

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 24, 2005

The Transportation Committee of the City of Mesa met in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on February 24, 2005 at 9:32 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

COUNCIL PRESENT

OFFICERS PRESENT

Claudia Walters, Chairman
Kyle Jones
Mike Whalen

None

Mike Hutchinson

1. Discuss and consider alternative alignments for the Williams Gateway Freeway Project.

Transportation Director Jeff Kramer introduced John McNamara and Paul Wong, representatives of DMJM Harris, a consulting firm hired by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) to conduct a Williams Gateway Freeway (WGF) Alignment and Environmental Overview Study within Maricopa County.

Mr. McNamara referred to graphics displayed in the Council Chambers and provided a chronological overview of the Southeast Maricopa-Northern Pinal County Area Transportation Study, which identified long-range transportation demands, provided modeling and identified a series of projects to address those demands in Maricopa and Pinal Counties over a 20-year period. He explained that the results of that study were integrated into the MAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP), which called for the construction of several freeway facilities in the region and was the basis for Proposition 400 in Maricopa County; that last year, the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) proceeded with several broad-based Corridor Definition Studies, including four in Pinal County and one in Maricopa County (the Williams Gateway Corridor) to determine the types of future facilities, the general location of the corridors and which entity would have jurisdictional responsibility for the facilities; and that in November 2004, MAG began to conduct the WGF Alignment and Environmental Overview Study.

Mr. McNamara explained that the WGF Alignment and Environmental Overview Study focuses primarily on Maricopa County, but also expands into Pinal County. He stated that the purpose of the study is to examine and identify the physical, socioeconomic and environmental characteristics associated with the WGF in Maricopa County, consider and evaluate alternative alignments, select a preferred alternative, develop specific information relative to the facility's characteristics (i.e., location of frontage roads and interchanges), and complete an environmental overview and a Title VI/Environmental Justice Analysis. Mr. McNamara advised that the WGF study area is bounded by Elliot

Road on the north, Queen Creek Road on the south, Power Road to the west and extends east into Pinal County for approximately three miles.

Mr. McNamara further commented that MAG has conducted extensive stakeholder interviews to solicit input with regard to the preferred WGF alignment alternatives and said that it intends to present the alternatives at a public meeting to be held sometime next month. He added that subsequent to that time, the Study team is scheduled to select a recommended preferred alignment in April, which will be presented to the MAG Transportation Review Committee later that month.

Mr. McNamara provided a short synopsis of the “tiered” process utilized by MAG to eliminate unsuitable alternatives, which resulted in the “Tier 3 Draft Corridors.” He stated that the main corridors under consideration and scheduled to be presented at the public hearing include Alternative 3 (Frye Road), Alternative 5 (Willis Road) and Alternative 7 (Ryan Road). (See Attachment 1.)

Mr. Wong addressed the Committee and reported that in conjunction with the WGF alignment alternatives, two Ellsworth Road realignment alternatives are being proposed for presentation at the public meeting. He advised that Realignment A is the westernmost alternative and realigns Ellsworth Road around the runway protection zones at Williams Gateway Airport, and that Realignment B is a more extensive realignment. (See Attachments 2 and 3.) Mr. Wong stated that his firm is still in the process of evaluating these alternatives.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that the Ellsworth Road project is currently “on the drawing board” and that construction of Phase I (from Germann to Ray Road) is scheduled to begin in June and Phase II (from Ray Road to Portobello) will commence three months later; that the cost of the project is estimated at \$30 million, with the City’s share being \$10 million; and potential north/south connector routes (Ellsworth, Crismon or Signal Butte) to the Hunt Highway alignment.

Mr. Kramer reported that Engineering and Transportation staff have extensively reviewed the WGF alignment alternatives and are strongly in support of Alternative 3 (the northernmost alternative that turns east on the Frye Road alignment between Williams Field and Pecos Roads). He explained that staff views Alternative 5 as a marginal second choice and are simply not in favor of Alternative 7, although they believe it is appropriate to be carried forward to the next level for study. Mr. Kramer stressed that Alternative 3 would provide the best access from the freeways to Williams Gateway Airport and would provide a loop or a through access between Hawes and Williams Field Roads.

Mr. Kramer commented that with regard to the Ellsworth Road realignment alternatives, staff prefers Realignment A. He indicated that it is the only option compatible with Alternative 3, offers the best access to the airport, is the most efficient east/west route through the proposed development areas, and interferes the least with existing development and improvements. Mr. Kramer added that staff does not support Realignment B because of the significant amount of throwaway based on the current project, it exceeds the necessary criteria for the runway protection zones, and is not consistent with the City’s arterial street layout as it encroaches very close to Crismon Road.

