

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 18, 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 April 18, 2002 at 9:45 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Jim Davidson, Chairman
Pat Pomeroy
Claudia Walters

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mike Whalen

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Barbara Jones

1. Discuss and provide comments about the Draft 2025 Transportation Plan.

Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace and Dan Hartig of Parsons Brinckerhoff, the City's general consultant, addressed the Committee relative to this agenda item.

Mr. Hartig referred to the April 11, 2002 Draft of the Mesa 2025 Transportation Plan and reported that this document is the result of input and effort on the part of staff, the Joint Master Planning Committee (JMPC) and the JMPC Transportation Subcommittee to achieve a multi-modal plan. He explained that the Plan has been structured in such a manner that individual chapters are dedicated to the various transportation modes (Streets Plan, Bicycle Plan, Pedestrian Plan, Town Center Plan, Public Transportation Plan) to assist the reader in discerning how each element is integrated into the overall Transportation Plan.

Mr. Hartig reported that planning future street improvements for the City has been a comprehensive process which involved the JMPC Transportation Subcommittee and the Transportation Advisory Board. He referred to a map displayed in the Council Chambers which depicted various recommendations for proposed four-lane and six-lane streets, as well as intersection improvements. Mr. Hartig advised that the Plan provides for a parkway along Higley Road, but noted that Higley Road would not be converted to a parkway until it extends north across the Salt River and connects to State Route 87.

Mr. Hartig informed the Committee that a second parkway is proposed from the 202 Freeway, which would provide service to the area of Williams Gateway Airport (WGA), the General Motors (GM) property and southeast into Pinal County. He explained that although this facility is identified as a parkway, the City could partner with the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) to develop it as a freeway, especially if the ½ cent regional sales tax is extended

beyond 2005. Mr. Hartig added that the City has already initiated discussions with the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) and ADOT to identify this as a regional facility.

Mr. Hartig advised that the Street System Plan has been divided into five five-year priority groups and that the priorities for this Plan were developed based on capacity needs, expected growth, freeway construction and an attempt to balance the priority group costs. He also stated that the higher priority projects are slated for the western portion of the City where increased traffic volumes currently exist and various improvements have already been completed.

Mr. Hartig referred to the Transit Plan and commented on a map illustrating the existing local and express bus routes in Mesa. He explained that the Transit Plan is divided into three categories of transit improvements as follows: 1.) The short-term (within five years) improvements, consisting of the first component of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) to Longmore; circulator systems in the downtown area as well as the regional shopping area around Alma School Road and Southern Avenue, and additional local and express bus routes. 2.) The mid-term improvements include a continuation of the local and express bus routes; the continuation of the LRT west of Mesa Drive, and an added circulator system in the area of WGA. 3.) The long-term transit is a compilation of short-term and mid-term improvements and the addition of Transit Priority Corridors (Bus Rapid Transit).

Mr. Hartig also referred to a map on display in the Council Chambers that depicted existing and future bicycle facilities. He explained that the intent of the Bicycle Plan is to ensure the coordination of bicycle facilities in conjunction with the street system expansion, including future shared-use paths along each of the canal facilities, as well as along U.S. 60. Mr. Hartig added that at the suggestion of the Transportation Advisory Board, additional bicycle facilities will be added in developing areas of Mesa to provide an inter-connected system.

Mr. Hartig commented on additional modal elements of the Transportation Plan including the Pedestrian Plan, which is designed to establish a coordinated strategy to improve the convenience and accessibility of pedestrian travel throughout the community; the Travel Demand Management (TDM) Plan, which includes activities to discourage single-driver vehicles, and the Town Center Transportation Plan, which supports the development of a vibrant downtown that is accessible to all Mesa residents and visitors. He also provided a brief overview of projected traffic-oriented streets, transit-oriented streets and pedestrian-oriented streets.

Mr. Hartig referred to the Finance Plan and directed the Committee to Table 10-1, which is a summarization of the projected cost of the 2025 Draft Transportation Plan.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy, Mr. Hartig clarified that all of the costs and revenue estimates contained in the Finance Plan are projected in constant dollars. He reported that the total projected cost of the Transportation Plan is \$2.9 billion; that the revenue projections for the Transportation Plan are based on the most recent three years for the City transportation program adjusted to account for the reduction in the Quality of Life tax from ½ cent to ¼ cent in 2006; that the current revenue is separated into street revenue and transit revenue, and that it is assumed that the City would be reimbursed for 50 percent of the LRT cost, 50 percent of bus purchases and facilities, and the City practice of developer contributions for street improvements would continue.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Hartig explained that the City currently receives developer contributions for street improvements. He commented that in conjunction with the construction of a residential subdivision, for example, developers are required to donate not only right-of-way to the City, but also to build a portion of the street, including 24 feet of pavement, curb, gutter and sidewalk.

Chairman Davidson stated that Table 10-3 entitled "Transportation Plan Revenue" is somewhat deceptive in that under the heading "Developer Contribution for Streets," it appears that the City is entitling impact fees when, in reality, it is not. He added that he would be curious to know what the effect would be on Mesa's street system cost projections if the City imposed street impact fees on developers similar to those imposed by other communities.

Mr. Hartig resumed his presentation and reported that the total estimated revenue for the Transportation Plan is \$1.49 billion in 2002 dollars. He commented that although the Plan is balanced and addresses the needs of Mesa residents, it cannot be completely implemented using existing revenue sources and that the financial analysis assumes that the Plan would be implemented over a 25-year period.

In response to concerns expressed by Committeemember Walters, Mr. Hartig assured the Committee that staff has allocated adequate funding for street improvements and construction. He explained that the projected cost for streets-pavement management is estimated to be \$15 million per year for the first five-year period, which includes an additional \$5 million in the first five years to compensate for recently deferred projects.

Committeemember Walters expressed the opinion that Mesa's existing street system "needs work" and that due to the City's current budget restraints, many projects are being deferred. She also questioned whether staff has allocated sufficient funding in the Transportation Plan for future street operations and maintenance.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting noted that in addition to the proposed \$5 million funding increase to accomplish various "catch up" street projects, the City's current funding needs average approximately \$10 million annually; the fact that the City has only been able to fund between \$4 million and \$5 million per year and that it has a backlog of projects to complete, and the fact that by year six of the 25-year Transportation Plan, the streets-pavement management projected cost will be reduced from \$15 million to \$11 million which staff anticipates will be an adequate amount to maintain City streets from that point forward.

Discussion ensued relative to a cost/revenue comparison and the fact that the annual deficit for the Transportation Plan will commence at \$39 million for the first year and increase to \$60 million in 2025, for a total shortfall of \$1.38 billion.

Chairman Davidson requested that staff conduct research regarding alternative revenue-generating sources to fund the Transportation Plan, and also obtain data from surrounding municipalities relative to imposing fees on cable and Internet providers for damage caused to streets during the installation of cable and fiber optics.

Mr. Krosting informed the Committee that both Phoenix and Chandler impose a utility cut fee based on the age of the pavement and the size of the "cut," and that staff is considering proposing that a similar fee be levied in Mesa.

Committeemember Walters voiced concerns that the Transportation Plan is not as “pedestrian friendly” as it could be. She stated, as an example, that although she is a proponent of City intersections being widened as opposed to entire streets, the completed intersection is often not conducive to pedestrian traffic. Committeemember Walters also commented that although the City has discussed the idea of providing greater pedestrian movement within Mesa, insufficient planning in that regard has occurred. She added that while the Transportation Plan envisions that every major arterial street in southeast Mesa will have six lanes, she also assumes that the Plan is a living document and that in the future, staff may elect not to implement every element currently depicted in the Plan.

Mr. Wallace concurred with Committeemember Walters’ assessment and noted that in an earlier iteration of the Plan, staff had not designated all the streets in southeast Mesa as six lanes. He stated that the Transportation Advisory Board and the JMPC Transportation Subcommittee expressed concerns that staff may have been overly optimistic regarding the City’s ability to handle the traffic in southeast Mesa without knowing the full impact of future development in Pinal County. Mr. Wallace added that subsequent to the completion of an ongoing MAG study relative to southeast Maricopa County and northern Pinal County, it is the recommendation of staff that a sub-area plan for southeast Mesa be conducted.

Committeemember Walters thanked Mr. Wallace for his explanation. She also commented that although Mesa cannot revert back to the small town atmosphere which existed in the past, it should still have the ability to create unique pedestrian friendly neighborhoods.

Committeemember Pomeroy voiced appreciation to staff for their efforts and hard work on the comprehensive contents of the Transportation Plan. He noted, in response to Committeemember Walters’ comments, that Mesa is no longer a small town, but rather a large urban area and agreed that it is imperative that the City’s traffic congestion problems be addressed in an expeditious manner.

Further discussion ensued relative to a downtown transit center which will serve as a hub for local and regional transit services and could also be designed to accommodate a possible Park and Ride facility.

Councilmember Whalen thanked staff for their efforts and hard work with regard to the Transportation Plan. He expressed concerns that although the Plan indicates that the LRT may terminate in Mesa near the Town Center, it could be misinterpreted by readers of the Plan as the ultimate location when, in reality, it is not. Councilmember Whalen suggested that an alternative option might be to connect the LRT in some manner to the commuter rail line. He also stressed the necessity of a north/south parkway to supplement the freeway system in the community.

Committeemember Walters concurred with Councilmember Whalen’s comments.

Chairman Davidson thanked staff, the Transportation Advisory Board and the JMPC Subcommittee for their dedication in the creation of a Transportation Plan which will offer Mesa residents a wide variety of transportation options.

Mr. Wallace provided the Committee with a timetable of upcoming meetings relative to the Draft 2025 Transportation Plan. He noted that the final draft is scheduled for Council review during July 2002.

Chairman Davidson thanked everyone for their presentation.

2. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.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 18th day of April 2002. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK