

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 13, 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 February 13, 2002 at 3:30 p.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Jim Davidson
Bill Jaffa
Dennis Kavanaugh
Pat Pomeroy
Claudia Walters
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL ABSENT

Mayor Keno Hawker

OFFICERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Barbara Jones

1. Discuss and consider a revised proposal regarding the previously approved budget reduction eliminating the peak bus route to Boeing.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting, Transit Administrator Jim Wright and Transit Coordinator Christine Stava addressed the Committee concerning this agenda item.

Mr. Wright referred to staff's report regarding this matter and the Committee's previous direction that staff meet with Boeing representatives and employees for the purpose of reducing the number of daily trips on Route 136 to the Boeing facility. Mr. Wright reported that as a result of meeting with Boeing representatives and employees, staff is proposing that the number of daily trips to and from the Boeing facility be reduced to 12, which represents a 50% reduction in the existing service. He also reported that the reduction represents an annual savings of approximately \$48,000 and a savings of \$16,000 for the remainder of FY 2001/02. Mr. Wright stated that Boeing staff supports this proposed compromise and that with Council approval, transit staff is ready to implement the proposed changes effective March 4, 2002.

In response to questions from Committeemember Pomeroy, Mr. Wright referred to a map on display in the Council Chambers and to the portion of Route 136 that would be impacted by the proposed service reduction. Mr. Wright explained that the proposed service to Boeing would consist of three northbound trips in the morning and three in the afternoon.

Discussion ensued regarding whether the proposed route changes were printed and distributed to bus drivers and confusion that exists concerning cost savings amounts contained in staff's report dated February 6, 2002.

Mr. Wright clarified that costs associated with the portion of Route 136 that are not impacted by the proposed changes, are not reflected in staff's report. He added that the proposed service reductions will result in a net annual cost savings of slightly less than \$48,000.

Councilmember Walters voiced support for staff's recommendations and appreciation to staff for their efforts to reach a compromise with Boeing while continuing to provide service to the facility. She commented on the recent Local Transportation Assistance Fund (LTAFII) funding cuts and the City's budget shortfalls. She said that the decision to reduce bus service is a difficult one and commented on her general support for providing bus service and encouraging bus ridership.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, to recommend to the Council that staff's revised proposal regarding the previously approved budget reduction eliminating the peak bus route to Boeing, be approved.

Chairman Davidson said that although he appreciates the input from riders of Route 136 concerning the issues of operating costs and ridership numbers, he supports the data, information and recommendations provided by staff. He voiced appreciation to Boeing officials and employees and to staff for their efforts to reach a compromise.

Carried unanimously.

2. Discuss and consider funding of Tempe bus routes which have been extended into Mesa.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting, Transit Administrator Jim Wright and Transit Coordinator Christine Stava addressed the Committee concerning this agenda item.

Mr. Wright referred to staff's report concerning this agenda item and also referred to and commented on tables of data displayed in the Council Chambers (See Attachment). He stated that Table 1 represents transit service along Southern Avenue to Westwood Street that is funded by the City of Tempe and is consistent with the standard level of transit service provided in Mesa. He said that Table II outlines five routes that are operated in Mesa by the City of Tempe, which exceed Mesa's standard service level and he commented on the various routes and services provided. Mr. Wright explained that although the City of Tempe has provided the service outlined Tables I and II at no cost to Mesa, due to budget constraints, Tempe has indicated that this service can no longer be provided without funding from Mesa.

Mr. Wright stated that it is staff's recommendation to fund the service along Southern Avenue (Route 61) as outlined in Table I. He added that because the services outlined in Table II exceed Mesa's standard level of service, staff does not recommend funding those services.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy, Mr. Wright explained that Tempe has provided this service since 1996 in response to input from Tempe residents regarding desired destination points.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that Mesa residents also utilize the bus service provided by Tempe, and the fact that alternate routes are available in connection with the service staff proposes to eliminate.

Mr. Krosting said that in the event the Committee and the Council elect to provide an additional level of service, staff recommends funding Route 77 along Baseline Road.

