high quality of service offered with the existing transit network.

Mr. Tonton went on to discuss five different scenarios for the Transit Plan. The short term scenario correlates to 2018 and the Gilbert Road light rail extension. This scenario recognizes improved bus services around the Fiesta District, additional Link services, and an increased frequency for high levels of service. Mr. Tonton explained that mid-term scenarios are predicated on the differences of high capacity transit and how light rail will extend beyond Gilbert Road. He went on to describe possible light rail extensions further east and south within the City limits. Mr. Tonton then discussed some long term scenarios, identifying a consistent theme of extending services east and south, with emphasis on creating a hub of transit near Superstition Springs. Mr. Tonton expressed the way in which the Transit Plan will develop over time and identified the ways in which the different transit and transportation modes come together in the future, including the future impact and accommodations needed for light rail extensions and the introduction of passenger rail.

Ms. Sorrell explained that the Transit Plan would be taken to City Council in line with the General Plan.

Chairperson Fortuna solicited questions from the Board.

Board Member Troy Peterson asked if the Transit districts identified on the maps during the Transit Plan presentation were detailed online. Mr. Wesley explained that there would be more detail on districts in the General Plan.

Board Member Peterson appreciated having the maps and renderings, but wanted to ensure that the vision for the corridors were not lost. He encouraged more detail and identifying functionality in the renderings.

Mr. Tonton explained that the schematics presented during this meeting were a general guideline.

There were no further questions from the Board.

This meeting was adjourned at 6:38 p.m.