

# COUNCIL MINUTES

October 10, 2005

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on October 10, 2005 at 4:30 p.m.

## COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker  
Rex Griswold  
Kyle Jones  
Tom Rawles  
Janie Thom  
Claudia Walters  
Mike Whalen

## COUNCIL ABSENT

None

## OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson  
Debbie Spinner  
Barbara Jones

1. Review items on the agenda for the October 10, 2005 Regular Council meeting.

All of the items on the agenda were reviewed among Council and staff and the following was noted:

Conflicts of interest declared: 5g, 5h (Hawker)

Items added to the consent agenda: None

Items removed from the agenda: 8k, 8l and 10.1a

2. Discuss and consider the Arizona Department of Transportation's Pinal County Transportation Corridor Study.

Transportation Director Jeff Kramer introduced Senior Transportation Planner Patrick Pittenger and Project Manager for Williams Gateway Regional Economic Activity Area Wayne Balmer who were prepared to address the Council relative to this agenda item. Mr. Kramer reported that the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) has conducted three corridor definition studies in Pinal County, which include the bypass on US 60 at Gold Canyon; North/South and Hunt Highway in Pinal County; and the Williams Gateway Freeway. He explained that the results of the studies were merged into a single set of recommendations. Mr. Kramer stated that the purpose of the studies were to determine, among other things, the necessity for any new corridors; the feasibility for their construction, given existing physical, environmental and community constraints; and the general location and type of new facilities.

Mr. Pittenger displayed a PowerPoint presentation and provided a short synopsis of ADOT's Pinal County Transportation Corridor Study. He discussed various components of the study including the needs analysis (including population projections for Pinal County); the feasibility analysis (which addressed engineering, environmental, socioeconomic and land use, community concerns, and right-of-way components); and the results of the feasibility analysis.

Mr. Pittenger indicated that as a result of ADOT's needs/feasibility analyses, a variety of concerns were expressed by the City of Mesa, Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), East Valley Partnership, Pinal County, and other communities and citizens who attended public meetings regarding this issue. He highlighted the primary concerns as follows:

- The study recommended that the future Williams Gateway Freeway not connect to US 60.
- Population projections were questioned, especially in terms of State Trust land.
- There is a need for a logical terminus for any potential freeway.
- That there be connectivity among proposed and existing facilities.
- Lack of coordination (Note: ADOT, MAG and the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG) were legislatively required to "jointly further define corridors identified in the southeast Maricopa/northern Pinal County area transportation study for right-of-way preservation.") MAG, like the City of Mesa and other agencies, provided comments at public meetings, but did not jointly conduct the study.
- ADOT submitted its recommendations to the State Transportation Board without study documentation being completed and available for review.

Mr. Pittenger further explained that at ADOT's August 30, 2005 public meeting regarding the study, Mayor Hawker expressed support for all the routes to be designated as State routes. The Mayor also questioned the validity of ADOT's population projections and stressed the importance of working with the State Land Department to protect the right-of-way for the freeway connecting the Williams Gateway Freeway to US 60.

Mr. Pittenger commented that on October 4, 2005, ADOT presented its recommendations regarding the Pinal County Transportation Corridor Study to the State Transportation Board and noted that on October 21<sup>st</sup>, the Board intends to act on said recommendations. Mr. Pittenger stated that ADOT's recommendations included the following: 1.) Planned Freeways by 2030, that further studies be conducted on the corridors identified in the needs analysis; 2.) Planned Freeways after 2030, including the extension of Williams Gateway Freeway to US 60, warrant further study to determine if and when they may be needed to support population and economic growth; and 3.) The Move AZ Long-Range Transportation Plan be amended to incorporate these various corridors, but that the corridors not be designated as State routes.

Mr. Pittenger concluded his remarks by commenting that staff recommends that the Council consider the following positions relative to ADOT's three corridor definition studies:

- That the State Transportation Board defer action on this matter until its November 18<sup>th</sup> meeting in order to allow stakeholders additional time to provide input.
- That if the Board proceeds with consideration of this item on November 18<sup>th</sup>, that the extension of the Williams Gateway Freeway to US 60 be designated as a planned freeway prior to 2030.

- That ADOT designate corridors identified as being needed prior to 2030 (including the Williams Gateway Freeway all the way to US 60) as State routes as soon as practically feasible.

Mr. Kramer clarified that the extension of the Williams Gateway Freeway is currently designated by ADOT in their recommendations to be a future locally controlled route, meaning the local entities would be responsible for bringing that to fruition at some point after 2030.

Mr. Balmer reviewed a packet of materials distributed to the Council including two maps depicting 2030 Corridor Needs, and Future Potential Needs for Access Managed Corridors; an October 5, 2005 Arizona Republic newspaper article entitled "Looking Ahead on Valley Growth"; and a draft letter to be presented by Mayor Hawker to the State Transportation Board at its October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting. (See Attachment 1.)

Vice Mayor Walters expressed support for the draft letter. She commented that she attended the public meeting in Apache Junction and stated that in her opinion, the process has been very frustrating in that ADOT may not necessarily have listened to the public comments received at that time.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Walters, seconded by Councilmember Jones, to direct staff to prepare a letter to the State Transportation Board, which would be signed by Mayor Hawker, outlining the comments and opinions contained in the draft letter distributed to the Council.

Councilmember Thom advised that she attended the State Transportation Board Study Session on Tuesday, October 4, 2005 in Phoenix, and stated that she has worked on this issue for many years. She voiced support for the letter being forwarded to the State Transportation Board and added that it is important to Mesa, Maricopa County and northern Pinal County that the planning for the transportation corridors be implemented. Councilmember Thom added that it might be appropriate for her fellow Councilmembers to offer their individual input with regard to this matter.

