



TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

March 5, 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 March 5, 2001 at 3:00 p.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Jim Davidson, Chairman
Pat Pomeroy
Claudia Walters

COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mayor Keno Hawker

Chairman Davidson excused Committeemember Walters from the beginning of the meeting. Committeemember Walters joined the meeting at 3:05 p.m.

1. Hear a presentation from ADOT regarding alternatives for the U.S. 60/Loop 202 traffic interchange.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting introduced Steve Wilcox from the consulting firm of DMJM, the Arizona Department of Transportation's (ADOT) consultant regarding the U.S. 60/Loop 202 traffic interchange, to provide an overview of the initial design phase of the project.

Mr. Wilcox reported that the initial technical evaluation of the project that was started in August 2000 and which included evaluation of 18 interchange design alternatives is complete. Mr. Wilcox further reported that through a screening process with representatives from the City of Mesa, ADOT, a Citizens Advisory Team and the Federal Highway Administration, the 18 original alternatives were reduced to 3, and added that a more detailed technical study and environmental evaluation was performed regarding the 3 remaining alternatives.

Mr. Wilcox said that the Citizens Advisory Team, made up of 20 citizens, one from each of the communities surrounding the traffic interchange plus a representative from the GM proving grounds, meets monthly with ADOT to help guide the process.

Mr. Wilcox detailed the public input portion of the initial design phase and stated that in October 2000, DMJM conducted a series of neighborhood meetings in each of the communities surrounding the project and briefed the residents on the different proposed alternatives; in December 2000 a public information meeting was held wherein the 18 alternatives were reduced to 3; also in December 2000 another series of neighborhood meetings was conducted to solicit input regarding the three alternatives; a final series of neighborhood meetings is planned during March 2001 to provide the residents with the results of the environmental studies performed regarding the three alternatives; and the final public hearing is planned for late October 2001.

Mr. Wilcox also detailed the various technical steps of the initial design phase and said that ADOT/DMJM plans to seek the City's formal recommendation of its preferred interchange design in July or August 2001. He added that the initial design phase of the project should be finalized by the end of December 2001.

Mr. Wilcox referred to graphics on display in the Council Chambers which depicted the three alternative interchanges and said that all three alternatives are larger in scale than the original interchange design that was approved in the Environmental Impact Statement. Mr. Wilcox stated that each of the alternatives is a fully directional, four level traffic interchange at the freeway to freeway connection.

Mr. Wilcox discussed Alternative A (formerly Alternative #7) and said that Alternative A provides the best operational characteristics for the freeway, at the least cost and with the least amount of right-of-way acquisition required. Mr. Wilcox reported that Alternative A will not provide eastbound U.S. 60 access from Sossaman Road and will not provide westbound U.S. 60 access from Ellsworth Road.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters regarding freeway access for residents precluded by the restrictions of Alternative A, Mr. Wilcox said that the closest access to Loop 202 that will allow transition to U.S. 60 will be Guadalupe Road on the south and Broadway Road on the north, and added that an interchange at Southern Avenue is not planned and has never been planned due to the proximity of existing residential neighborhoods.

Mr. Willcox discussed Alternative B (formerly Alternative #16) and said that a westbound U.S. 60 ramp at Ellsworth Road is reintroduced with this alternative. In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Willcox clarified that none of the alternatives provide access to Loop 202 from Ellsworth Road. Mr. Willcox added that construction costs of Alternative B are higher than A since more right-of-way acquisition is required.

Mr. Wilcox discussed Alternative C and said that in addition to providing a westbound U.S. 60 ramp at Ellsworth Road, Alternative C also reintroduces an eastbound U.S. 60 ramp at Sossaman Road. Mr. Wilcox detailed the complex interchange configuration required under Alternative C, which includes reducing the ramp to westbound U.S. 60 from southbound Loop 202 from two lanes to one lane. Mr. Wilcox added that Alternative C also requires more right-of-way acquisition from the southwest and northwest quadrants of the interchange, including a full row of homes from the Silver Ridge community.

In response to concerns voiced by Chairman Davidson and Committeemember Walters regarding reducing the ramp to westbound U.S. 60 from southbound Loop 202 to one lane, Mr. Wilcox said that ADOT is also concerned that a single lane ramp may not be adequate due to the fact that the capacity of a single lane ramp is 1200 vehicles per hour and the Maricopa Association of Government's (MAG) 2025 projection for this ramp is 1150 vehicles in the morning peak hour. Mr. Wilcox added that MAG's

projections are typically underestimated and that the volume could be much higher than what is projected. Mr. Wilcox pointed out that expanding the ramp to two lanes will require the acquisition of another row of homes from the Silver Ridge community and will impact the drainage improvements on the north side of U.S. 60 and existing bridge structures, adding tremendous cost to the project.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding the benefits of Alternative C over Alternative B, Mr. Wilcox reported that MAG projects 200 – 250 vehicles accessing the Sossaman Road on-ramp to eastbound U.S. 60 during the morning peak hour in 2025.