Carlos DeLeon, City of Tempe Transit Administrator, addressed the Committee and provided an overview regarding the transit service provided by Tempe in Mesa. He noted that the services provided are reciprocal for the citizens of Mesa and Tempe. He commented on ridership data that was collected from Route 77 (Baseline Road) from May to August 2001, which indicated 400,000 boardings per year with 25% of the boardings occurring in Mesa. He noted that this route provides service to Desert Samaritan Hospital, Mesa Community College and Fiesta Mall.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy concerning the Mesa ridership, Mr. DeLeon said that there is no available data to analyze the destination points of Mesa riders.

Committeemember Pomeroy voiced concerns regarding the City's budget shortfalls and cutbacks in transit funding.

In response to questions from Committeemember Walters regarding the proposed continuation of Route 61 (Southern), Mr. Wright stated that the segment of Route 61 from the Tempe border to Westwood is rightfully Mesa's responsibility and that if this services is not funded, there will be a gap in service along Southern Avenue.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that although staff proposes to eliminate Route 77, bus service along Dobson Road will continue to provide service to Desert Samaritan Hospital.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Chairman Davidson, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendations to fund bus service for route 61 (Southern Avenue) as outlined in Table 1, be approved.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy concerning the source of funding to support staff's recommendation, Mr. Krosting state that the Transit budget can accommodate the \$12,000 needed to fund the recommended service for the remainder of FY 2001/02.

Discussion ensued regarding the \$1.3 million transit budget shortfall anticipated for FY 2002/03 and the fact that the projected shortfall will result in additional service cutbacks.

Committeemember Walters clarified that the intent of the motion is to approve funding for Route 61 as outlined in Table 1 for the remainder of FY 2001/02 only.

Committeemember Pomeroy voiced concerns regarding the fact that the Committee is concurrently approving a reduction of service in Route 136 and the funding of Route 61.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy, Mr. Krosting stated that it is staff's opinion that Route 61 represents a higher priority than Route 136.

Chairman Davidson emphasized that his second to the motion is reluctant due to the fact that he also supports funding Route 77 (Baseline Road) in addition to Route 61. He stated the opinion that bus service along Baseline Road provides an important service to the citizens in this area of Mesa. He indicated that he will support funding Route 77 when this issue is considered by the Council.

Carried unanimously.

3. Hear a presentation regarding plans to accommodate projected traffic volumes in the vicinity of Dobson and Southern.

Mr. Krosting addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and introduced Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace. Mr. Krosting noted that this update is the result of the planned expansion of Desert Samaritan Hospital and Chairman Davidson's request for an analysis of traffic in this area. He added that traffic flows and volumes associated with Mesa Community College (MCC) were also considered in staff's evaluations and projections for this area.

Mr. Wallace discussed current traffic volumes in the vicinity of Southern Avenue and Dobson Road and reported that Southern Avenue carries approximately 38,000 vehicles per day and Dobson Road carries approximately 42,000 vehicles per day. He said that it is anticipated that this area will continue to experience steady growth in traffic volumes in the future.

Mr. Wallace reported that the planned Desert Samaritan Hospital expansion will commence in 2003 and include the addition of 400,000 square feet of hospital and medical office space and the addition of 1500 parking spaces. He noted that although MCC has no current expansion plans, MCC is commencing a new master planning process to evaluate future parking and building needs.

Mr. Wallace referred to an illustrative map on display in the Council Chambers and reported that staff has identified five improvements designed to ease traffic flows in this area, including: 1) the addition of an eastbound through lane on Southern Avenue, including a right turn lane at Dobson Road; 2) construction of an eastbound bus pull-out on Southern Avenue, east of Dobson Road; 3) addition of a northbound right turn lane on Dobson Road into MCC's north campus entry; 4) addition of a southbound left turn lane and a northbound left turn lane and right turn lane at the shared MCC/Desert Samaritan access on Dobson Road; and 5) addition of a northbound right turn lane on Dobson Road into MCC's south campus entry. Mr. Wallace commented on the benefits associated with the improvements and said that the total cost of the five improvements is estimated at \$3.5 million. He added that staff plans to construct the five improvements in two projects; the first project encompassing the improvements along Dobson Road would be constructed during summer months, and the second project encompassing the improvements on Southern Avenue, would be conducted the following year.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters concerning difficulties encountered by disabled and elderly pedestrians when crossing expansive intersections, Mr. Krosting advised that typically larger intersections have longer cycles. He also discussed staff's efforts to assist groups and individuals in identifying the best places to cross major arterial streets.

Discussion ensued regarding the significant amount of pedestrian traffic surrounding Mesa Community College, and the fact that the City does not have a "street impact" development fee.

Committeemember Walters urged staff to submit their report concerning this matter to the Transportation Advisory Board and indicated support for implementing a street impact development fee.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters concerning the source of funding for this project, Mr. Krosting explained that this project would be funded from Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) funds and prioritized with other CIP road improvement projects in the City.

Discussion ensued regarding the proposed additional through lane on Southern Avenue and the proposed right turn lane from eastbound Southern to southbound Dobson Road.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy concerning the proposed improvements on MCC property (right turn lanes), Mr. Krosting explained that staff would negotiate joint project agreements with MCC and Desert Samaritan Hospital relative to the cost of proposed improvements that directly impact these facilities. He noted that MCC has indicated a willingness to assist with improvements on the campus to facilitate ingress/egress traffic.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson concerning Desert Samaritan Hospital's consideration of traffic impacts resulting from its planned expansion, Mr. Krosting advised that the project architect conducted a traffic impact study concerning the planned expansion, but advised that City staff does not agree with the results of that study.

Chairman Davidson voiced concerns regarding the existing and future traffic volumes on Dobson Road in this area and also regarding future funding of this project.

Discussion ensued regarding previous road improvements made in this area in connection with the previous Desert Samaritan Hospital expansion.

Mr. Krosting advised that this project will not be implemented for several years because of the funding issues.

Chairman Davidson voiced appreciation to staff for the update and concurred with Committeemember Walters' request that the Transportation Advisory Board be provided a copy of staff's report concerning this matter.

4. Hear a status report on the Transit Maintenance Facility project.

Mr. Wright addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and reported that the Transit Operations and Maintenance facility project was included in the Quality of Life sales tax program approved by Mesa voters in 1998. Mr. Wright reported that presently, Transit Administration, Vehicle Maintenance and the City's contractor's management office are located in three separate facilities, resulting in a disjointed and cumbersome management system. He said that the new Transit Operations and Maintenance Facility will combine all Transit operations into one facility.

Mr. Wright further reported that when Vehicle Maintenance operations are moved to the new facility, a significant amount of space will be vacated at the East Mesa Service Center, thereby delaying future expansion of that facility.

Mr. Wright outlined the existing and planned Transit fleet, including 23 CNG-fueled coaches, 4 contractor-provided mini buses, 6 mid-size transit vehicles, 20 low-floor transit vehicles, and 25 future vehicles to support the Light Rail Transit project. He noted that the new facility is designed to house 100 vehicles in the first phase.

Mr. Wright referred to and commented on diagrams and artist renderings on display in the Council Chambers, which depicted the project site plan and building elevations. He identified

and described the functions of the five buildings included in the project, including the administration/operations, fare collection, fuel, vehicle wash and vehicle maintenance buildings.

Discussion ensued regarding the location of the project site at Greenfield Road and Virginia Street next to the new Quail Run Park, and the fact that the site and surrounding area are zoned for industrial use.

In response to questions from Committeemember Walters regarding Federal Transit Administration (FTA) funding approved for construction of this facility (FTA 5309), Mr. Wright reported that the 2001 appropriation (\$1,970,727) has been allocated, the corresponding grant contract will be submitted to the Council in the near future for approval, and the fact that staff expects to receive the grant contract from the FTA for the 2002 appropriation (\$3,970,000) in the near future. Mr. Wright also reported that additional FTA funding continues to be eligible for this project, that a regional meeting concerning transit funding will take place within a week, and that staff will endeavor to secure any additional funding available for this project.

In response to questions from Chairman Davidson concerning the Quality of Life sales tax funding for this project (\$10.7 million), Mr. Wright stated that he recently confirmed with Finance Director Larry Woolf that there are no recent changes relative to the projection of sales tax revenue funding for this project.

Mr. Hutchinson concurred with Mr. Wright's comments concerning the status of projected Quality of Life funding for this project.

Chairman Davidson thanked staff for the update.

5. Hear a status report on Mesa's public relations outreach program for capital improvement projects.

Engineering Public Relations Supervisor Glen Gorke addressed the Committee regarding this item and reported that for the past ten years, the City has systematically communicated with business owners and citizens impacted by capital improvement road projects. Mr. Gorke outlined the steps and methods currently used in this process, including:

1. Public notices are mailed out to the impacted area of a project approximately two weeks in advance of a public meeting;
2. Public meetings are generally held in public schools near the site of the project;
3. Notices are sent concerning the project to area homeowners' associations, public schools and school transportation dispatchers, churches, newspapers and traffic reporters;
4. Notice is provided to the Councilmembers, the Transportation Advisory Board, City staff and others who have shown interest in receiving notification concerning these types of projects;
5. Public notices are published in newspapers and also publicized on Channel 11 and the City's website;
6. One week prior to the public meeting, staff hand delivers notices to businesses and residents adjacent to the project;
7. Staff provides an overview of the project at the public meeting and solicits input from residents and business owners;

8. Staff compiles the public comments and attempts to incorporate the comments and suggestions into the project design;
9. Input is then solicited from the Transportation Advisory Board and/or the Transportation Committee and incorporated into the project design;
10. Regular updates are provided during the design, bid and construction processes;
11. The Public Relations telephone number is posted on the project site and staff responds to complaints within a 24-hour period and inspects the project on a weekly basis to ensure impacts to residents and businesses are minimized;
12. Staff conducts weekly meetings with impacted business owners to maintain ongoing communication.

Discussion ensued regarding the fact that unless significant controversy exists regarding the project, the Transportation Committee does not participate in the public meeting process, and recent controversial projects which the Transportation Committee participated in.

Committeemember Walters discussed negative citizen input concerning the City's lack of preparedness regarding road improvement projects designed to accommodate traffic from the Red Mountain Freeway.

Chairman Davidson stated the opinion that the opening of the Red Mountain Freeway to Gilbert Road has resulted in traffic improvements in this area by significantly reducing the traffic on McKellips Road.

Committeemember Pomeroy voiced concerns regarding excessive traffic on Gilbert Road south of McKellips to University and said that he has received several complaints from residents in the area concerning this problem.

In response to questions from Committeemember Pomeroy, Mr. Krosting reported that staff has monitored this area since the freeway opened in January and adjusted the timing of traffic lights on a regular basis to accommodate fluctuating traffic flows; that the future widening of Gilbert Road in this area is not planned for approximately 4-5 years; that widening the impacted intersections is a possible solution; and that although traffic on Gilbert Road will be somewhat alleviated when the next segment of the freeway is open to Greenfield, and Higley Road, because of continued overall growth in this general area, traffic on Gilbert Road will continue to be a problem.

In response to questions and concerns voiced by Chairman Davidson and Committeemember Pomeroy regarding outreach efforts in the neighborhoods adjacent to Gilbert Road south of McKellips, Mr. Gorke reported that Block Watch captains in this area have been contacted and staff will conduct a mailing to these impacted neighborhoods in the near future advising residents of the City's efforts to address this problem.

Chairman Davidson voiced appreciation to staff for the update and for their ongoing efforts.

6. Adjournment.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, that the Transportation Committee meeting adjourn at 4:47 p.m.

Carried unanimously.

Transportation Committee
February 13, 2002
Page 8

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are true and correct copy of the minutes of the Transportation Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 13th day of February 2002. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

Attachment
pjt