

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

September 27, 2001

The Transportation Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on September 27, 2001 at 10:00 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Jim Davidson, Chairman
Pat Pomeroy
Claudia Walters

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson

1. Discuss and consider proposals for the 202 freeway Power Road exit ramp and pedestrian overpass.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting addressed the Committee and introduced Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace, Joe Warren from the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) and Steve Wilcox from the consulting firm of DMJM (ADOT's consultant regarding this project). Mr. Krosting reported that the issues of adding a second exit lane at Power Road and providing a pedestrian overpass were raised by area residents in conjunction with public meetings concerning the expansion of the Red Mountain/Loop 202 freeway (202) to Power Road and the addition of a Recker Road traffic interchange. He said that staff is seeking input from the Committee and the Council regarding these two issues for the purpose of providing direction to ADOT.

POWER ROAD EXIT RAMP:

Mr. Wallace stated that residents raised the concern that a single lane exit ramp at Power Road would not be sufficient to accommodate traffic on a permanent basis. Mr. Wallace reported that ADOT's current plan provides for a temporary dual lane exit ramp during the end-of-freeway condition at Power Road, and that when the freeway is extended past Power Road, the temporary dual lane ramp will be converted to a permanent single lane ramp. He added that, at the request of the City, ADOT performed a traffic analysis on this issue and determined that a single lane exit ramp would be adequate to handle the projected traffic volumes. Mr. Wallace stated that if the City desires to make the permanent single lane ramp a permanent dual lane ramp, the City must pay for the enhancement, which is estimated at \$600,000. He noted that the enhancement would entail bridge modifications.

In response to questions from Committeemember Walters regarding the existing eastbound 202 exit ramp at McKellips Road, Mr. Krosting explained that there is a temporary dual lane exit ramp at McKellips Road, which will be converted to a permanent single lane exit ramp when the freeway is opened to Gilbert Road. He noted that when the 202 was opened to Country Club

Drive, the temporary dual lane exit ramp at McKellips Road was restriped for a permanent single lane. He added that due to continued high volumes exiting at McKellips Road and significant, resultant freeway congestion, the McKellips Road exit ramp was converted back to a temporary dual lane ramp.

Committeemember Walters referred to staff's report concerning this matter and commented that projected traffic volumes for the Power Road exit subsequent to the end-of-freeway condition are less than existing traffic volumes at various single lane exits along the US 60 freeway.

In response to questions from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the difference between a temporary dual lane exit ramp and a permanent single lane exit ramp, Mr. Wilcox explained that a normal single lane exit ramp is approximately 22 ft. wide and that a permanent dual lane exit ramp is approximately 40 ft. wide. He further explained that when ADOT constructs exit ramps to accommodate an end-of-freeway condition and designs the ramps as permanent single lane ramps, the width of the single lane ramp is extended approximately 4 ft. to accommodate temporary striping of two exit lanes.

Mr. Krosting explained that the temporary dual lane exit ramp is extremely narrow at the initial gore point, where traffic exits the freeway to the ramp.

Mr. Wilcox stated that although a temporary dual lane exit ramp may exist for a number of years, the condition is not in line with design standards and is not considered safe for long-term use.

Further discussion ensued regarding the McKellips Road exit ramp.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding staff's analysis of ADOT's projections for the Power Road exit ramp, Mr. Krosting advised that ADOT's projections appear to be reasonable.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Krosting stated that staff does not recommend approval of the proposed enhancement and added that staff's opinion is that the projected traffic volumes do not justify the expense.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, to recommend to the Council that the proposed enhancement to construct a permanent dual lane exit ramp at Power Road, not be approved.

Committeemember Walters voiced the opinion that, based upon the comparison of traffic volumes at various other freeway exits in Mesa, the projected traffic volumes for the Power Road exit do not justify enhancing the ramp to two lanes on a permanent basis.