Mr. Krosting stated that staff is concerned that MAG's traffic projections are underestimated due to lack of consideration given to growth in nearby Pinal County. Mr. Krosting also reported that residents in the Broadway Road and Southern Avenue corridors have voiced concerns that traffic will divert to Broadway Road and Southern Avenue if freeway access is restricted at Sossaman Road and/or Ellsworth Road. Mr. Krosting added that the Fire and Police Departments both support full U.S. 60 access at both interchanges (Alternative C).

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding impact to the interchange due to growth in nearby Pinal County, Mr. Krosting voiced the opinion that he expects a substantial increase of eastbound to southbound traffic and also northbound to westbound traffic at the interchange over what is projected by MAG.

Discussion ensued regarding the potential impact the interchange will have on the Superstition Springs retail area.

Mr. Wilcox reported that the Citizens' Advisory Team is split three ways between the three alternatives.

In response to a question from Mayor Hawker, Mr. Wilcox stated that the total cost of the interchange is currently projected at \$200 million.

Mayor Hawker requested that ADOT evaluate the possibility of acquiring another row of homes in the Silver Ridge community to provide additional acreage to accommodate a two lane ramp to westbound U.S. 60 from southbound Loop 202.

Mr. Wilcox explained that the addition of an extra lane to the ramp would also impact retention basins in the area and result in reconstruction of existing bridge structures.

Discussion ensued regarding the current zoning of vacant parcels near Ellsworth Road and the number of lanes on U.S. 60 between Power Road and the U.S. 60/ Loop 202 interchange.

Mr. Wilcox explained that changing the lane configuration of U.S. 60 from Power Road to the interchange would significantly impact the project by requiring right-of-way acquisition along the entire southside frontage.

Further discussion ensued regarding the U.S. 60 lane configuration between Power Road and the proposed interchange, and also the projected amount of traffic that will exit U.S. 60 at Superstition Springs Boulevard and Power Road.

Committeemember Pomeroy voiced concerns regarding Alternative C having only a one-lane ramp to westbound U.S. 60 from southbound Loop 202 and the costs associated with expanding it to a two-lane ramp.

Mr. Krosting stated that staff will further investigate the concerns raised by the Committee with ADOT/DMJM and request cost projections for expanding the ramp to westbound U.S. 60 from southbound Loop 202 in conjunction with Alternative C.

Chairman Davidson voiced appreciation to staff and to Mr. Wilcox for the update.

2. Discuss and consider alternatives for dealing with end-of-freeway impacts at Gilbert Road and the 202 and other freeway locations in Mesa.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting addressed the Council regarding this agenda item and said that several Councilmembers have expressed concerns regarding the impact of Loop 202 through Mesa and the effect on neighborhoods, particularly the Gilbert Road area with the end-of-freeway condition projected to occur in December 2001 for an 18 to 20 month period. Mr. Krosting stated that Transportation staff proposes to collaborate with the Neighborhood Outreach Office and conduct neighborhood meetings for the purpose of educating residents regarding expected impacts on local traffic and also to solicit feedback from residents regarding their concerns and the problems they anticipate with the end-of-freeway condition. Mr. Krosting added that by communicating with residents prior to the completion of the freeway to Gilbert Road, it establishes a core group of citizens that can be utilized to help staff quickly address unanticipated traffic problems that may occur when the freeway opens, and also provides the opportunity to identify and implement preferred traffic calming measures before the Gilbert Road interchange opens. Mr. Krosting reported that staff proposes to utilize this approach as the freeway progresses to subsequent end-of-freeway interchanges and impacts additional neighborhoods.

Committeemember Pomeroy voiced support for staff's recommendations and urged staff to move forward with neighborhood meetings as soon as possible.

Committeemember Walters concurred with Committeemember Pomeroy and voiced the opinion that she expects significant resident input and also disagreement regarding traffic calming measures to be implemented.

Chairman Davidson voiced concern regarding the traffic calming measures proposed in staff's report dated February 21, 2001 (traffic control signing, temporary speed humps on existing fire routes, traffic circles or diverters, neighborhood pace cars, pavement markings and police enforcement), and stated the opinion that staff's suggested temporary measures will not adequately address the traffic problems on Hermosa Vista Drive.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Krosting advised that staff estimates approximately 30 thousand vehicles per day at the intersection of Gilbert Road and McKellips Road with the end-of-freeway condition.

Chairman Davidson urged staff to consider permanent traffic calming structures, other than speed bumps, along Hermosa Vista Drive.

Discussion ensued regarding short and long-term traffic problems on Hermosa Vista Drive east of Gilbert Road; various traffic patterns that may develop through other Gilbert Road corridor neighborhoods with the end-of-freeway condition, and the possibility of implementing peak hour turning prohibitions as one measure to calm neighborhood traffic.

Chairman Davidson voiced support for utilizing a raised median along Hermosa Vista Drive as a traffic calming device and clarified that although he supports staff's recommendation to solicit neighborhood involvement and input, he does not support the temporary traffic calming measures suggested by staff. Chairman Davidson also voiced the opinion that Hermosa Vista Drive is going to be a very dangerous road with the end-of-freeway condition at Gilbert Road.

Mr. Krosting stated that it is not staff's intent to exclude the possibility of using raised medians along Hermosa Vista Drive as a long-term traffic calming measure but explained that there is not enough time to develop and build that type of project before the Gilbert Road interchange is open.

Further discussion ensued regarding temporary traffic control measures, the importance of ongoing efforts and communication with area residents to effectively mitigate the end-of-freeway impact on affected neighborhoods.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, to recommend to the Council that staff be directed to meet with the neighbors in the area to discuss and identify short and long-term traffic calming issues and solutions for future consideration.

Committeemember Pomeroy clarified his support for staff to meet with affected neighborhoods and solicit additional ideas from residents with respect to possible solutions to mitigate neighborhood traffic.

Carried unanimously.

3. Discuss and consider a concept plan for traffic calming options on Harris Drive between McKellips Road and Hermosa Vista Drive.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting introduced City Traffic Engineer Alan Sanderson to provide an overview of this agenda item.

Mr. Sanderson outlined the history associated with traffic problems on Harris Drive between McKellips Road and Hermosa Vista Drive and stated that in February 1997, the Council voted to install an all-way stop at the intersection of Harris Drive and Lockwood Street at the request of a solidified neighborhood. He added that in 1999 an individual who resides at the corner of Harris Drive and Lockwood Street asked the Transportation Committee to remove the all-way stop, which the Committee declined to do because of overwhelming neighborhood support for the stop sign. Mr. Sanderson noted that at the time of the 1999 discussion, the Transportation Committee expressed interest in exploring other traffic calming solutions for the neighborhood.

Mr. Sanderson referred to graphics on display in the Council Chambers and said that the traffic calming designs depicted are not presented as recommended designs, but only as an example of the range of design options available.

Mr. Sanderson discussed Alternative A and said that it is the simplest and least intrusive design and provides for a double yellow center line and a shared bicycle/parking lane which is 11.5 ft. to 12 ft. wide. Mr. Sanderson said that when Mesa first started to utilize this type of striping, residents liked the idea of a bicycle lane but did not want to give up on-street parking. Mr. Sanderson added that in order to assign a bicycle lane, the width has to be available to bicyclists at all times. Mr. Sanderson reported that this striping method has been used successfully throughout the City on 48 ft. wide collector streets and added that it creates one narrower traffic lane in each direction instead of a wide, unmarked street, provides a lane for bicycles which encourages bicycle and automobile traffic to use different parts of the street and it preserves on-street parking for residents. Mr. Sanderson said that the striping could be done by City crews at the approximate cost of \$2,500.

Mr. Sanderson discussed Alternative B, which utilizes raised center median islands to physically narrow the traffic lanes along Harris Drive. Mr. Sanderson described two types of possible designs in conjunction with this alternative: the first design uses a 12 ft. wide median, 1 traffic lane in each direction and a 6 ft. wide bicycle lane on each side precluding on-street parking; the second design provides for a narrow raised median and allows on-street parking and a bike lane. Mr. Sanderson said that the islands must be designed to allow access to all intersections and private driveways. Mr. Sanderson stated that the cost of the raised island alternative is approximately \$65,000.

Mr. Sanderson discussed Alternative C, which uses the same geometric shapes for islands as Alternative B but uses low median islands that can be driven over. Mr. Sanderson reported that the cost of Alternative C is approximately \$125,000.

Committeemember Pomeroy stated support for staff to seek input from neighborhood residents regarding their ideas and opinions with respect to traffic calming measures for their neighborhood.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters regarding funding for the project, Mr. Sanderson confirmed that there is no funding presently available for Alternatives B and C.

Committeemember Walters stated concern regarding discussing traffic calming design options with residents when funding for the measures is not in place.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Sanderson confirmed that staff does not recommend removing any of the stop signs in the neighborhood.

Discussion ensued regarding additional traffic calming alternatives.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Walters, to recommend to the Council that staff be directed to meet with neighborhood residents to determine the residents' support for the placement of traffic calming options in the area and, if staff determines that sufficient support exists among the residents, to also direct staff to discuss various traffic calming options with the residents for future consideration.

Committeemember Pomeroy commented that funding for the project can be addressed after staff meets with the neighborhood and is apprised of their preferences regarding traffic calming measures in their neighborhood.

Committeemember Walters said she will reluctantly support the motion since the project is a pilot program but reiterated her concern regarding the absence of funding for Alternatives B and C.

Mayor Hawker voiced concern regarding moving forward with the project as a pilot project without first researching the needs of other neighborhoods as well as the total impact of the program on the City's budget.

Chairman Davidson stated that he too will reluctantly support the project but noted concerns regarding the limited traffic calming options presented by staff.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Davidson thanked staff for their efforts.

3. Adjournment.

Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 4:07 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 5th day of March 2001. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

Dated this ____ day of _____ 2001.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK