



# TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

January 24, 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 January 24, 2001 at 4:00 p.m.

## COMMITTEE PRESENT

Jim Davidson, Chairman  
Pat Pomeroy  
Claudia Walters

## COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

## OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson  
Barbara Jones

## COUNCIL PRESENT

Bill Jaffa

1. Discuss and consider a recommendation concerning the traffic interchange at Recker Road and Loop 202 (Red Mountain Freeway).

Chairman Davidson welcomed those in the audience to the meeting and briefly discussed the public process/hearing that was held to gain citizen input regarding this issue. Chairman Davidson stated that the comments provided by the citizens have been forwarded to and reviewed by the members of the Committee and the purpose of this meeting is to allow the public to witness the Committee's deliberations, based on all of the input and available information, which will then result in forwarding a recommendation to the City Council either in support of or opposition to the construction of the traffic interchange at Recker Road and Loop 202.

Chairman Davidson added that although public input is not usually part of the agenda at Committee meetings such as this, in view of the interest that citizens have shown in this matter, he would allow members of the audience who have new information to report to do so. Chairman Davidson advised the members of the audience that following the Committee's vote on a recommendation to the Council, this issue will then be placed on the agenda of the Council's February 5, 2001 Regular Council Meeting, which begins at 5:45 p.m., and encouraged those who wish to speak once again on this matter to attend that meeting and provide additional input.

Development Services Manager Jack Friedline informed the members of the Committee that Transportation Director Ron Krosting and representatives of the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) are present in the audience and will respond to questions regarding this agenda item.

Mr. Krosting provided a brief overview of this issue and stated that the final environmental impact study that was conducted recommended that a sufficient amount of right-of-way be dedicated to ensure that the traffic interchange be constructed when traffic levels warrant its construction. Mr. Krosting added that the Fire Department has indicated that serious emergency response issues would arise should the interchange not be constructed. Mr. Krosting also said that Transportation and Redevelopment staff also support proceeding with the construction of the interchange as soon as this segment of the Red Mountain Freeway is developed.

In response to a request from Committeemember Pomeroy, Assistant Fire Chief Paul Wilson reiterated the Fire Department's strong support for the construction of the interchange, provided history relative to the fact that Fire Station #14 was constructed at its current location based on the construction of the interchange, and emphasized the important access across the entire northeast valley that the freeway interchange would provide the Fire Department.

Committeemember Walters commented on the fact that the current width of Recker Road is extremely narrow and asked staff to comment on future road improvements. Mr. Krosting reported that the entire length of Recker Road from Thomas to McDowell will be improved in the future.

Committeemember Walters stated the opinion that the placement of a traffic signal at the intersection of Thomas and Recker will be required in the future and also suggested that staff pursue the placement of signage stating "Local Traffic Only" to limit the amount of traffic in the residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Krosting informed the Committee that a traffic signal is planned for that location and indicated staff's intention to pursue the placement of signage as recommended by Committeemember Walters.

Chairman Davidson asked if anyone in the audience had new information that they would like to provide to the members of the Committee.

Stephen Smith, 4055 North Recker Road, addressed the Council and read a portion of a letter he presented to the Committee relative to this agenda item. (See Attachment.) Mr. Smith discussed the fact that a decision was made to route the freeway north of the community of Lehi and not place a freeway interchange between Country Club and Gilbert Road, a distance of three miles. Mr. Smith stated the opinion that interchanges at both Mesa Drive and Stapley Drive would have had more potential immediate and future traffic than a Recker Road interchange would ever have and requested that, as was done with Lehi, the Council be sensitive to the impacts on the surrounding communities of Red Mountain Ranch and Ridgeview and vote not to proceed with the interchange at the Recker Road location.

Chairman Davidson thanked Mr. Smith for his input and stated that his letter will be made part of the record.

Committeemember Pomeroy commented on the fact that he has listened to the input of the neighbors who are opposed to the construction of the interchange and their concerns regarding negative impacts on the area and he has heard from neighbors in adjoining neighborhoods who support sharing the traffic burden and the construction of the interchange on Recker Road. Committeemember Pomeroy said those

neighbors are concerned about the increased traffic their neighborhoods will have if the interchange is not built at the Recker Road location. Committeemember Pomeroy noted that a previous decision not to place an interchange at US 60 and Lindsay Road has resulted in compounded traffic problems. Committeemember Pomeroy added that unfortunately, costs associated with correcting that error and constructing an interchange at that location would now be prohibitive and cautioned against repeating such a mistake.

Committeemember Pomeroy stressed the importance of ensuring that public safety response times are not hindered and said that he will vote in support of proceeding with the interchange.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy to recommend to the Council that construction of a traffic interchange at Recker Road and Loop 202 (Red Mountain Freeway) proceed as proposed.

Committeemember Walters thanked all of the citizens for their input and said that it is the responsibility of the members of the Committee to weigh all of the arguments, both pro and con, and then render a decision that will best meet the needs of the City. Committeemember Walters also clarified that an interchange at Stapley Drive was never considered since Stapley Drive ends and does not go through. Committeemember Walters stated that plans to construct an interchange at Mesa Drive were changed but emphasized that significant land use issues were at stake. Committeemember Walters informed the audience that the Recker Road interchange also involves commercial property and stressed the importance of providing access to that land.

Committeemember Walters stated that although compelling arguments have been expressed both in support of and opposition to this issue, she will second Committeemember Pomeroy's motion to proceed with the construction of the interchange as proposed.

Chairman Davidson advised that the Committee's recommendation to proceed with the construction of the interchange will be forwarded to the City Council for their consideration. Chairman Davidson encouraged the residents to continue to provide input to the Committee and to the Council regarding this issue and said that a final decision will not be made until the February 5, 2001 Regular Council Meeting, which he hoped the residents would attend and participate in. Chairman Davidson also commented on the fact that a flyer distributed by ADOT informed residents that an off-ramp would not be constructed at the Recker Road location, but then indicated elsewhere in the flyer the caveat that it would not be constructed "if the volumes of traffic indicated that one was not needed." Chairman Davidson stated the opinion that the flyer distributed by ADOT was misleading and inappropriate.

Chairman Davidson also commented on the importance of considering the needs of the entire region when rendering a decision such as this and said that there will be an extensive amount of traffic in this corridor as it connects further south down to the San Tan Freeway. Chairman Davidson stated the following reasons for his support of the motion to proceed: 1) the interchange will provide service to the neighborhood by providing access to the freeway without burdening adjacent neighborhoods. It will provide limited incoming traffic to the residential area. 2) the interchange will benefit the developing commercial property to the south, which needs this access, 3) the interchange will improve the level of service on the freeway to the east and to the south. Chairman Davidson added that from a regional perspective, the best method of proceeding would be to construct the ramp now and not wait until additional costs are required to build it at a later date. Chairman Davidson said that as far as the Mesa Drive location, property has been purchased for the construction of a ramp in the future and stated the opinion that a ramp will be developed on Mesa Drive at a later time.

Chairman Davidson declared the motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Davidson thanked the residents for their interest and participation in this matter.

2. Hear a status report on bus route service to human service providers and schools.

Chairman Davidson stated that in response to his request, staff has prepared a map which indicates the location of social service agencies and schools that are currently served by transit within the City of Mesa.

Transit Administrator Jim Wright and Transit Coordinator Christine Simmons addressed the Committee relative to this agenda item. Mr. Wright stated that as a part of the regional Valley Metro transit service, public transit routes within the City operate primarily on arterial streets. Mr. Wright added that the regional transit system operates a grid system in which the highest travel demand corridors are attempted to be served. Mr. Wright noted that at a few locations in the service area, vehicles deviate from the grid and are brought together at "limited transfer" points in order to facilitate passenger transfers between routes. Mr. Wright provided a brief overview of a report distributed to the Committee.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Wright provided a brief overview of the "service route" concept which originated in Sweden and operates "in-between" the grid system's routes. Mr. Wright explained that the service routes utilize small mini-buses (21 passengers) operating on fixed routes that allow diversions and added that the routes bring vehicles closer to origins and destinations of trips that are not served directly by the grid system. Mr. Wright said that although service routes were originally designed to serve elderly and disabled citizens, they are now gaining popularity as a neighborhood oriented transit service.

Ms. Simmons stated the opinion that it would cost approximately \$125,000 to operate a 10-mile loop and noted that a small bus that is ADA approved is available for use and the costs are for maintenance and operation only.

Committeemember Walters questioned the feasibility of implementing a pilot program involving only one service route in order to gauge the program's effectiveness.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting stated strong support for proceeding in this manner and said that in order to accurately measure the success of such a program, the process should be in effect for a significant amount of time and not limited to six months to one year.

Chairman Davidson commented that the map is extremely helpful and answers many questions regarding transit options that are available in close proximity to service organizations. Chairman Davidson recommended that staff distribute copies of the map to human service agencies throughout the City.

In response to a request for input from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Wright stated that funding will be requested in the upcoming budget for a variety of transit issues including the development of a service route pilot program. Mr. Wright commented that the process will require extensive public input in order to identify the optimum routes that will benefit the most citizens.

Mr. Wright indicated his intention to gather extensive information relative to the proposal to present for future consideration.

Chairman Davidson said that he has received comments from citizens regarding the importance of moving faster on transit issues and encouraged staff to present recommendations to the Committee on how to best improve the transit situation in Mesa.

Committeemember Walters commented on the fact that she is currently chairing an elderly mobility work group for MAG and asked Mr. Wright to provide her with any other additional information he may have on this issue. Mr. Wright advised that he is currently serving as a member of a national review panel that is researching elderly mobility in the United States. Mr. Wright added that he will be attending a panel meeting tomorrow in Washington, D.C. and said that he has a variety of resources that he will discuss with Committeemember Walters. Chairman Davidson asked Mr. Wright to provide the Committee with an update on the meeting in Washington when he returns.

In response to a question from Committeemember Pomeroy relative to whether a large number of high school students utilize the City's buses, Ms. Simmons reported that a customer survey has never been conducted in Mesa. Ms. Simmons stated that a funding request has been placed in the budget to conduct such a survey and said that the results will be extremely useful and will assist staff in identifying the actual users and their age groups and will provide a wide variety of additional, useful information. Committeemember Pomeroy said that he will be interested in seeing the results of the study once the data has been compiled.

Chairman Davidson thanked staff for their presentation and said that the map will be a useful tool for the City in the future.

3. Adjournment.

(City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that the Thursday 7:30 a.m. Study Session has been canceled and reminded the Committee that a Finance Committee will take place at 8:00 a.m.)

Without objection, the Transportation Committee adjourned at 4:46 p.m.

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Transportation Committee meeting of the City of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 24th day of January 2001. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_ 2001

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BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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Att.

Members of the Transportation Committee of the Mesa City Council

My name is Stephen Smith. I live at 4055 N. Recker Road, #46, Mesa.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the Committee prior to your making a recommendation to the full Council on the proposed freeway interchange at Recker Road. During the previous public hearing, concerns were raised by many of my neighbors in the communities of Red Mountain Ranch and Ridgeview that would be directly affected by this interchange. I will not repeat those concerns but would like to raise a couple of points that were not brought up in that meeting.

At previous meetings conducted by ADOT over the past couple of years and all information provided by ADOT during that time indicated there would not be a traffic interchange at Recker Road. Many people purchased property in the communities of Red Mountain Ranch and Ridgeview based on that information over the past few years.

The alignment of the freeway and the access to it should be decided by what is best for the community as a whole. At the same time, this Committee and the Council as a whole should not ignore the negative impact that such a decision will have on existing homeowners and communities. ADOT in conjunction with input from previous Council and concerned citizens made just such a decision when they routed the freeway north of the community of Lehi and chose not to have a freeway interchange between Country Club and Gilbert Roads, a distance of three miles. Mesa Drive and Stapley Drive are main thoroughfares that extend north and south through the city and through the heart of the population centers in Mesa. Recker Road ends in Red Mountain Ranch approximately one mile north of the proposed interchange and ends to the south at Broadway. Certainly Mesa Drive and Stapley Drive interchanges would have had more potential immediate and future traffic than a Recker Road interchange would ever have. But the decision was made not to build those interchanges because of the negative impact it would have on the small community of Lehi. The communities of Red Mountain Ranch and Ridgeview are asking for the same consideration.

In the prior public hearing, a traffic study was presented showing projected impact on traffic patterns with and without the interchange at Recker. These type of projections may be appropriate and reasonable when you have unlimited growth potential in all four directions from the proposed

interchange. The ability of the city to grow north, or immediately east or south of the proposed interchange does not exist. In fact the only growth potential in the immediate area is the commercial property west of Recker that is bisected by the freeway. The most effective way to access either of those parcels without negatively impacting our neighborhoods would be from Thomas, Higley or McDowell.

Also in the prior public hearing, the growth that is currently taking place and the potential growth that will occur in the East Valley was emphasized to justify the need for this interchange. Every one of those neighborhoods that were mentioned is East of Power Road and most are South of McDowell Road. These residents and business centers will not be driving to an interchange at Recker Road to access the freeway. They will be gaining access at Power and McDowell. Whether or not this interchange is built will not affect the new communities or future growth to the East. Concerns were raised by a representative of Las Sendas that the lack of an exit on Recker would negatively impact their exit on Power and McDowell Roads. The fact is that traffic coming from the west going to either Red Mountain Ranch or Ridgeview would exit on Higley near Thomas rather than continue to travel east and double back to either neighborhood.

One of the speakers at the public hearing representing the fire department stated that response times could be affected if there was not an interchange at Recker. We have fire stations throughout Mesa. They are positioned in neighborhoods and respond primarily by driving on city streets not freeways. Improvements are already scheduled for McDowell between Higley and Power Roads. I do not know if any improvements to Thomas Road between Higley and Recker Roads are planned. I suggest that improvement of Thomas Road prior to the completion of this portion of the freeway would be a better use of funds than an unwanted and unneeded interchange on Recker. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Stephen L. Smith  
4055 N. Recker Road, #46  
Mesa, AZ 85215