

# TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 12, 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 July 12, 2006 at 2:30 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT	COMMITTEE ABSENT	STAFF PRESENT
Scott Somers, Chairman Claudia Walters	Rex Griswold	Paul Wenbert Jack Friedline

Chairman Somers excused Committeemember Griswold from the entire meeting.

A PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) was displayed that addressed all of the agenda items.

1. Consider and make a recommendation to the City Council on the results of the corridor modeling studies for Southern Avenue, Mesa Drive and McKellips Road.

Transportation Director Jeff Kramer introduced Senior Planner Pat Pittenger and Deputy Transportation Director Dan Cleavenger.

Mr. Pittenger advised that pre-design studies (copies of the report summaries are available for review in the City Clerk's Office) were recently completed for portions of Southern Avenue (from Country Club Drive to Leisure World Boulevard, which is the Recker Road alignment), Mesa Drive (from the U.S. 60 to Broadway Road) and McKellips Road (from Gilbert Road to Power Road).

Mr. Pittenger stated that the studies were based on the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) model in order to determine the impact of widening only the intersections in 15.5 miles of arterial streets. He reported that the study results indicate that only the intersections should be improved, except for widening the one-half mile segment of Mesa Drive north of the U.S. 60 to Southern Avenue. He noted that improving only the intersections eliminates the need to secure rights-of-way along the corridors. Mr. Pittenger added that although the Regional Transportation Plan funds 70 percent of the original cost estimates, the costs have escalated significantly since the original calculations were made. He said that improving only the intersections, except for the Mesa Drive segment, reduces the City of Mesa's share of the cost from \$40 million to \$13 million, and that an estimated \$26 million remaining in regional funding could be applied to other street projects that are included in the Regional Plan. Mr. Pittenger also noted that widening Southern Avenue could negatively impact traffic volume by encouraging the utilization of Southern Avenue as an alternative to the U.S. 60. He further stated that studies of the travel-

time savings determined that improving only the intersections would provide 81 percent of the benefit at 50 percent of the cost when compared to the original cost estimates to widen the corridors. Mr. Pittenger advised that staff recommends that the City proceed with plans to widen only the segment of Mesa Drive north of the U.S. 60 to Southern Avenue and that only intersection improvements be planned for the Southern Avenue, Mesa Drive and McKellips Road corridors. He explained that the first step in the process would be to obtain MAG approval of the revised plan by providing documentation, and he stated the opinion that MAG would grant approval. Mr. Pittenger added that the final specific improvements to each intersection would be determined by the Engineering Department.

In response to a question from Chairman Somers, Mr. Pittenger stated that the total amount of Regional funding would remain available to the City. He explained that as the project is implemented, staff would bill MAG for 70 percent of the costs. Mr. Pittenger advised that MAG has policies and procedures in place to govern these types of changes. He further advised that upon completion of the project, the unused balance of the funding remains allocated to the City as part of Mesa's regional equity, which no other city is able to access.

Mr. Kramer stated that one of the considerations to be addressed by staff relative to future Engineering alignment studies is the positioning of intersection improvements with respect to the rights-of-way. He added that as the Regional Plan is implemented during the next 20 years, staff would study alternatives to determine whether certain concepts should be implemented throughout the City. Mr. Kramer advised that MAG was included in every step of the study process. He reported that changes to the Arterial Life Cycle Program (ALCP) were discussed with MAG representatives and that MAG has expressed support for the concept.

In response to questions from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Pittenger advised that the City has sufficient Regional and Federal funds to address the intersection of Country Club Drive and Southern Avenue. He explained that the installation of bus bays and intersection improvements would be coordinated in order to implement construction in one timeframe. Mr. Kramer noted that accelerating the projects would be difficult due to the fact that 54 projects are scheduled during the 20-year period, and that staff was concerned about the availability of future funding. He explained that when projects are accelerated to an earlier timeframe, the City must pay the costs immediately and incur financing costs. Mr. Kramer noted that the inflationary cost savings achieved by accelerating a project has to be weighed against the financing costs. He added that another concern is that the City's staffing levels may be insufficient to accomplish the work.

