

# TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

February 15, 2007

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 15, 2007 at 8:30 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Scott Somers, Chairman  
Claudia Walters

COMMITTEE ABSENT

Rex Griswold

STAFF PRESENT

Christopher Brady  
Jack Friedline

Chairman Somers excused Committeemember Griswold from the entire meeting.

1. Hear an update and provide direction on the Draft Five-Year Mesa Transportation Improvement Program.

Transportation Director Jeff Martin displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) to provide an overview of the Five-Year Transportation Improvement Program. He noted that a set of spreadsheets titled "Transportation Five Year Summary" (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) was provided to the Committee. He stated that revenues generated by the 2006 voter-approved 0.3 percent local sales tax increase would target operations and maintenance of existing streets as the top priority. Mr. Martin advised that the remaining revenues would fund capital projects, including street projects in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). He said that although the RTP funds up to seventy percent of the project costs in that plan, the cost estimates prepared by the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), which were adjusted utilizing the Consumer Price Index (CPI), were too low. He reported that the rate of inflation for the costs of materials and rights of way far exceeded original expectations. Mr. Martin also noted that inflation could severely affect 25 of the City of Mesa projects that occur in the last five years of the twenty-year plan. He advised that advancing these projects to an earlier timeframe would incur additional interest expense, and he recalled that last year the Council discussed the possibility of issuing General Obligation Bonds to provide matching funds for RTP street projects.

Mr. Martin advised that in late 2006 staff began updating the cost estimates for street improvements based on recent experience in bidding projects. He reported that over the past three years, the average cost for intersection improvements increased by 55 percent and the cost for a full-corridor widening increased by 67 percent.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Martin confirmed that the higher percentage of increase for a full-corridor widening reflects the increased cost to acquire rights of way.

Mr. Martin advised that a recent study indicated that intersection improvements provide 80 percent of the benefit of a full-mile corridor widening at approximately half of the cost. He said that based on the study, staff reduced the scope of certain projects. He reported that the following two improvement projects have been deferred due to limited traffic congestion and fiscal constraints: (1) Greenfield from Southern to University, and (2) the McKellips Road intersections at Val Vista Drive, Greenfield Road and Higley Road. Mr. Martin noted that the construction of the Red Mountain Freeway has diverted a substantial amount of traffic from McKellips Road. He added that information on the first five years of Mesa's RTP projects is being presented at each of the District Town Hall meetings.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Mr. Martin stated that the City would address several resurfacing projects that were delayed when future intersection improvements were proposed but not implemented.

Mr. Martin outlined the estimated \$248,615,158 in Regional Transportation Plan construction projects scheduled over the next five fiscal years (see Attachment 1).

Responding to a comment by Committeemember Walters that the 2008-09 street projects at Dobson and Guadalupe Roads and at Country Club and University Drive are controversial, Mr. Martin advised that the projects are subject to change based on citizen and Council input. He also confirmed that potential improvements at Broadway Road and Mesa Drive would require a substantial amount of right of way acquisition and that these costs would be a major consideration relative to implementing the project.

Mr. Martin reported that projects in the Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for the years 2008 through 2012 total \$75,501,542. He advised that staff developed and refined a Five-Year Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP) that limits the number of street capital projects planned for each year and eliminates previous assumptions regarding financing. He stated that the priorities established for utilizing various revenue sources include funding for the following areas:

- Debt repayment.
- Operations and maintenance of existing streets.
- Existing Capital Improvement Program.
- RTP arterial street projects.

Mr. Martin reviewed forecasted revenues and expenditures for the final TIP (see Attachment 2) that indicates a shortfall of \$163,241,786.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters, Deputy City Manager Bryan Raines advised that the appropriation listed from Quality of Life funds is a residual amount that was set aside for transportation and has not been spent to date.

Mr. Martin displayed cash flow charts (see Attachment 3) that project the revenue and sales tax receipts and the capital expenditures for the next five fiscal years and indicate a net difference in available funding totaling \$149 million.

City Manager Christopher Brady explained that staff prepared these charts at his request in an effort to determine the availability of capital project funding over the next five-year period. He advised that although the City is scheduled to receive a maximum of \$83 million in regional reimbursement in the next five years, the City has the capacity to accomplish additional projects that are scheduled for regional reimbursement in the years beyond 2012. He said that staff anticipates that the cost to borrow funds to advance the construction timetable would be far less than the inflationary impact on construction costs in future years, and he added that the City would ultimately receive the additional regional reimbursement in future years. Mr. Brady stated that an alternative would be to reduce the number of projects to align the expenditures with the \$83 million in regional reimbursement.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that utilizing bonds would be the best method to advance the construction timetable; that the City's construction costs increased by 55 percent for the three year period between 2003 and 2006; that bonding would cost an estimated 5-1/2 percent; and that staff would quantify the differences in the costs and provide the information to the Committee.

Mr. Martin responded to a question from Committeemember Walters regarding the decision not to utilize Highway User Revenue Fund (HURF) bonding. He stated that staff was reluctant to consider extending additional debt until a local revenue source was in place, which was accomplished by the voter-approved sales tax increase designated for transportation. He added that the Council also discussed the possibility of issuing General Obligation Bonds to fund these projects.

Committeemember Walters stated that staff should ensure that the City's debt service remains level in future years.

Mr. Martin recognized the staff members who assisted in the preparation of the Five Year Mesa Transportation Improvement Program, including representatives of the Transportation, Budget and Engineering Departments and the City Manager's Office. He credited these individuals for implementing a high level of discipline in the process.

Chairman Somers thanked Mr. Martin for the presentation.

2. Hear an update from Valley Metro staff regarding ongoing studies, including the Valley Metro Strategic Plan, Regional Paratransit Study and Regional Fare Policy.

Dave Boggs, Executive Director of Valley Metro, displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) to provide an update. He noted that the passage of Proposition 400 changed Valley Metro from a \$7 million agency to a \$124 million agency overnight. Mr. Boggs stated that he has been with the agency for almost two years, during which time changes and improvements were implemented in the Regional Public Transportation Authority (RPTA) to enhance staff responsiveness. He reported that a human resources study resulted in improvements to the compensation program and organizational changes that enable the retention and recruitment of qualified personnel.

Mr. Boggs outlined Valley Metro's focus in 2007 as follows:

- 20 Year Strategic Plan

Ongoing activities include finalization of the draft plan that outlines the mission, vision and goals; documents the data and steps in the process; provides for outreach to the business community and citizen groups; and enables continued board and staff involvement. The key area to be addressed is the development of a roadmap that shifts all functions in the region to a single agency over time.

- Regional Paratransit Study

Phase I is an assessment of the nine paratransit programs in the Valley, including the taxi subsidy and mileage reimbursement programs; identification of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* (ADA) and non-ADA issues and needs; and recommending operational or policy changes in an effort to contain costs, improve services and meet other specialized needs. Phase II will define the alternatives available and identify the benefits and challenges as RPTA moves toward a regional program.

In response to concerns expressed by Committeemember Walters regarding the difficult task of developing a system that is able to meet unlimited demands for service with limited resources, Mr. Boggs said he concurred with her assessment. He stated that their agency is addressing the issue with the best transit consulting team in the country, including personnel with local expertise. He said that the agency would be willing to provide a future update to the Mesa City Council as the study progresses.

- Regional Transit Fare Policy Study

The fare study proposes lowering the base fare from \$1.25 to \$1.00 and eliminating transfer slips, tickets and tokens as a means of reducing fraud and handling costs. New fare boxes are scheduled to be in place in January 2008 and all options are being reviewed. The targeted fare box recovery rate is 25 percent.

Mr. Boggs reported that the last Valley Metro fare increase was implemented twelve years ago, and he advised that a proposal to adopt a five-year fare structure would be presented to the Board. He offered to answer any questions, and he thanked the Mesa City Council and City staff for assuming leadership roles in regional transportation issues.

Mr. Martin noted that these issues are important to the City of Mesa because the City purchases all public transportation services from RPTA. He said that RPTA is in the process of considering many issues that previously were not addressed. He complimented Mr. Boggs for his accomplishments during the relatively short time he has been with Valley Metro.

Responding to comments by Committeemember Walters that financial issues are often the impetus for regionalization of services, Mr. Boggs noted that many municipalities are reluctant to move in that direction.

Mr. Martin stated the opinion that in addition to the financial issues, the demand for regional service will increase as other communities recognize the improved service levels offered by RPTA.

Chairman Somers thanked Mr. Boggs for his presentation.

3. Hear an update and provide direction on the Speed Hump Program.

Senior Transportation Engineer Rene Ehm addressed the Committee and introduced Senior Transportation Engineer Derrick Bailey. She displayed a PowerPoint presentation (a copy is available for review in the City Clerk's Office) to provide an update on the Speed Hump Program. Ms. Ehm reported that the City's budget allocated \$150,000 for speed hump construction in 2006/07 and that streets are prioritized according to the prevailing speeds. She advised that the current program requires residents to pay \$105 per location for speed and volume counts in order to determine eligibility and that a contribution from the residents of \$500 per speed hump is required for streets that do not meet the 500 vehicles per day threshold.

Ms. Ehm advised that to date three street segments have met the criteria for speed hump installation and that four additional requests are in process. She estimated that the total cost to construct seven speed humps would be \$54,000. Ms. Ehm noted that although several additional requests could be proposed as part of the "Building Stronger Neighborhoods Initiative," staff does not anticipate that the entire \$150,000 would be expended during the current fiscal year. She said that possible explanations for the low number of requests include the impact of the \$105 data collection fee or a lack of public awareness that the funded Speed Hump Program was reinstated.

Ms. Ehm stated that staff is recommending that the City pay for all data collection costs and that residents on qualified streets reimburse the City for the collection costs when the speed hump is constructed. She estimated that the City's cost to collect data would total \$7,600 per year. Ms. Ehm noted that other options include retaining the current program or changing the program to have the City pay for all data collection costs, which are estimated to be \$9,500 annually.

Committeemember Walters suggested that a better alternative would be that the City pays the data collection costs for only those locations that qualify for speed humps.

Ms. Ehm reported that historically only 15 to 20 percent of the requests for speed humps actually qualify.

Deputy City Manager Jack Friedline said that although he respects staff's recommendation, he concurred with the comments made by Committeemember Walters. He stated that staff advises residents regarding the probability of a specific location qualifying for a speed hump before implementing the data collection process. Mr. Friedline said that the program could require a \$105 deposit for each speed and traffic count, which would be refunded for those locations that qualify for speed humps.

Committeemember Walters said her recommendation would be to continue the existing program for another year or to implement the program as outlined by Mr. Friedline.

Responding to a question from Committeemember Walters, Ms. Ehm advised that 70 percent of the area property owners, which typically number approximately 40 to 50 properties, would share the \$105 cost for data collection.

Committeemember Walters stated the opinions that the \$105 data collection fee did not discourage participation in the program and that many residents were probably unaware that the City reinstated the Speed Hump Program. She recommended that the current Speed Hump Program remain in place for another year.

Chairman Somers concurred with the recommendation of Committeemember Walters.

Mr. Friedline noted that the full Council would have the opportunity to review the minutes of this meeting and that any Councilmember holding a different opinion could request that the Speed Hump Program be placed on a future Council agenda for consideration. He added that staff would endeavor to increase public awareness of the program.

In response to a question from Chairman Somers, Mr. Friedline confirmed that \$105 represents cost recovery for the data collection process.

Ms. Ehm advised that at the request of the City Manager, staff is planning to test rubber speed humps as an alternative to asphalt and for installation on fire response routes. She stated that rubber speed humps are referred to as "speed cushions" and have gaps of one and a half to three feet that enable larger vehicles such as fire trucks to straddle the cushions. Ms. Ehm explained that passenger vehicles are unable to straddle the cushions. She added that the speed reducing effect of the rubber cushion is expected to be comparable to that of the asphalt speed hump. Ms. Ehm said that experiments with the concept, including rubber cushions in the Town of Gilbert and asphalt cushions in the City of Glendale, provided an opportunity for the Mesa Fire Department to conduct tests with their equipment. She said that Fire Department personnel determined that the cushion concept was an improvement over the existing asphalt speed humps and that their vehicles were able to maintain speeds of thirty miles per hour. She reported that based on the favorable field test results, Fire Chief Harry Beck has expressed support for further tests in the City of Mesa. She stated that the first installation of a rubber speed cushion would occur on Pepper Place outside of the Mesa City Plaza Building in addition to two other locations on streets where the asphalt speed humps were removed in conjunction with the recent installation of an overlay. Ms. Ehm said that staff would cooperate with residents and the Fire Department to select a small collector street designated as a fire route as the fourth test site.

Assistant Fire Chief Dan Stubbs noted the dilemma of the Fire Department when residents on a fire route request speed humps for safety reasons that would negatively affect the department's response time. He said that based on their tests in Gilbert and Glendale, the cushion concept seems to be a better alternative for the Fire Department on the half mile and quarter mile collector streets.

Mr. Friedline responded to a question from Chairman Somers regarding the difference between the asphalt and rubber speed cushions by advising that the asphalt profile is more difficult to construct.

Discussion ensued relative to the fact that only one or two manufacturers offer this type of product; that rubber cushions maintain the profile and are easier to install; that obtaining the identical profile on each asphalt cushion would be difficult; and that rubber cushions could be removed and then reinstalled following the placement of an overlay on a street.

Mr. Friedline noted that costs are likely to decrease as more cities employ the cushion concept.

Further discussion ensued relative to the fact that the rubber speed cushions are easier to install and less labor intensive than asphalt cushions; that the cost summary (see Attachment 4) does not include the cost for an asphalt cushion speed hump; and that staff is directed to provide additional construction cost information to the Committee.

In response to a comment by Chairman Somers, Chief Stubbs confirmed that the gap in the speed cushions that accommodates the fire trucks would not accommodate ambulances. He stated that the only problem that he could foresee regarding ambulances is that a patient could experience slightly more discomfort, and he noted that ambulances are not required to respond in the same timeframe as Fire Department vehicles. Chief Stubbs said that although the Fire Department has never favored speed humps, the speed cushion concept seems to be an alternative that does not adversely affect response times and minimizes wear and tear on the apparatus.

Mr. Friedline advised that staff could provide additional information in the future as results are obtained from the test sites.

Ms. Ehm noted that staff was seeking direction regarding the size of the survey area that would determine neighborhood acceptance of a specific location as a test site. She said that an installation on a collector street could affect residents three or four blocks from the test site. Ms. Ehm advised that staff is proposing to petition only those residents with frontage property on that street for the trial installation. She noted that an advantage of the rubber speed cushion is that in the event of neighborhood opposition the cushion could be easily removed.

Additional discussion ensued relative to the fact that approximately five years ago Hermosa Vista property owners in the area west of Gilbert Road were concerned about the impact of speed humps on the Fire Department's response times; that residents who lived east of Gilbert Road were divided in their opinions regarding the installation of speed humps; and that numerous street improvements were constructed in the older areas of Hermosa Vista during the past five years.

Chairman Somers suggested that the location of 72<sup>nd</sup> Street across from Fire Station #209 be considered as a test site.

Ms. Ehm advised that staff has identified eighteen potential test site locations on fire routes based on interest in speed humps expressed by residents in the past year. She advised that these residents would be solicited to circulate petitions in their neighborhood.

Chairman Somers expressed support for the test program on behalf of the Committee, and he thanked staff for the presentation.

#### 4. Adjournment.

Without objection, the Transportation Committee Meeting adjourned at 10:00 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 15th day of February 2007. 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

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Attachments (4)