In response to questions from Chairman Davidson regarding the source of and reasoning behind the proposal, Mr. Krosting reiterated that the proposal was precipitated by concerns voiced by residents with respect to mitigating traffic volumes at the Recker Road interchange. He added that staff's analysis of this issue concluded that the addition of a second permanent exit lane at Power Road would not significantly reduce traffic volumes at Recker Road.

Carried unanimously.

PEDESTRIAN OVERPASS:

Mr. Wallace reported that a pedestrian bridge connecting the north and south neighborhoods in the vicinity of the Recker Road interchange was proposed by residents to maintain a pedestrian connection in the area. He further reported that staff requested that ADOT evaluate the possibility of constructing a bridge and referred to a letter from Joe Warren regarding ADOT's analysis of this issue.

Mr. Wallace commented on possible locations for the pedestrian bridge and noted that a widened sidewalk along Recker Road was previously requested in connection with the interchange. He reported that minimal benefits would occur as a result of building a pedestrian bridge near Recker Road, which will provide pedestrian access via a widened sidewalk. He added that the bridge should be located significantly east of Recker Road in order to justify the project. He further reported that constructing a pedestrian bridge approximately 1/3 to 1/2 mile east of Recker Road would cost approximately \$1.3 million and would require removal of a home on the south side of the freeway.

Mr. Krosting referred to a map on display in the Council Chambers and commented on the best possible site to locate a pedestrian bridge. He concluded that a home on the south side of the freeway would have to be taken to accommodate the project and provide access to Quartz Street.

Mr. Krosting reported that the proposal to construct a pedestrian bridge does not have the overall support of the neighborhood and that negative responses have been received from residents regarding the construction of a pedestrian bridge in this area based on privacy and safety concerns.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding school access in this area, Mr. Krosting stated that school bus service is provided to the neighborhoods that do not have direct school access.

Committeemember Walters stated the opinion that although the concept of maintaining the neighborhood connection in this area is valid, the benefits associated with a pedestrian bridge do not justify the high cost of the project, the need to acquire a home to construct the project and the loss of privacy to homes adjacent to the bridge.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy to recommend to the Council that the proposal to construct a pedestrian bridge over the 202 freeway in the vicinity of Recker Road, not be approved.

Carried unanimously.

(Mayor Hawker joined the meeting at 10:10 a.m.)

2. Discuss and consider a recommendation from ADOT on the US 60/202 traffic interchange.

Mr. Krosting addressed the Committee and said that staff is seeking a recommendation from the Committee regarding the selection of a proposed interchange design for the US 60/202 traffic interchange. He commented on the significant work that has been accomplished by ADOT and

DMJM regarding the selection of an interchange design and noted that the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) and staff recommend Alternative B.

Mr. Wilcox addressed the Committee and provided a brief overview of the selection process. He introduced Gene Knipfel, who was present in the audience, and stated that Mr. Knipfel is a member of the Citizens' Advisory Team and has been instrumental in the selection process. Mr. Wilcox stated that due to the fact that all groups presented with the three alternatives have selected Alternative B as the preferred alternative, ADOT is proceeding with the technical environmental documents in conjunction with Alternative B.

Mr. Wilcox referred to drawings of the three proposed interchange designs on display in the Council Chambers and commented on the differences between the three proposed alternatives. He reported that Alternative A provides partial access at Sossaman Road and Ellsworth Road by excluding ramps on the east side of Sossaman Road and the west side of Ellsworth Road. He further reported that Alternative B continues the partial access at Sossaman Road and provides full access to US 60 from Ellsworth Road. He said that Alternative C provides full US 60 access from Ellsworth Road and Sossaman Road and he described the ramp configurations required to provide indirect access to eastbound US 60 from Sossaman Road via a two-mile frontage road to Ellsworth Road.

Mr. Wilcox reported that in Alternative C, the projected traffic volume for the Sossaman Road eastbound access to US 60 is 200 vehicles during the peak hour in year 2025. He said that the Citizens' Advisory Team determined that this local access is outweighed by the incremental cost to the community in terms of environmental impacts, residential relocations, right-of-way acquisition and construction costs.

