

# TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

July 16, 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 July 16, 2002 at 3:34 p.m.

**COMMITTEE PRESENT**

Mike Whalen, Chairman  
Rex Griswold  
Janie Thom

**COUNCIL PRESENT**

None

**OFFICERS PRESENT**

Mike Hutchinson

1. Hear a presentation from Transportation Citizen Advisory Committee Co-Chairs.

Former Vice Mayor Jim Davidson, who serves as Co-Chair of the Transportation Citizen Advisory Committee, addressed the Committee concerning this agenda item. Mr. Davidson reported that the Transportation Citizen Advisory Committee (TCAC) was assembled for the purpose of providing recommendations to this Committee and the Council concerning implementation of the Vision 2025 Transportation Plan.

Mr. Davidson advised that the TCAC's first meeting was recently conducted and that issues relative to funding the Transportation Plan and prioritizing projects were discussed. He reported that the Committee discussed the fact that it will be necessary to prioritize and/or recategorize projects identified in the Plan due to the fact that projected available funding sources are insufficient to fully fund the entire Plan. He noted that the TCAC also discussed plans to identify and categorize specific funding relative to the four categories of the Transportation Plan: 1) capital improvements; 2) operations and maintenance; 3) transit; and 4) traffic engineering and transportation planning. He added that a consensus was reached relative to the fact that the TCAC's work would be based upon the goals, objectives and "universe of projects" previously identified through the Transportation Plan and Joint Master Planning Committee processes.

Mr. Davidson stated that City staff was asked to provide the TCAC with various information relative to revenue sources identified to fund the Plan; assumptions made in conjunction with revenue projections; current and future taxes; and State and Federal funding sources.

Mr. Davidson also reported that the issue of future transit needs was discussed and he noted that committee members voiced a wide range of preferences in this regard. Mr. Davidson

commented on the fact that the TCAC is comprised of a diverse group of citizens and voiced the opinion that the final recommendations of the TCAC will be "sound" because of its diversity.

Mr. Davidson reported that a subsequent update concerning the progress of the TCAC will be presented to this Committee during late August 2002 and that final recommendations will be presented during mid-September 2002.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the projected available funding for transportation needs within the City through year 2025 is \$1.5 billion; and the fact that this sum will fund only 50% of the entire universe of projects outlined in the Transportation Plan.

In response to questions from Committeemember Griswold concerning the TCAC's intentions with respect to considering additional funding sources, Mr. Davidson advised that one of the additional funding sources the TCAC will consider recommending to the Council is some form of sales tax increase or extension of an existing tax.

Committeemember Griswold suggested that the TCAC consider presenting its recommendations under two separate categories, the first one based upon projected available funding, and the second based upon additional proposed funding sources.

Mr. Davidson said that although it is likely that the TCAC's final recommendations will come forward as suggested by Committeemember Griswold, it is anticipated that there will be significant debate with respect to which projects are considered mandatory basic transportation needs, therefore qualifying for projected available funding. Mr. Davidson stressed the importance of considering the Transportation Plan as an integrated plan, rather than a Plan that consists of individual transportation elements.

Mr. Davidson reported that a small group of TCAC members will travel to Salt Lake City and Dallas later this month to study light rail and other transit systems in these cities.

Chairman Whalen thanked Mr. Davidson for the update.

Mr. Davidson voiced appreciation to Chairman Whalen for his attendance at the first TCAC meeting and also to staff for their ongoing assistance to the Committee.

## 2. Discuss and consider speed hump policy.

Traffic Engineer Alan Sanderson, Senior Transportation Engineer Rena Ehm and Assistant Fire Chief Gil Damiani addressed the Council concerning this agenda item. Mr. Sanderson stated that this update concerning the City's speed hump policy is being presented in response to Committeemember Griswold's request that various options relative to this issue be evaluated.

Ms. Ehm provided a brief overview of the City's speed hump program including the fact that the program was approved in December 1997; to date the City has approximately 600 speed humps; the cost of installing a speed hump on a 34 ft. wide street is approximately \$1,700; prior to budget cuts in FY 2001/02, the annual cost of the program was approximately \$500,000; 50%

of the City's annual cost is for speed hump installations, the other 50% is for staff time to evaluate requests and collect data regarding traffic speeds and volumes; approximately 85% of speed hump requests are not approved, primarily because streets do not meet the minimum speed criteria; the three key warranting criteria associated with the program are traffic speed, traffic volumes and whether the street is a fire route. She explained that streets considered to be emergency response routes (fire routes) by the Fire Department are not eligible for speed humps, and further outlined the speed criteria (the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile speed of traffic is at least 8 mph over the speed limit, which is 33 mph in a 25 mph zone). She added that if all criteria except traffic volumes are met, residents can obtain speed humps if they contribute \$500 towards the cost of each speed hump.

Ms. Ehm commented on the advantages and disadvantages associated with the possibility of modifying the speed hump policy to allow residents to purchase speed humps if their streets do not meet the speed criteria. She noted that the Fire Department has expressed serious concerns regarding a potential proliferation of speed humps because of the cumulative detrimental effect on response times. She added that the appropriate spacing of speed humps for maximum effect is every 500 ft. and that each speed hump increases Fire Department's response time anywhere from 3-10 seconds.

Ms. Ehm referred to and commented on photographs on display in the Council Chambers that depicted two alternative types of speed humps, speed cushions and split speed humps. She reported that speed cushions (smaller humps strategically spaced across a roadway, parallel to each other) allow wider wheel base fire trucks to partially or completely straddle the speed cushions although passenger cars must drive over the cushions. She noted that because Mesa's fire trucks have dual rear wheels, the rear wheels would have to drive over the speed cushions, resulting in slower fire truck speeds and increased response times. She added that although narrowing the speed cushion would allow Mesa fire trucks to completely straddle the cushion, this would also allow passenger cars to partially straddle the cushion, diminishing the effectiveness of the speed cushions. Ms. Ehm reported that split speed humps require fire trucks to swerve through a staggered set of speed hump halves in a slalom fashion, swerving in and out of oncoming traffic, which increases the risk of collisions.