Councilmember Rawles voiced support relative to forwarding the letter to the State Transportation Board. He suggested, however, that staff redraft the document to reflect that the opinions and comments contained therein are those of the entire Council and not just Mayor Hawker.

Mayor Hawker directed staff to redraft the letter in accordance with Councilmember Rawles' comments and also requested that signature blocks be added for each Councilmember.

Councilmember Thom further requested that copies of the letter be sent to State Senator Thayer Verschoor and House Representative Andy Biggs, who are both Chairman of their respective Transportation Committees.

Mayor Hawker stated that he would prefer that the letter be sent to the State Transportation Board prior to its October 21<sup>st</sup> meeting to urge the members to postpone action on the matter until November 18<sup>th</sup>. He also acknowledged the presence of Roc Arnett, President of the East Valley Partnership, and thanked him for his efforts and hard work in this regard.

Mayor Hawker called for the vote.

Carried unanimously.

Mayor Hawker thanked staff for the presentation.

3. Acknowledge receipt of minutes of various boards and committees.

- a. Economic Development Advisory Board meeting held June 7, 2005

It was moved by Vice Mayor Walters, seconded by Councilmember Rawles, that receipt of the above-listed minutes be acknowledged.

Carried unanimously.

4. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

Vice Mayor Walters  
Councilmember Griswold

Various neighborhood parties  
Police drive-along

5. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Thursday, October 13, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session – Cancelled

Monday, October 17, 2005, 4:00 p.m. – Executive Session – City Manager Recruitment

Thursday, October 20, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Thursday, October 20, 2005, 8:30 a.m. – Transportation Committee

Friday, October 21, 2005, 8:00 a.m. – General Development Committee

Monday, October 24, 2005, 8:00 a.m. – Interview of City Manager Semi-Finalists

Monday, October 24, 2005, TBA – Study Session

Monday, October 24, 2005, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Thursday, October 27, 2005, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

6. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Study Session adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

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KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 10th day of October 2005. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

\_\_\_\_\_  
BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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attachment

**DRAFT**

October 21, 2005

State Transportation Board  
Arizona Department of Transportation  
206 South 17th Avenue  
Phoenix, Az 85007

Dear Board Members:

The Mesa City Council and I have reviewed the Executive Summary of the recommended actions for the three corridor definition studies you currently have underway in northern Pinal County-and I must say we are disappointed.

Mesa strongly supports connection of the Williams Gateway Freeway to US 60 connection-before 2030.

We were frustrated to read your staff's position that it will not be needed until after 2030 - and to see it is shown as being a "future potential need" for an "access managed" facility on Figure 4 of the report.

Mesa strongly believes the Gateway to US 60 connection is needed - and as soon as possible-for the following reasons:

- The Gateway to US 60 connection is the only alternative being considered which will provide traffic relief for the already overcrowded Superstition Freeway. Given the growth in the eastern Maricopa and northern Pinal Counties, an additional east-west connection to serve the area will be essential - especially twenty five years from now.
- What is the logical terminus for the Williams Gateway Freeway? The connection to the US 60 is only about 7 miles from where your staff has recommended the freeway turn southeast along the CAP canal. In contrast, once the freeway turns south it will be another 17 miles to SR 79 or 25 miles to SR 287. The public will expect a "useable" freeway as soon as possible to provide relief to the ever-increasing traffic on the Superstition and Santan Freeways-and the US 60 connection is the way to do it.
- The Arizona State Land Department owns the land south of the Superstition Freeway where the Gateway to US 60 freeway, the US 60 Bypass project and the north-south corridor between the Superstition and Gateway Freeways are all located. The department is planning to begin development of this area in the near future as the Lost Dutchman Heights project (see attached newspaper story). Lost Dutchman Heights has the potential to generate significant long term revenues for the State, and construction of the Gateway to US 60 freeway to provide access to the area and accommodate traffic from the project will be pivotal to the success of the State's efforts.

- The State Land Department has already agreed to designate and reserve freeway corridors for the Gateway to US 60 freeway through Lost Dutchman Heights as part of their planning process. As a result, many of the constraints typical in acquiring right of way will be minimized for the project - making it more "constructible" within a specific budget and timeframe.

Mesa recognizes the expectations for service generated by these corridor studies will exceed ADOT's ability to satisfy them-and that you are faced with a real dilemma on how best to proceed.

Mesa's concern is that throughout this process you and your staff have heard most from those who have a theme in the race. You have heard much about how the proposed new facilities will benefit their individual interests - but you haven't heard much talk about how the new plan will benefit Arizona. It is clearly possible to take the short-term view and address the projects that have vocal constituents, and all of these are included in the plan. The plan also needs to reflect the long-term best interests of the entire state, and I am concerned that the document, as presented, does not achieve that goal. In my opinion it gives short shrift to the development potential of the state land in Pinal County as well as the interests of those citizens who live west of Meridian Road.

My recommendation is that the Board should focus on what is actually achievable in the next 25 years - given the funding, partners and resources you have available - and move forward with those projects that will generate the greatest public return on the investment you can make.

To that end, Mesa respectfully requests the Board add the Gateway Freeway to US 60 connection to the projects shown on Figure 3 of the Executive Summary as one of the 2030 Corridors. We also ask the Board support the project for the benefits it will provide to the motoring public, the existing and future traffic problems in eastern Maricopa and northern Pinal Counties it will alleviate, and the long-term economic benefits it will provide for the State of Arizona.

Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. Best regards,

Keno Hawker  
Mayor

Xc  
Governor Janet Napolitano  
Mesa City Council  
Mike Hutchinson  
Mark Winkleman