Mr. Kramer commended the MAG Study team, which has been receptive to staff's comments and input. He also expressed appreciation to Senior Civil Engineer Ross Renner for his efforts and hard work to develop alternative variations based on staff's input and clearly convey those concepts to the Study team.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the fact that there are no homes that would be affected by Alternatives 3 and 5 within the City of Mesa and its strip annexation area; that Alternative 7 would directly impact existing residential areas in Pinal County and Queen Creek; that the Ellsworth Road construction project south of Williams Field Road would consist of interim improvements (i.e., no curb, gutter or sidewalk) to account for the potential relocation of the road around the runway protection zone; that the runway protection zone at Williams Gateway Airport is regulated by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) as far as the number of incursions allowed at the space; that for the present time, Ellsworth Road will remain where it is presently located, but as the airport grows and becomes more active, it may be necessary to realign the road; and that MAG is examining flood control structures and designated flood plains in conjunction with the WGF study.

Committeemember Whalen commented that although the financing of the various projects has not been addressed today, it is disconcerting for the City of Mesa to build a freeway and bring economic development into another county if the other entity is unable to pay for such improvements. He questioned what efforts the Central Arizona Association of Governments (CAAG) has made to obtain funding for the corridor development and whether it would be feasible for Mesa to extend a loan to Pinal County in this regard.

Roger Herzog, a representative of MAG, clarified that CAAG is anticipating that Pinal County's half-cent sales tax will be renewed. He noted, however, that the amount of the proceeds it would garner would not be significant enough to fund the corridor development due to the fact there are many other funding needs throughout the entire County. Mr. Herzog explained that the RTP proposes that the Maricopa County portion of the WGF be constructed in 2016 during Phase III. He added that the allocation for the corridor is estimated at \$325 million in 2002 dollars and said that in order to accelerate the project, certain strategies could be undertaken relative to right-of-way preservation and interim facilities to provide a level of service in that corridor before 2016.

Assistant Development Services Manager Jeff Martin stated that the City of Mesa has made several loans regarding the acceleration of the Red Mountain and Superstition Freeways and stated that that would be something staff could research and investigate further regarding the WGF. He explained that at the present time, staff and MAG are anxious to complete the WGF study, with the idea that once a preferred alignment has been selected, potential developers in the area would have a better understanding of the location of the road and could proceed forward with their development plans. Mr. Martin added that this would "buy some time" for the City to consider different options relative to the potential acceleration of the project's construction.

In response to a question from Committeemember Whalen, Mr. Herzog stated that ADOT would design, build and operate the WGF, and in addition to the half-cent sales tax money, other State and Federal monies would be used to fund the project. He said that ADOT expends approximately 37% of its statewide funding in Maricopa County and

noted that the agency could potentially shift some of its discretionary money between Maricopa and Pinal Counties.

It was moved by Committeemember Whalen, seconded by Committeemember Jones, to recommend to the Council that Alternative 3 of the Williams Gateway Freeway Alignment and Environmental Overview Study be approved.

Carried unanimously.

It was moved by Committeemember Jones, seconded by Committeemember Whalen, to recommend to the Council that Ellsworth Road Realignment A of the Williams Gateway Freeway Alignment and Environmental Overview Study be approved.

Committeemember Whalen requested that the Council have the opportunity to discuss what plans the new landowners of the GM Proving Grounds may have for the development of their property and also whether they are supportive of Realignment A prior to the Council voting on this item.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Walters thanked everyone for the presentation.

2. Hear an update on the RPTA and City of Mesa operations at the Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility at Greenfield Road and Virginia Street.

Assistant Development Services Manager Jeff Martin reported that the City of Mesa has entered into a partnership with the Regional Public Transit Authority (RPTA) to manage the Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility located at Greenfield Road and Virginia Street. He explained that the management team for the facility consists of individuals from the City, RPTA and MV Transportation, the new contractor. Mr. Martin advised that the management team has overcome many challenges in order to make the operation run smoothly and efficiently and stated that a performance-based management approach has been implemented to assist in that regard. He acknowledged the management team for their efforts and hard work, and in particular, Transit Administrator Jim Wright and Transit Maintenance Administrator Pete Scarafioti for playing significant roles in moving the project forward.