Ms. Ehm discussed the fact that the City has received 88 requests for speed humps on streets that are fire routes and noted that these requests would likely satisfy the speed and volume criteria under the City's existing speed hump policy. She reported that the City's cost of constructing speed humps to satisfy these 88 requests would be approximately \$700,000.

Ms. Ehm stated that it is the recommendation of Fire and Transportation staff that no changes be implemented to the City's existing speed hump policy.

Assistant Chief Damiani advised that response time is a major concern of the Department and added that their goal is to achieve a four-minute response time for 90% of calls received. He reported that the Department struggles to meet this goal in eastern areas of the City where stations are further apart. He stated that due to these concerns, the Fire Department is opposed to the installation of speed humps on streets designated as fire routes.

Mr. Sanderson commented on the fact that although the speed hump program is popular and neighborhood response to the existing speed humps has been generally positive, increased emergency response time is the most critical negative result of the speed hump program.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that this update has not been presented to the Transportation Advisory Board.

Committeemember Griswold stressed the importance of balancing the necessity of maintaining safe Fire Department response times with the importance of maintaining safe, low-speed neighborhood environments that protect children. He suggested that one of the speed hump alternatives outlined by staff be implemented on a neighborhood street on a trial basis only, or possibly on the test track at the Public Safety Training Facility.

(Committeemember Thom joined the meeting at approximately 4:00 p.m.)

In response to a question from Committeemember Thom, Ms. Ehm outlined the program provision that allows neighborhoods/citizens who request speed humps but do not meet the minimum traffic volume criteria, to qualify for the program by contributing \$500 toward the installation cost of each speed hump. She reiterated that when there is available funding for the program, the City bears the full costs associated with requests that meet all criteria outlined in the City's policy. She added that the program was suspended in December 2001 because of budget cuts.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the previous amount budgeted for this program (prior to budget cuts in FY 2001/02) was \$500,000; the fact that the current budget (FY 2002/03) provides \$140,000 for this program; the fact that residents submitting new speed hump requests after the program was suspended in December 2001, were instructed to call back after the FY 2002/03 budget was approved; and the fact that seven requests for speed humps that were being processed when the program was suspended, are now back in process.

Mr. Sanderson outlined the timeframes associated with processing requests for speed humps and noted that the process takes a minimum of 3-4 months. He added that the process can take considerably longer depending upon the amount of time necessary to complete the required neighborhood survey, which is conducted by the neighborhood liaison.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the \$1,700 cost to construct each speed hump includes asphalt installation, striping and signs, but does not include City staff time; the fact that the City has a service agreement with a private contractor to construct speed humps; and the fact that the current contract expires in October 2002.

Mr. Sanderson commented on the neighborhood input process currently under way in connection with extension of the Red Mountain Freeway to the Recker Road/Power Road areas and the previous neighborhood process associated with extension of the freeway to Gilbert Road. He said that various traffic/speed control measures have been proposed and are being considered by neighborhood groups in the Recker Road/Power Road areas, including speed

humps, street narrowing and circles. He added that a neighborhood meeting is scheduled to take place on July 24, 2002 to further discuss resident proposals for this area.

Committeemember Griswold reemphasized the importance of implementing speed control solutions that provide safe, low-speed neighborhood streets while at the same time preserving acceptable emergency response times. He added that citizens have expressed significant concerns regarding the City's perceived lack of response to demands for neighborhood speed control measures. He also commented on a neighborhood speeding problem that he is aware of on Preston Street, which does not qualify for speed humps because it is a collector street, despite its close proximity to a fire station. He stated that residents strongly support the placement of speed humps on Preston Street.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that most collector streets have been designated fire routes; the fact that older neighborhoods in the City frequently have homes along collector streets, which is where a significant portion of neighborhood speeding problems arise; the fact that collector streets in newer neighborhoods are generally designed without homes along the collector streets; and the fact that placing speed humps on collector streets, such as Horne, would likely result in diverting traffic through neighborhoods.

Chairman Whalen stressed the importance of educating citizens concerning the necessity of preserving safe emergency response times. He voiced the opinion that the City's current speed hump policy is appropriate and added that he is personally opposed to speed humps. He said that he supports continued efforts on the part of Transportation staff to evaluate alternative speed control measures other than speed humps. He voiced concerns regarding implementing an alternative speed hump test program in a neighborhood and explained that removing a test program that proved to be unsafe with respect to emergency response times but was well liked by residents, might be problematic. Chairman Whalen commented on innovative speed control measures that were discussed at a traffic management seminar he attended in Denver with Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace and encouraged staff to evaluate the possibility of booking the seminar's guest speaker to provide a presentation to the Council and staff.

Discussion ensued regarding potential changes to the width of Thomas Road in the vicinity of Recker Road and Power Road; and the fact that resident surveys concerning preferences for traffic mitigation in this area are expected to be completed and returned to staff by the end of July.

Committeemember Griswold stated that his concern for safer neighborhood streets is not restricted to the speed hump program and that he would support whatever method achieves this goal.

It was moved by Chairman Whalen, seconded by Committeemember Griswold, that the City's existing speed hump policy remain in effect and that staff continue researching alternative traffic/speed control measures and report to this Committee accordingly within the next several months.

Carried unanimously.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee meeting adjourned at 4:22 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 16<sup>th</sup> day of July 2002. 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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