Mr. Wilcox provided a timeline of events associated with the selection process and reiterated that all groups and entities including the Citizens' Advisory Team, the Maricopa Association of Governments' (MAG) Transportation Committee, ADOT's environmental, technical and management staffs, the Federal Highway Administration and the Mesa Transportation Advisory Board, selected Alternative B as the preferred alternative.

Mr. Wilcox noted that the Transportation Committee was updated regarding the selection process at its July 13, 2001 meeting and that prior to that meeting, staff supported Alternative C as the preferred alternative. He further noted that at the culmination of the meeting and due to disclosure of the fact that Alternative C would not provide direct access to US 60 from Sossaman Road, staff's recommendation changed from C to B.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the cost difference between Alternatives B and C, Mr. Wilcox advised that the projected costs of the alternatives, including ROW and construction costs but excluding design costs, are \$229 million for Alternative B and \$252 million for Alternative C.

Mr. Wilcox stated that at the request of the City, an analysis was conducted regarding projected impacts to the local street system in conjunction with the three alternatives. He said that the analysis revealed that Alternative B would result in the redistribution onto Southern Avenue and Baseline Road of approximately 100 cars each during the peak hour. He noted that the only intersection that might exceed capacity would be the intersection of Baseline and Ellsworth.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the reasoning behind staff's preference change from Alternative C to B, Mr. Krosting reported that the primary reasons are the impact to the neighborhood south of the freeway with Alternative C requiring displacement of an entire row of homes and the increased cost.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters regarding the recommendation from the TAB that ADOT participate in funding necessary for mitigation measures at the intersection of Baseline and Ellsworth, Mr. Joe Warren, representing ADOT, advised that although ADOT cannot directly contribute money to the community for local street improvements, ADOT would negotiate this issue with the City of Mesa through the Intergovernmental Agreement.

Further discussion ensued regarding the impacts anticipated at the intersection of Baseline and Ellsworth.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Walters, to recommend to the Council that staff and ADOT's recommendation that Alternative B be selected for construction of the US 60/202 traffic interchange, be approved.

Discussion ensued regarding the planned lane configuration of US 60, the amount of right-of-way that exists for future expansion and planned noise mitigation measures.

Carried unanimously.

3. Discuss and consider accelerating City street improvement projects related to ADOT's accelerated schedule for completing the 202 freeway to Higley Road.

Mr. Krosting provided a brief overview of this item and noted that ADOT recently announced an accelerated completion date of the 202 freeway to Higley Road.

City Engineer Keith Nath addressed the Committee and said that the new completion date for the 202 freeway to Higley Road is November 2002. He said that staff recently reanalyzed the construction schedules of the numerous City road projects that are designed to accommodate traffic in conjunction with the extension of the freeway to Higley Road.

Mr. Nath referred to a map on display in the Council Chambers and commented on the status of projects currently in the construction phase. He reported that the Gilbert Road to Lockwood project is now complete and ready to be tied into the freeway interchange; that the first construction phase of the McDowell Road project, which will complete construction eastbound to 32nd Street, should be completed by the end of October; that the second phase of the McDowell Road project, which will complete asphalt out to Val Vista Drive, is scheduled for completion in February 2002, and that the entire project is scheduled for completion in May 2002.

Mr. Nath reported on the Val Vista Drive project, which extends from McKellips Road north to the 202 freeway. He said that staff proposes to accelerate the Val Vista project by separating it into two phases, with the north phase (from the McDowell intersection north to the canal) scheduled for completion in December 2002 and the south phase scheduled for completion in September of 2003. He noted that pursuant to an agreement with Maricopa County, the City is designing the 3/8-mile portion of Val Vista from the City limits to the 202. He also noted that at

this point, there is no agreement with the County regarding construction of the project. Mr. Nath added that the project entails right-of-way acquisition and utility relocations.