Mr. Wright addressed the Committee and indicated that the City of Mesa has been and still is in the process of transitioning three medium size contracts into one large multi-modal contract. He stated that the contracts are as follows: 1.) August 2004, the Mesa ATC operation was moved to MV Transportation; 2.) January 2005, the City incorporated the East Valley Dial-A-Ride Service into MV Transportation's management practices; and 3.) April 2005, the RPTA will move five local and two express routes to the Transit facility, and bring 76 vehicles, 200 vehicle operators, 20 road supervisors and 21 maintenance personnel to the site as well.

Mr. Wright reported that the contract that the City entered into with the RPTA was performance-based, meaning that the Request for Proposals (RFP) contained certain performance indicators that staff felt were vital to ensure quality service. He explained that if the contractor met specific criteria, he would receive an incentive in the form of an increased rate per mile. Mr. Wright also noted that the East Valley Transit Team consists of staff from the stakeholder communities (Mesa, Chandler, Gilbert, Tempe and

Scottsdale) and have formed a coalition to provide these services under the umbrella of the RPTA. He added that the team began meeting last summer and developed a vision statement that outlines the goals for the project.

Mr. Wright referred to a Power Point presentation and provided a short synopsis of various components of performance-based management including, but not limited to, the following: the fact that performance-based contracting requires performance-based management; performance-based management will be based upon a performance-measurement model; the performance measurement model will be unique to the Valley Metro-East Valley public transit operation; the organization will make decisions about its future and will develop the necessary procedures and operations to do so; the organization will be customer-driven, maintain focus on the needs and expectations of its customers, and will improve service through a continuous evaluation process. (The complete Power Point presentation is available for review in the City Clerk's Office.)

Mr. Wright further indicated that in an effort to accomplish the above-listed goals and measurements, staff has reengineered the project by developing four work teams that are skilled in specific areas to develop various goals, objectives and performance measures to determine the contractor's successes and failures. He explained that the teams would also analyze current processes and develop new concepts for problem solving in an effort to better serve the customers.

Discussion ensued relative to the various project management teams and their duties and responsibilities; and the goals of the new organizational structure under the performance-based management.

Mr. Wright and Mr. Scarafiotti displayed a series of graphs depicting various performance measures for the East Valley Dial-A-Ride On-Time Performance, Fixed Route On-Time Performance for Local and Express Bus Service, Miles Per Road Calls - Large and Small Buses and Dial-A-Ride Vans, and Road Calls by Predominant Failure.

Mr. Scarafiotti reported that because of the increased fleet size and fleet inventory fuel mix, staff is launching several projects to fuel the vehicles that will be housed at the new Transit facility during this transition period. He explained that Mesa has 39 compressed natural gas (CNG)-powered buses and that the facility was designed to accommodate the fueling of those vehicles, but not to provide liquefied natural gas (LNG) for LNG-powered vehicles. He commented that when the RPTA moves its fleet to the facility in April, it would include LNG, diesel, and gasoline-powered vehicles. Mr. Scarafiotti explained that in an effort to resolve the LNG dilemma, the City has contracted with Clean Energy LLC to provide an LNG skid of equipment to assist in the fueling of those vehicles and said that when the LNG buses are no longer in service, the equipment will be disassembled and removed offsite. He added that the RPTA will incur all costs and that the costs will be expensed through a rate between MV Transportation and the RPTA.

Mr. Scarafiotti provided a brief overview of the ongoing construction of a new diesel fueling facility scheduled for completion in October of this year. He explained that the project consists of two aboveground storage tanks with a combined capacity of 24,000 gallons. Mr. Scarafiotti added that the City's cost for the project is \$400,000, which will be reimbursed by the RPTA.

Mr. Martin commented that staff has saved the City a significant amount of money since the Transit facility first opened and anticipates even greater savings during the second year of its contract with the RPTA. He noted, however, that although the City is saving money, it is also creating somewhat of a problem in that Mesa's service costs are much less than Phoenix and Tempe's. Mr. Martin stated that as the City moves forward to implement the Regional Transportation Plan, it has entered into a debate with the RPTA regarding where such savings should go. He added that staff would like to bring this issue back to the Council in the near future to solicit their input, as well as to provide an update on the Proposition 400 implementation.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the secured storage capabilities at the Transit facility to accommodate the RPTA's increased fleet of vehicles, as well as the parking accommodations for the large number of employees who will be working at the site.

Chairman Walters commented that she had an opportunity to tour the Transit facility and suggested that Committeemember Whalen or Committeemember Jones' Financing the Future Citizen Committee might also enjoy visiting the site. She also expressed appreciation to staff for their outstanding work and especially the implementation of the performance-based measures.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee Meeting adjourned at 10:53 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 24th day of February 2005. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

pag

attachments (3)