

# TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

October 3, 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 October 3, 2002 at 8:25 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT	COMMITTEE ABSENT	OFFICERS PRESENT
Rex Griswold Janie Thom Mike Whalen	None	None

(Agenda items were discussed out of order, but for purposes of clarity will remain as listed on the agenda.)

1. Discuss and consider the recommendations contained in the final report from the Transportation Citizen Advisory Committee.

Jim Davidson, Former Vice Mayor and Co-Chairman of the Transportation Citizens Advisory Committee (TCAC) and Craig Ahlstrom, Co-Chairman of the TCAC addressed the Committee concerning this agenda item.

Mr. Davidson introduced members of the TCAC who were present, including Jim Nesbitt, Phil Lowry and Bob Payne. Mr. Davidson referred to the *Final Report of the Transportation Citizen Advisory Committee* and stated that the Committee successfully completed its assigned task, which was to recommend a funding mechanism to address the transportation budget shortfall and to prioritize the transit and transportation elements identified in the Mesa Transportation Plan developed by the Joint Master Planning Committee. Mr. Davidson stated that the Committee, which was composed of a diverse group of citizens representing all six City districts, participated in extensive and meaningful discussions on all elements of the Transportation Plan and existing City transit and transportation capital expenditures. He commented that nationally, Mesa is significantly behind other cities of its size in terms of transit and transportation expenditures.

Mr. Davidson reported that the TCAC evaluated a variety of options to fund the \$2.4 billion shortfall associated with financing the 25-year Transportation Plan. He stated that after careful consideration of the various funding possibilities, the Committee recommends the implementation of a 25-year sales tax increase, dedicated to transit and transportation

improvements, which a citizen advisory group would oversee. Mr. Davidson stated that the Committee unanimously recommends that the Council refer this issue to Mesa voters.

Mr. Davidson reported that approximately 70% of the TCAC's recommendations are related to street operations, maintenance and capital improvements, that approximately 27% deal with increasing mass transit routes and services, and the remaining recommendations relate to funding multi-use paths and pedestrian improvements. He stated that although the TCAC initially recommended an extension of the regional light rail system from the East Valley Institute of Technology to the Mesa Town Center, the Committee's review of this issue revealed that it would not be possible to fund this extension with local revenue sources. He added that the TCAC strongly recommends that the Council support regional funding and planning to bring light rail/commuter rail corridors to east Mesa and beyond. Mr. Davidson stated that the TCAC recommendations will fund transportation that is integrated with the City's land use plans so that expenditures for improvements will be in areas where they are most needed.

Chairman Whalen and Committeemember Griswold voiced appreciation to Mr. Davidson, Mr. Ahlstrom and the TCAC members for their efforts in this matter.

Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace provided a detailed overview of the TCAC's *Final Report*. He outlined the five findings of the Committee, including:

1. The Mesa Transportation Plan is a thorough, well-constructed document that articulates the long-term transportation vision for the City of Mesa.
2. Transportation is a vital component of the City's overall quality of life. By a unanimous decision, the TCAC found that additional transportation funding is needed for basic operations and maintenance needs, as well as improving the transportation system to meet the City's growing needs.
3. Transportation should provide integrated choices to the citizens of Mesa, including options for street systems and public transportation users, bicyclists and pedestrians.
4. Transit service is vital for a large segment of community residents who depend on transit service for independent living and employment.
5. The most viable local revenue source for additional transportation funding is the sales tax.

Mr. Wallace also outlined the Committee's seven recommendations, including:

1. Refer a ballot measure to the voters in March 2003, to consider increasing the sales tax rate by one-quarter cent for three years, and an additional one-quarter cent for an additional 22 years. The TCAC supports this option for the following reasons: a) with the sunset of the .25% Quality of Life sales tax in 2006, the proposed sales tax would only result in a net quarter-cent sales tax increase; b) the new sales tax would increase the City's local rate to 1.75%, which is less than the highest rate of other Valley cities, which is 1.8%; and c) it would maintain the

City's position as having the lowest overall tax burden for homeowners in comparable sized cities in the Valley.

2. The TCAC supports the future extension of light rail from Main and Longmore into the Town Center, but did not recommend it with this funding proposal because the increased cost to finance the project would be approximately \$71 million, the total cost of the project could make light rail a lightning rod for the rest of the election package, and the City will consider funding for the light rail project from the regional transportation sales tax if extended by Maricopa County voters.
3. To ensure public input and government accountability, the existing Mesa Transportation Advisory Board will oversee an annual audit to ensure the projects funded with this measure are completed in a timely and cost effective manner. All revenues shall be placed in a separate fund, which may only be used for transportation purposes.
4. Include tangible improvements to transit and streets early in the program.
5. Consider increasing general fund support for streets and transit programs.
6. Explore opportunities to implement a development impact fee for transportation (streets and transit) to help fund needed transportation improvements.
7. Mesa political leaders should aggressively support future efforts to extend the regional transportation sales tax, to fund projects not included with this funding proposal. In particular, light rail transit, express bus service, commuter rail, and freeway HOV lanes should be a priority for regional transportation funding.

Mr. Wallace referred to and commented on Table 1 (Recommended Transportation Program Funding Levels) in the report, which itemizes the recommended funding levels for each element of the program, including Streets Capital, Streets O & M, Transit - Bus/Dial-a-Ride, Town Center, Shared Use Paths and Pedestrian Improvements. Mr. Wallace also referred to and commented on Table 2 (Distribution of Proposed Sales Tax Revenues by Transportation Program).

Mr. Wallace also discussed a map provided to the Committeemembers that depicted the locations of various projects in the *Street Capital Projects 25 Year Program* and the *Pavement Maintenance Program – First 10 Years*. He noted that most of the capital work in the program will be conducted in the southeast area of the City. He also referred to and commented on a map depicting the locations of various proposed transit routes and service levels in the *Transit Service 25 Year Program*. He noted that projected transit service has been structured to serve the light rail corridor that will be ending at Main and Longmore.

In response to questions from Committeemember Thom concerning the limited bus services projected in the southeast area of the City and the possibility of decreasing levels of service in western areas of the City in order to provide additional bus service in the southeast, Mr. Wallace explained that the strategy concerning transit service is to build an urban level of service where population densities are highest, which is in western areas of the City. He noted that with

additional funding, higher service levels could be extended further east and noted that proposed transit service levels are based on ridership projections. He added that services may be adjusted based upon route productivity, community input and changing local and regional conditions.

In response to a question from Committeemember Thom concerning whether resident outreach was conducted in connection with the proposed bus transit service levels, he advised that the proposed transit plan is based on the Mesa Transportation Plan and the extensive public comment that was solicited during that 2-year planning process.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen, Mr. Davidson and Mr. Ahlstrom commented on the process of cutting and prioritizing the various projects outlined in the Mesa Transportation Plan and noted that the Final Report and recommendations from the TCAC account for approximately 75% of the overall Mesa Transportation Plan. Mr. Davidson also commented on the process of determining the proposed sales tax increase and duration to fund the modified plan.

Discussion ensued concerning the recent success of transportation tax ballot measures in Glendale, Phoenix and Tempe, and the failure of Tucson's ballot measure; the fact that although surveys recently conducted indicated that voters are supportive of a multi-modal approach to transportation that includes light rail, there is minimal financial support for development of Phase 2 of the light rail system in Mesa; the likelihood of the ½ cent County-wide transportation tax being extended in the future and impacts the City can anticipate in conjunction with a possible extension.

In response to a question from Chairman Whalen concerning anticipated funding associated with extension of the County-wide transportation tax, Mr. Davidson stated that although he anticipates that County voters will extend the transportation tax in the future, in his opinion, it is critical that the City proceed with funding the proposed mass transit plan immediately.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the proposed transit program will increase bus routes by 340%.

Chairman Whalen commented that the majority of the County's freeway system has been or is in the process of being built and that funding of mass transit projects is the most critical transportation need to be addressed through extension of the County-wide tax, if approved by voters. He added the opinion that mass transit should be addressed on a regional level and that municipalities should not have to bear the burden of funding mass transit systems.

Assistant Development Services Manager Jeff Martin addressed the Committee and reported that the City recently received a request from the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), as did all Valley cities, to submit a list of proposed transportation projects for funding through extension of the County-wide transportation sales tax. He noted that MAG requested that this information be provided by November 1, 2002 and that this issue will come before this Committee and the Council prior to that date. Mr. Martin concurred with Chairman Whalen's comments concerning the likelihood that future County-wide transportation improvements will be heavily weighted towards transit improvements. He added that it is his understanding that the County-wide transportation sales tax extension issue will be presented to voters in 2004.

Chairman Whalen declared a recess at 9:47 a.m. and reconvened the meeting at 10:00 a.m.

In response to a question from Committeemember Griswold concerning the various elements of the Transportation Plan recommended for funding by the TCAC, Mr. Ahlstrom stated that prioritizing the various proposed elements will be an on-going, flexible process.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that future sales tax collected as a result of this measure would be held in a separate account to be utilized only for approved projects and that the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) would oversee this process; and the fact that sales tax revenue projections are based on 1% growth, which was derived from a 4% growth factor less a 3% inflation factor.

Chairman Whalen commented that the majority of the proposed Streets Capital Improvements are planned for the southeast area of the City and outlined the proposed allocations of the 25-year Streets Capital program by Council district, including \$9 million in District 1, \$46.8 million in District 2, \$19.6 million in District 3, \$42,745 million in District 4, \$158,577 million in District 5 and \$563,888 million in District 6.

Committeemember Thom voiced opposition to a sales tax increase. She stated concerns regarding declining sales tax revenues and voiced the opinion that maintaining a lower sales tax rate than neighboring communities helps to attract vehicle purchasers, which helps to balance declining sales tax revenues. She stated the opinion that although the issue of funding for street improvements was included in the 1998 Quality of Life Sales Tax measure, City streets are being allowed to deteriorate because a majority of that money has gone into the Performing Arts Center.

Committeemember Thom voiced support for expanding bus routes in east and west Mesa and suggested that mini vans replace large buses on routes with low ridership to help reduce fuel costs.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that the TCAC is recommending that the Council refer the issue of a dedicated transportation sales tax to Mesa voters in March 2003; that the reason behind the proposed March 2003 election date is to expedite the process so that street improvements can begin as soon as possible; and the possibility that voter confusion may arise as a result of the County-wide transportation sales tax extension issue that will arise during late 2003.

There was Committee concurrence to allow speakers to comment on this agenda item.

The following speakers (in order of appearance) spoke in support of the TCAC's recommendations:

Mary Hartle-Smith	220 N. 22 <sup>nd</sup> Place
Tony Sohl	333 N. Chippawa Place, Chandler
Nola Baker-Jones	(Mesa resident – address unstated)
Donna Redford Kruck	915 W. 9 <sup>th</sup> Street, Tempe (Representing Arizona Bridge to Independent Living)

The foregoing speakers spoke in support of the TCAC's recommendations for the following reasons:

- There is a significant need for improved regional transit services including buses, Dial-A-Ride and light rail, for individuals who do not drive, particularly disabled and elderly individuals;
- Public transportation is vital to the disabled community;
- Disabled individuals experience difficulties obtaining employment because a lack of efficient transit service exists;
- Disabled individuals are also prevented from shopping, pursuing recreational activities and otherwise being productive, contributing citizens because there is a lack of efficient transit service;
- A regional approach to transit is vital – Phoenix and Tempe voters have approved a transportation tax measure;
- Dial-A-Ride services are not dependable and efficient with respect to providing timely service (arrival times are uncertain);
- Transit systems must provide extensive routes and frequent runs in order to be effective and secure regular ridership;
- Recent cut backs in bus service in southwest Mesa previously funded by the City of Tempe have created significant hardships, including educations being interrupted at Mesa Community College;
- The Arizona Bridge to Independent Living organization is committed to supporting this proposed dedicated transportation tax measure;
- Implementing a dedicated transportation sales tax is key to adequately funding transit services.

Chairman Whalen and the Committeemembers voiced appreciation to the speakers for attending the meeting and for their input.

It was moved by Committeemember Griswold, seconded by Committeemember Thom to recommend to the Council that the recommendations contained in the final report from the Transportation Citizen Advisory Committee, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

2. Discuss and consider the recommendations outlined in the Thomas Road Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan.

Assistant City Traffic Engineer Dan Cleavinger and Senior Transportation Engineer Rena Ehm addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item.

Ms. Ehm discussed the fact that the Red Mountain Freeway/Loop 202 extension to Higley Road is expected to be completed and open in January 2003. She said that in response to concerns voiced by residents of northeast Mesa regarding anticipated short and long term traffic impacts resulting from development of the freeway in this area, staff conducted an extensive neighborhood outreach/public comment process. She referred to a staff report dated September 23, 2002 and said that this report represents seven months of staff effort working with residents in the area bounded by Recker Road on the west, Power Road on the east, McDowell Road on the south, and the north City limits. She stated that the Transportation

Advisory Board (TAB) recommends proceeding with 21 traffic control modifications in this two square mile area and added that staff is seeking approval to proceed with implementing these 21 modifications.