Mr. Nath commented on the Greenfield Road project which extends from McDowell to the 202. He stated that this project is currently open for bids, that staff will request contract approval from the Council during October, and that the target completion date is June 2002. Mr. Nath reported that right-of-way acquisition and utility relocations are occurring on schedule.

Mr. Nath commented on the Higley Road project and said that the project extends from McDowell north to the freeway, that staff does not propose to accelerate the project, that the target completion date is November 2002, and that the project entails utility relocations and minor right-of-way acquisition.

Mr. Nath discussed the Thomas Road project and reported that staff proposes to accelerate the project for completion in November 2002 in time for freeway completion, and that the project also entails right-of-way acquisition and utility relocations.

Mr. Nath commented on the McDowell Road project from Higley Road to Power Road and reported that the project is in the preliminary design phase and staff proposes to accelerate the project for completion in March 2003.

Mr. Nath also discussed the Power Road project and reported that ½ mile of the project is under construction by the developer of the Power Center, and that the remaining ½ mile of the project is scheduled for completion in November 2002.

Real Estate Services Manager Doug Tessendorf addressed the Committee and commented on the right-of-way issues associated with the various projects. He reported that there are 59 parcels that must be acquired by the City; that although the acquisition process normally requires six months to a year, due to the accelerated schedule, staff has one to three months to acquire the properties; that public meetings have been conducted, and more public meetings and outreach programs are planned. He further reported that staff will be requesting condemnation authorization in the near future for the majority of the parcels to ensure that acquisition occurs on schedule. Mr. Tessendorf added that there will be no total property acquisitions and no relocations.

Mr. Nath commented on the need to accelerate CIP funding for the various projects and noted that HURF funds will be used to fund the work.

Committeemember Walters commented on the fact that accelerated right-of-way acquisition will not affect the amount of money property owners will receive for their property.

Councilmember Pomeroy voiced the opinion that the benefits associated with accelerated freeway access to Higley outweigh the negatives associated with completing the improvements in an accelerated manner.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson commended staff for their efforts in this matter and commented on the additional resources the City will utilize to complete the right-of-way acquisitions necessary for the projects. He also voiced support for accelerating the CIP funding.

Further discussion ensued regarding funding of the projects and the City's overall bond indebtedness.

In response to questions and concerns voiced by Chairman Davidson regarding completion of utility relocations necessary for the projects, Mr. Nath reported that Salt River Project and other utility entities have assured staff that the relocations can be completed as scheduled.

Committeemember Walters voiced support for the accelerated schedule and stated appreciation to staff for their efforts in this matter.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding the use of eminent domain, Mr. Tessendorf clarified that although staff will seek approval to use eminent domain in connection with all of the parcels due to the compressed time limits, staff does not anticipate initiating eminent domain proceedings in all of the 59 cases.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding planned improvements to the County portion of Val Vista, Mr. Hutchinson commented on the possibility of the City advancing the funds for completion of the project and seeking repayment from the County over a five-year period.

Chairman Davidson voiced opposition to advancing funds for improvements in the County and expressed general concerns regarding the City's future revenue streams and overall state of the economy.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Walters, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendations regarding accelerating City street improvement projects related to ADOT's accelerated schedule for completing the 202 freeway to Higley Road, be approved.

Committeemember Walters voiced concerns regarding the County's reluctance to fund necessary road projects and stressed the importance of utilizing available HURF funds for City street projects.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Davidson voiced appreciation to staff for their efforts in this matter.

4. Discuss and consider neighborhood traffic calming projects for the Gilbert Road area immediately south of the 202 freeway.

Mr. Krosting introduced Senior Transportation Engineer Renate Ehm and stated that Ms. Ehm has been instrumental in the process of working with the affected neighborhoods regarding traffic calming projects to address the end-of-freeway condition at Gilbert Road.