Mr. Pittenger advised that staff would first address projects in the western section of the City and then move toward the eastern section.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Chairman Somers, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation to widen the segment of Mesa Drive north of the U.S. 60 to Southern Avenue and improve only the intersections in the Southern Avenue, Mesa Drive and McKellips Road corridors be approved.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – Somers-Walters  
NAYS – None  
ABSENT – Griswold

Chairman Somers declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

2. Consider and make a recommendation to the City Council on proposed changes to the City Speed Hump Program.

Deputy Transportation Director Dan Cleavenger stated that residential speeding continues to be a common citizen complaint. He noted that staff was directed by the Council to provide alternatives relative to reinstating a City-funded speed hump program. Mr. Cleavenger provided a brief history of the program that provides for the installation of speed humps on residential streets that are designated as “non-fire” routes. He explained that staff works closely with the Fire Department to establish protected routes for emergency situations. Mr. Cleavenger said that the criteria utilized to determine eligibility for a speed hump includes the following:

- Vehicle speeds on the residential street in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile threshold of 8 miles per hour (mph) over the posted speed limit.
- A minimum volume of 500 vehicles per day utilizing the street.
- Approval by the neighbors.

Mr. Cleavenger advised that program funding was reduced over the years due to budget constraints, and that the program was last funded in fiscal year 2002/03. He added that a total of 624 speed humps are currently in place on 222 City of Mesa streets. Mr. Cleavenger said that the only speed humps constructed in the past two years were two for the Nuestro Neighborhood as part of the Neighborhood Revitalization Area Program. He outlined the eligibility, funding variables and alternatives that are available for consideration. Mr. Cleavenger summarized staff’s recommendation for Alternative 3 (see Attachment 1) by highlighting the following points:

- Speed humps constructed on the basis of priority (speed and volume of traffic).
- Residents pay for speed and volume counts.
- The City funds the speed hump construction, signing, striping and maintenance at an estimated cost of \$3,000 per speed hump.
- The threshold of traffic being in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of 8 mph over the limit is maintained.
- An annual funding limit of \$150,000 is established.
- The neighborhood pays \$500 per hump if the traffic volume is less than 500 vehicles per day.
- Qualified low-volume streets are considered only after all other fully qualified streets are addressed (subject to funding availability).

Committeemember Walters advised that having read staff’s report the Committee would like to discuss the recommendation.

In response to questions from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Cleavenger advised that speed humps and streets utilize the same funding source. He also confirmed that a speed hump installation on a street that is scheduled for construction or repairs within the next year would be delayed until work on the street was completed.

Responding to a comment from Chairman Somers regarding the possibility of “tiered” fees for a street that has a traffic volume of less than 500 vehicles per day, Mr. Cleavenger advised that several other cities in the Valley have a “tiered system,” some of which are based on traffic volume and others are based on speed.

Chairman Somers expressed support for a “tiered system” based on the volume of vehicles per day.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Chairman Somers, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation, Alternative 3 (see Attachment 1), be approved and also that consideration be given to adding a tiered fee system.

Committeemember Walters suggested that staff review the tiered systems utilized by other communities and provide that information to the Council.

In response to a comment from Chairman Somers that staff should consider the Phoenix model, Mr. Cleavenger advised that Phoenix bases their "tiered" fees strictly on traffic volume and Chandler bases their fees on vehicle speed.

Chairman Somers confirmed that his preference was to consider a "tiered" fee system based only on traffic volume similar to the Phoenix model. He suggested that staff provide two options to the Council, one with a flat rate and the other with a "tiered" rate.

Chairman Somers called for the vote.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES –	Somers-Walters
NAYS –	None
ABSENT –	Griswold

Chairman Somers declared the motion carried unanimously by those present.

3. Consider and make a recommendation to the City Council on a request for streetlights by the Kensington Grove Homeowner's Association.

Mr. Kramer advised that the Kensington Grove Homeowner's Association (HOA) is requesting that five streetlight poles bordering three separate private retention basins (see Attachment 2) be retrofitted with dual arms in order to provide lighting in the basins. He stated that the HOA is willing to reimburse the City for the cost to retrofit the poles and the monthly costs for the added maintenance and power usage (see Attachment 3). Mr. Kramer reported that the five poles would have to be replaced in order to accommodate the dual arms. He added that staff's analysis indicates that the retrofit would provide a minimal amount of lighting in the retention basins.

Mr. Kramer noted that staff considered several factors in making their recommendation, including the fact that limited staff resources are available in the street lighting work group. He said that streetlight repairs are now completed within three to five weeks as a result of staff limitations. Mr. Kramer explained that a luminaire on a pole is designed to produce elongated lighting along roadways, which would be ineffective in lighting the retention basins. He also noted that the monthly maintenance figure is an average based on the costs to maintain the City's 36,000 streetlights. Mr. Kramer added that Council approval of the Kensington Grove request could generate similar requests from other HOA's. He stated that based on a policy perspective and the lack of effectiveness of the proposed lighting, staff recommends that the City not approve lighting requests for private retention basins regardless of conditions for cost participation

Committeemember Walters stated that the Kensington Grove HOA representative, Skip Carney, was present in the audience. She expressed support for granting the lighting request based on the fact that the HOA has agreed to enter into a legal, binding agreement with the City to pay for all of the associated costs. Committeemember Walters noted that although the retention basins are privately owned and maintained, the public has access to the areas. She explained that the residents are well organized in their efforts to maintain neighborhood safety, and she added that their request provides the City an opportunity to partner with the neighborhood.

Chairman Somers stated that he supports the concept of partnering with the neighborhood, but he expressed concern regarding the fact that the lighting would be ineffective in providing security. He stated that although he supports staff's recommendation, he was not opposed to moving the issue forward for Council consideration.

Mr. Carney came forward to address the Committee and stated that the proposal's intent is to light a concrete path around the perimeter of the basin rather than lighting the entire basin. He noted that the basin is approximately 15 feet below street level, which would enable a wider spread of the light. Mr. Carney clarified that the City owns ten acres or approximately one-third of the retention basin that is located adjacent to the canal, and that the Kensington Grove HOA provides free landscaping and maintenance for the City-owned portion of the basin.

Mr. Kramer explained that 35-foot poles located adjacent to a retention basin that is 15 feet deep would generate a minimal amount of light from a height of 50 feet.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Chairman Somers, to recommend to the Council that the City enter into an agreement with the Kensington Grove HOA that includes provisions to reimburse the City for the costs to retrofit five streetlight poles with dual arms and monthly maintenance and power usage costs.

Committeemember Walters said that Chairman Somers could oppose the motion and that the item would then move forward for Council consideration without a recommendation.

Chairman Somers addressed Mr. Carney and advised that the Kensington Grove HOA would have an opportunity to present their views to the full Council.

Chairman Somers called for the vote.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES –	Walters
NAYS –	Somers
ABSENT –	Griswold

Chairman Somers declared the motion failed for lack of a majority vote, and he advised that the item would move forward for Council consideration without a recommendation.

4. Hear a presentation on a proposed Mesa Transportation Plan update and a proposed Southeast Mesa Subarea Transportation Study.

Mr. Pittenger stated that as outlined in the Mesa Transportation Plan, which was adopted four years ago, staff is proposing to move forward to initiate a Southeast Mesa Subarea Transportation Study and prepare a report regarding the status of the Plan's implementation for the entire City. He noted that during the past four years, southeast Mesa experienced significant growth and a new Regional Transportation Plan was developed. Mr. Pittenger added that \$247 million in regional funds would be available over the next 20 years for arterial streets, and additional funding would address the future Williams Gateway Freeway. He outlined the major work elements of the proposed study including the following:

- Public Outreach
- Summary of Existing Conditions
- Evaluation of Land Use
- Establishment of Goals and Objectives
- Analysis of Future Conditions
- Design and Evaluations of Alternative Plans
- Recommended Plan

Mr. Pittenger advised that the process would include the formation of a steering committee comprised of City staff members (representatives of Transportation, Engineering, Planning and the Capital Improvement Projects office) and an advisory committee that includes representatives of other agencies (the Arizona Department of Transportation and neighboring communities), in addition to providing regular updates to the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB). He noted that City of Mesa staff members also serve on advisory committees in neighboring communities.

Mr. Pittenger stated that staff would present the proposed contract to the Council for approval with detailed information on the scope of work. He estimated that the budget would be approximately \$300,000.

Development Services Manager Jack Friedline advised that at the present time, staff's highest priority is developing a budget and operational program in order to implement the Streets Program that is funded as a result of the May election, which may affect the timeline for these projects. He noted that both Mr. Kramer and Mr. Pittenger have accepted positions with other municipalities and will be leaving the City of Mesa very shortly. He added that Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace recently left his position. Mr. Friedline stated that the Transportation Committee would receive future updates regarding the status of these projects.

In response to a question from Chairman Somers, Mr. Friedline said that the City is losing very valuable employees who have established strong relationships with the City's partners and MAG personnel. He noted that many good employees remain on staff, and he added that the Development Services Department would meet the challenge.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that plans for southeast Mesa are critical in order to create a regional economic and employment center in the Williams Gateway Airport area; and that staff was seeking informal Committee approval to proceed with the update and the Southeast Mesa Subarea Transportation Study.

Chairman Somers stated, and Committeemember Walters concurred, that staff should move forward with the update and the study. He also encouraged staff to develop a subarea plan for southeast Mesa.

Chairman Somers thanked staff for the presentations.

5. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee Meeting adjourned at 3:30 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 12<sup>th</sup> day of July 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)