Ms. Ehm outlined the public process that occurred and reported that staff worked with resident volunteers (resident plan advocates) to prepare a traffic management plan for consideration by the larger community. She reported that 31 proposals related to speed and traffic volume mitigation were put forward for neighborhood comment in the form of a questionnaire. She noted that four questionnaires were developed, each relative to a specific area and that residents were only asked questions relative to their specific areas. She added that a questionnaire was sent to 5,250 residents and more than 1,300 completed questionnaires were returned.

Ms. Ehm explained that staff met with the resident plan advocates to review the completed questionnaires. She noted that any proposal that received more than 50% yes responses were considered to have overall community support. Ms. Ehm further explained the process used to prioritize the 31 proposals down to 21 proposals recommended for implementation.

Ms. Ehm reported that 16 of the 21 proposals can be implemented quickly and easily because they only involve signing and striping; that several proposals require parking ordinances; that one proposal is for a speed limit change; that 5 proposals involve construction; that two of the proposals involving construction are already included in the Recker Road widening project (center median and curb bulb out), which are centered on Recker Road at Thomas Road; and that the most costly proposal is for construction of a raised landscaped median on Thomas Road between Recker Road and Power Road that is projected at \$700,000. She added that staff recommends that the Thomas Road raised median project be accelerated during the next CIP program. Ms. Ehm stated that the remaining two construction projects are both curb bulb out projects, one on Virginia Street and one at the intersection of Redmont Drive and Power Road.

Ms. Ehm referred to an area map provided to the Committeemembers and discussed the various proposals.

In response to a question from Committeemember Griswold concerning the reported lack of neighborhood support for speed humps on 64<sup>th</sup> Street, Ms. Ehm explained that residents were advised that because 64<sup>th</sup> Street is a fire route, and therefore not eligible for speed humps under the City's existing policy, that submission of this issue to the Council for consideration of a policy exemption required significant neighborhood support. She added that the results of the survey did not demonstrate significant neighborhood support for installation of speed humps on 64<sup>th</sup> Street.

Further discussion ensued regarding the responses from residents regarding the issue of speed humps on 64<sup>th</sup> Street; and the fact that responses from all users of 64<sup>th</sup> Street, including residents on neighboring streets, were considered in staff's analysis of this issue.

Discussion ensued regarding the width of Thomas Road; the fact that the theory behind the recommended raised median on Thomas Road is to visually break up the wide expanse of roadway and create "side friction" to help reduce speeds in this area; the fact that residents of the Red Mountain Ranch community voiced concerns regarding the appearance of permanent

improvements; and the fact that the Red Mountain Ranch Homeowners Association has agreed to assume responsibility for maintaining the landscaping in the curb bulb outs.

Committeemember Thom discussed the issue of raised medians and commented that she is aware of fatal accidents involving vehicles that have flipped over into adjacent traffic after striking a raised median. She voiced the opinion that raised medians are dangerous and recommended that the installation of raised medians be discontinued "whenever possible."

Ms. Ehm reported that the Transportation Advisory Board also recommends that staff conduct follow-up neighborhood meetings after the Red Mountain Freeway is open to Higley Road to discuss existing traffic conditions and the effectiveness of the various modifications that have been implemented.

Chairman Whalen voiced appreciation for the comprehensive report and commended staff for their work with the neighborhoods.

In response to questions from Committeemember Thom concerning the curb bulb outs, Ms. Ehm reported that the bulb out project recommended for Redmont Drive at Power Road, which is supported by residents, will only restrict Redmont Drive and will not impact Power Road; and that the curb bulb outs, unlike speed humps, will not restrict or slow emergency vehicles.

Committeemember Griswold commented that one of the anticipated results of the curb bulb out projects is to discourage lake and river traffic from driving through this neighborhood. He voiced appreciation to staff for their efforts to address the various concerns of residents in this area.

In response to questions from Chairman Whalen concerning funding of the recommended construction projects, Transportation Director Ron Krosting advised that the Thomas Road median project (projected at \$700,000) would be considered in conjunction with the upcoming 5-year CIP program, and that it is the opinion of staff that the costs associated with the curb bulb out projects, ranging from \$30,000 - \$45,000 each, can be incorporated/absorbed into larger street widening projects planned for this area.

It was moved by Committeemember Griswold, seconded by Committeemember Thom, to recommend to the Council that the recommendations from the Transportation Advisory Board regarding the Thomas Road Neighborhood Traffic Management Plan, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

### 3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee meeting adjourned at 10:42 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 3<sup>rd</sup> day of October 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

pjt