Ms. Ehm stated that the end-of-freeway condition at Gilbert Road will be shorter than previously projected due to ADOT's recent acceleration of the completion date regarding the Gilbert Road to Higley Road segment.

Ms. Ehm reported that staff held public meetings in the neighborhoods on the east and west sides of Gilbert Road. She advised that the west neighborhood contains approximately 700

households and is bounded by McKellips Road, the Consolidated Canal, Gilbert Road and Stapley Drive. She stated that the east neighborhood contains approximately 1,500 households, is one square mile and is bounded by McKellips Road, McDowell Road, Gilbert Road and Lindsay Road.

Ms. Ehm reported that four meetings were conducted in each neighborhood, that the first and last meetings were open to all residents, and that two meetings were held with a smaller group of volunteer neighborhood representatives. She said that at the initial meetings, residents raised concerns regarding existing traffic conditions, traffic conditions with the end-of-freeway condition and permanent traffic conditions after the freeway extends past Gilbert Road.

Ms. Ehm commented on the role played by staff in connection with conducting the meetings and the process of addressing the numerous concerns raised and evaluating suggestions for traffic mitigation measures. Ms. Ehm outlined the mitigation measures proposed by residents and commented on the overall neighborhood support of the various measures proposed. She explained that staff compiled the comments and recommendations from residents into two Neighborhood Traffic Management Plans and provided the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) with the plans.

Ms. Ehm outlined the five recommendations made by the TAB on September 18, 2001 concerning the Gilbert Road West Neighborhood, as follows:

1. Design and construction of a median on Harris Drive on the north approach to McKellips Road.
2. Striping and signing of Harris Drive from McKellips Road to Hermosa Vista Drive with shared bike/parking lanes and double yellow centerlines.
3. Design and construction of Hermosa Vista Drive to a 34 foot paved width between Harris Drive and Forest. These works include the installation of curb and gutter, sidewalk, and street lighting on the south side of the street. An appropriate boulevard treatment will be determined through discussions with the adjacent property owners.
4. Once Hermosa Vista Drive is constructed, stripe the section between Harris Drive and Forest with white edge lines to narrow the travel portion of the road to 20 feet. No yellow centerline will be installed and on-street parking will be maintained. The route will remain a bike route.
5. Design and construction of a median on Hermosa Vista Drive on the west approach to Gilbert Road.

Ms. Ehm also outlined the four recommendation made by the TAB concerning the Gilbert Road East Neighborhood, as follows:

1. Install stop signs on Old Gilbert Road at Hermosa Vista Drive so that the intersection becomes an all-way stop controlled intersection.
2. Install a west to north right turn restriction, 7 am to 9 am, Monday through Friday, on McKellips Road at Gentry at the same time that the freeway opens to Gilbert Road.

3. Evaluate the need for a traffic signal at the intersection of McDowell Road and Lehi Road following the opening of the freeway to Gilbert Road.
4. Monitor traffic flows in the area, including the intersection of McDowell Road and 26th Street, following the opening of the freeway to Gilbert Road to determine the need for additional traffic control devices.

Committeemember Walters voiced appreciation to staff for their work and noted that the goal of the City with this process is to provide effective traffic calming measures based upon input from neighborhood residents.

Discussion ensued regarding traffic volumes projected by the Maricopa Association of Governments for Gilbert Road in 2002 and 2003; the fact that planned County improvements include a traffic signal at the intersection of Gilbert Road and Oak, which will provide access to residents in the neighborhood east of Gilbert and north of McDowell; and the west neighborhood's request for speed bumps along Hermosa Vista Drive.

Committeemember Walters spoke in support of providing enhanced traffic enforcement in this area when the new segment of freeway to Gilbert Road initially opens and conducting follow-up meetings in the east and west neighborhoods a few months following the opening of the freeway.

Committeemember Pomeroy concurred with Committeemember Walters' comment regarding the importance of conducting follow-up meetings and also voiced concerns regarding the measures recommended for the east neighborhood.

Discussion ensued regarding the right turn restriction onto Gentry from McKellips Road recommended for the east neighborhood.

Chairman Davidson voiced concerns regarding the minimal measures proposed for the east neighborhood and the lack of support from the neighborhood for additional measures. He commented on the importance of designing neighborhood streets in the future that encourage social interaction and discourage speeding and spoke in support of incorporating street design and traffic calming measures into the Residential Development Guidelines.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, to recommend to the Council that the recommendations from the Transportation Advisory Board regarding traffic calming projects for the Gilbert Road area immediately south of the 202 freeway, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Davidson voiced appreciation to staff for their efforts in this matter.

5. Hear a presentation regarding red and yellow light intervals.

Signal Systems Supervisor Jan Siedler addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item. Ms. Siedler reported that Mesa uses all-red intervals at every signal controlled intersection in Mesa, that a two second all-red interval is used following the green and yellow sequence, and that a one second all-red interval is used following left turn movements.

Ms. Siedler explained the process used by staff to determine the length of yellow intervals, which includes utilization of the Minimum Change Period Formula, a recognized formula that is used throughout the industry. She noted that approach speed and intersection width are considered in the process and that the yellow cycle is generally lengthened in consideration of higher speeds and larger intersections. Ms. Siedler commented on the importance of maintaining yellow intervals that are not artificially long and noted that long yellow intervals result in increased driver violations. She added that long yellow intervals also reduce the green light interval resulting in reduced intersection efficiency. She reported that the Federal Highway Administration recommends a maximum six-second yellow interval and that the Institute of Transportation Engineers recommends a maximum five-second yellow interval.

Ms. Siedler reported that in November 2000, staff increased the yellow interval for dual left turn arrows at numerous intersections throughout the City. She explained that the yellow interval was lengthened to four seconds at intersections where the stop bar (striping on the pavement indicating where the first vehicle should stop) is pulled back significantly from the intersection, resulting in a longer crossing distance.

Discussion ensued regarding the timing of the traffic signals on McKellips Road east of Gilbert Road and the progression speed utilized in that area, the numerous factors that determine progression speed, the new traffic control system software utilized by the City and the problems encountered with merging the new system with the old system.

Chairman Davidson commented on the fatal car accident that occurred at the intersection of 64th Street and McKellips Road and the resultant neighborhood demand for a traffic light at that intersection.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding the effect of adding traffic lights to the timed traffic system in response to a request from a neighborhood, Ms. Seidler reported that a traffic light that is added to the system within a few hundred feet of another traffic light negatively impacts the system.

Traffic Engineer Alan Sanderson said that the addition of a traffic light at 64th Street and McKellips Road did not disrupt the system due to the fact that 64th Street is ½ mile from the adjacent traffic lights at Recker and Power Roads. He added that some requests for traffic lights are not accommodated if conditions do not warrant the light.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding the City's use of lagging left turn signals, Mr. Krosting advised that the City currently uses lagging left turn signals at various locations with closely spaced traffic lights. He added that the Superstition Springs and Fiesta Mall areas contain lagging left turn signals.

Discussion ensued regarding the prohibition against blocking controlled intersections, staff's concerns regarding lengthening the all-red interval, and the fact that Mesa was the first in the Valley to implement the all-red interval throughout the City.

In response to concerns voiced by Committeemember Walters regarding making left turns from McKellips Road during peak traffic hours, Mr. Krosting said that numerous intersections along McKellips Road are problematic due to high volumes and that staff attempts to maintain an appropriate balance of safety vs. efficiency at every intersection throughout the City.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the traffic system's control center is located at the 6th Street Service Center and the planned expansion and remodel of the 6th Street Service Center.

Chairman Davidson stressed the importance of maintaining appropriate security in connection with the City's traffic control center and Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) and requested that staff reevaluate security measures at the 6th Street Service Center.

6. Adjournment.

Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 11:50 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 27th day of September 2001. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

pjt