

COUNCIL MINUTES

August 21, 2003

The City Council of the City of Mesa met in a Study Session in the lower level meeting room of the Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on August 21, 2003 at 7:30 a.m.

COUNCIL PRESENT

Keno Hawker, Mayor
Rex Griswold
Kyle Jones
Dennis Kavanaugh
Janie Thom
Claudia Walters
Mike Whalen

COUNCIL ABSENT

None

STAFF PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Debbie Spinner
Barbara Jones

1. Review items on the agenda for the August 25, 2003 Regular Council meeting.

All of the items on the agenda were reviewed among Council and staff and the following was noted:

Conflict of interest declared: 3a (Whalen); 4k, 4l (Hawker)

Items removed from the consent agenda: 3a, 4k, 4l, 5e, 8a

2. Discuss and consider the MAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Assistant Development Services Manager Jeff Martin stated that staff was present to provide the Council with a brief update on the 20-year Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) that is being developed to address the region's diverse transportation needs. He noted that anticipated growth would exert pressure on the region's infrastructure and indicated that the multi-modal plan would be performance based and include funding for transit, plus funding for local needs such as capital and bus service, with a goal of geographic equity in the distribution of transportation improvements throughout the valley.

Mr. Martin reported that the half-cent sales tax for transportation expires on December 31, 2005, and during the past 20 years, regional transportation needs have gone from being about 98 percent freeways to include light rail, local street improvements, the bus system, etc. He announced that the citizens of Mesa have an opportunity to provide their input and comments on the proposed RTP at a workshop on September 3 at 5:00 p.m. in the Superstition Ballroom at the Rendezvous Center.

Assistant to the City Manager Jim Huling, using a PowerPoint presentation, advised that the proposed plan totals \$15.3 billion. He noted that extension of the half-cent sales tax for transportation would raise approximately \$9 billion and additional funding is being sought from a variety of State and Federal sources. Mr. Huling explained that the proposed regional plan allocates 59% of the funds for freeways, 17% for bus transit, 14% for light rail, 8% for streets and 2% for other, such as future corridor and investment studies. He anticipated funding for the City of Mesa at \$1.71 billion (11.2% of the total \$15.3 billion), and said that the plan would allocate the funds as follows: 53% freeways, 18% for arterial streets, and 29% for transit. Mr. Huling noted that Mesa's population accounts for 12% of the region and the proposed funding is about \$124 million below true equity. He referred to a copy of a letter in the Council's packet requesting additional funds for Mesa based on equity and indicated that staff is optimistic that additional funds will be allocated.

Mr. Huling updated the Council on new valley freeway projects: the Loop 303 in the West Valley, South Mountain, the I-10 reliever where South Mountain connects to I-10 on the west side, and the Williams Gateway Parkway. He reported that planned freeway improvements to address bottleneck problems include: I-17 improvements with double-decking the freeway from McDowell Road to Peoria, HOV lanes and general purpose lanes on the rest of the existing system as well as part of the 202, miscellaneous improvements on Grand Avenue and interchange improvements throughout the valley. Mr. Huling added that another planned project that would directly benefit Mesa and certainly help commuters on the Superstition is a series of collector-distributor roads on I-10 running from Baseline up to where Highway 51 begins.

Mr. Huling responded to questions from Councilmember Whalen and clarified that the new South Mountain Freeway would run parallel to South Mountain and around to the west and noted that the City of Phoenix is in negotiations with the Gila Indian Community to place the South Mountain Freeway on Indian land. He also noted that Mayor Hawker has advocated placing a hard cap on the freeway projects and confirmed to Councilmember Whalen that the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) through the Transportation Policy Committee (TPC) will determine the priority of these projects.

Mayor Hawker clarified that there are two protections for the citizens: the hard cap on projects over \$300 million and firewalls on money allocated for specific projects. He explained that firewalls would prevent moving money from one project to another.

Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace presented an update on arterial street projects. He noted that projects from the Mesa Transportation Plan were submitted to MAG and he then displayed maps, one showing the projects MAG recommended to fund throughout the Region and the other showing only the approved Mesa projects. Mr. Wallace noted that the Region is proposing to pay 70% of the estimated street project costs totaling \$300 million, with the City responsible for a 30% match.

Mr. Wallace responded to a question from Councilmember Thom regarding Mesa's contribution to total funding by noting that in the past 20 years, Mesa contributed almost identical to what their population represents in the Region—13 or 14%, and the future contribution is expected to be approximately 12%. He noted that some communities, such as Scottsdale, contribute more on a sales tax basis, but Mesa has been a rather even contributor matching closely with population and sales tax.

Mr. Martin continued the presentation with a map of the proposed Super Grid Bus System for the region showing current service, proposed service that has a greater peak frequency, and proposed new service. He commented that the map indicates movement towards a truly regional bus program, something staff has pushed for as a matter of geographic equity and to improve the local bus service. Mr. Martin noted that the current system is very complicated in terms of intergovernmental agreements and trying to track the flow of funds between the governments. He showed slides of the Bus Rapid Transit routes and the high-capacity corridors, noting that a consultant briefed the Council on this subject some time ago, and he indicated the location of the first 20.3 miles of the light rail system of which Mesa has one mile. Mr. Martin also noted that some cities have identified a preference for technology to be used, but said that the City of Mesa will conduct a study on technology in the future.

Mayor Hawker commented that the Council decided to fund one mile of the original 20-mile light rail segment, if there is a full funding grant agreement with the Federal government for construction. He added that the Council has not designated the technology to be used.

Mr. Huling noted that the next slide provided an overview of the program with \$15.3 billion in revenues and current project costs totaling \$14.7 billion, but there is an added \$1.4 billion worth of contingencies that put the program out of balance by \$800 million. He explained that ADOT and MAG have identified some cost savings: the 303 project can be reduced by \$200 million because right-of-ways have already been acquired and another \$250 million can be reduced on the South Mountain project, leaving a shortfall of \$350 million. Mr. Huling pointed out that the East Valley, as a whole is under-represented in the plan, and is requesting an additional \$300 million added to their plan. He also noted that there could be an additional savings of \$200 million in contingency and there is \$410 million in ADOT set-aside funds that are unallocated. Mr. Huling identified ADOT bonding as another source of potential revenues. He outlined the timeline as follows: the priorities will hopefully be released on Friday, a MAG workshop is scheduled for September 2 to review the priorities, and if the TPC reaches agreement and the Regional Council approves, the plan would go out for air quality testing on September 30 with final certification by the Legislature and the Governor required by November 30. Mr. Huling noted that if all these deadlines were met, the Legislature would have to pass the plan in the first two weeks of their session in order to have this placed on the May ballot and if not, the plan would have to wait for the November ballot.

Councilmember Walters asked what happens to the money if a project falls out. She questioned whether the money could be used for projects that are unanticipated or if the money would be returned to MAG and used to fund unanticipated projects.

Mr. Huling explained that perhaps a combination of both could occur, and arguments will be made by communities to use the money on local projects. He added that in all likelihood, the TPC and Regional Council would have to approve any changes to the adopted plan.

Mayor Hawker added that projects go through an air quality conformity test and if there are changes, the project has to come back through the Transportation Committee at MAG as the governing body for the Region. He noted that if a project fell out, the first thing to be determined is what would be substituted to get the same type of mobility and solve the transportation need. Mayor Hawker gave an example of substituting a high-capacity street in place of buses, but said the project would still come back through the MAG process.

Vice Mayor Kavanaugh thanked staff for a good presentation and noted that the report indicates significant progress for the community in all segments of the transportation issues that were identified in the study last year. He stated that there is a balance in the type of improvements that will help in economic development as well as in moving people. Vice Mayor Kavanaugh emphasized the importance of the high transit corridor through to the Mesa Drive area as a good "jumpstart" for reinvestment along Main Street and particularly in the downtown area. He expressed his support for the comments made by Mayor Hawker in his letter to MAG.

Mayor Hawker, responding to Councilmember Whalen's question as to whether other cities would send similar letters to MAG, said that every single city probably sent letters commenting on the plan. He added that there has been considerable support from the East Valley and the firewall concept has been embraced by basically the whole Regional Council.

It was moved by Councilmember Whalen, seconded by Councilmember Walters, to approve Mayor Hawker's letter to MAG dated August 22, 2003.

Carried unanimously.

Mayor Hawker complimented the citizens of Mesa for approving the recommendation of the Vision 2025 Committee. He noted that considerable money was spent to go through the visioning process and the transportation component of the master plan. He added that because of the groundwork performed by staff, the citizen committee and the citizens of Mesa in passing the vision for the build out, Mesa has been ahead of the game and will remain a strong player in getting equity back to the City.

Councilmember Thom expressed her appreciation for the presentation and stated that she had a couple of observations regarding major arterial street improvements. She referred to the map and noted her support for funding by the Region to extend Power Road to Williams Field, but expressed concern relative to the fact that Higley Road was not funded south of Highway 60. She added that she had been under the impression that the extension would be funded. Councilmember Thom stated that another major concern she had was with Ellsworth Road improvements being funding only to Baseline and not further south. She noted that because Ellsworth is the major road down to Queen Creek, she thought that the citizens of Mesa would be charged with providing transportation to the residents of Queen Creek.

Mr. Martin said he believed the County has a major project scheduled to improve Ellsworth and said he will check on that and advise her of his findings.

Councilmember Thom noted that constituents have recommended to her that east-west streets not be improved because those improvements just make access easier for people in adjoining cities. She indicated she has a great interest in this topic.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson confirmed that the County has a project on Ellsworth.

Mr. Martin addressed Councilmember Thom's concern regarding Higley south of Highway 60 and reported that staff has tried to work with the Town of Gilbert, but there is little support in Gilbert to extend Higley further south. He also concurred with Mr. Hutchinson that the work on Ellsworth is a major County project.

Councilmember Walters pointed out that citizens watching the meeting would note that most of the projects being discussed are in East Mesa or Southeast Mesa, with nothing for West or Central Mesa. She wanted to clarify that the project dollars being discussed are for street widening or new street projects and cannot be spent on street improvements.

Mr. Martin noted that Councilmember Walters made an excellent point. He reiterated that the plan being discussed is for street capital and not street maintenance.

Mr. Hutchinson complimented staff for their work on this very difficult project. He noted that in a regional environment the process could be very complicated and the Mayor and Councilmembers were aware of this from their own experience as well. He expressed pride in the work performed by City staff to bring the project to this level.

3. Discuss and consider the development of a comprehensive paratransit program policy.

Transit Operations Administrator Jim Wright introduced Jim Dickey, Deputy Executive Director of Operations and Planning of the Regional Public Transportation Authority for Valley Metro. He recalled that both of them appeared before the Council in June to discuss the Paratransit Program and were asked by Council to put together a policy document regarding the future of the paratransit program in the City of Mesa. Mr. Wright said that staff was present to provide the Council with an update on their progress. He reported that City staff along with Mr. Dickey and the four East Valley partner cities were working with the disabled and senior citizen groups in the community to provide a more cost-effective way to provide the same level of mobility to their clients. Mr. Wright said that three points will be covered today and anticipated that a plan and policy would be brought before Council in October.

Mr. Wright noted that the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) presentation made to the Council earlier in the meeting included regional funding for ADA paratransit service. He explained that funding for ADA paratransit service would come from the RTP so that regional sub systems could be formed such as Mesa has already done with the East Valley Dial-A-Ride.

Mr. Wright said that the second element of the RTP that affects paratransit is the expansion of the fixed-route system. He noted that many of the disabled and the seniors would prefer to ride the bus as all of the buses are accessible and on a fixed timetable and route system, but the current system does not provide enough service availability. He explained that an important component is the marketing plan so that niche groups of clients can be reached more efficiently and effectively to inform them about programs available. Mr. Wright added that one of the objectives is to promote the ET (Enabling Transportation) program to shed clients off the Dial-A-Ride Program.

Mr. Wright noted that an objective was to unify the various programs under one entity to provide mobility management for the elderly and disabled in the region. He commented that the mobility manager concept is expected to be more efficient and effective and will be able to target efficiencies in the system for ADA clients that have no other mobility option other than publicly provided service.

Mr. Jim Dickey, Deputy Executive Director of Operations and Planning for the Regional Public Transportation Authority, said that the partnership of the East Valley Dial-A-Ride Program was

unique not only in the East Valley, but also in most major metropolitan areas. He explained that Dial-A-Ride trips are ten times more expensive than a fixed-route trip and the five-city partnership provides the opportunity to address specialized markets from a sub regional perspective to better manage costs while providing the necessary level of service for the citizens. Mr. Dickey reported that discussions have been held with the transit staffs of the partner cities to address the paratransit transportation needs.

Mayor Hawker expressed his support for joint cooperation among multiple cities and jurisdictions and noted that the City of Mesa accounted for 40,000 Dial-A-Ride trips at a cost of \$21.37 each and a round trip cost in excess of \$40. He stated that there has to be a more efficient and cost-effective way to provide this service, and expressed his appreciation for Councilmember Walters' efforts with Elderly Mobility to find drivers who are reimbursed for taking passengers. Mayor Hawker also noted that as bus routes are expanded, the required Dial-A-Ride service area will be extended $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile on each side of the bus route. He stated that his primary focus is on cost reduction and if the burden of these costs continues to grow, he may be in favor of providing the service only to ADA clients.

Mr. Dickey stated that with an improved fixed-route bus system, trip alternatives for seniors and other Dial-A-Ride clients could more easily be identified.

Discussion ensued regarding the requirement for paratransit service in relation to bus lines and the rules that apply.

Mr. Wright explained that transit service providers are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide complementary paratransit service within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of bus routes to ADA certified persons. He noted that other operational requirements include: the ADA certified client must be picked up, the client may reserve a trip at least 14 days in advance, and the client must be picked up within 30 minutes of the requested time. He added that transit operators could be sued for a civil rights violation for failing to meet the requirements.

Mr. Wright responded to Councilmember Walters' question as to what happens when funds are depleted prior to the end of the fiscal year by explaining that a daily cap is put on the number of trips originating from Mesa. He added that if a non-ADA client requests transportation after the cap has been met, the client will be asked to rearrange their need for the mobility resource to a different day or time. Mr. Wright noted that this kind of trip denial is new to the service and explained that in going to the mobility manager concept, client needs will be analyzed as to destinations and purpose and result in a better use of available resources that are more cost-effective and efficient.

Councilmember Walters stated that in terms of the growing population of seniors in the valley, management of paratransit costs is critical. She thanked staff for their efforts and encouraged them to work with the senior citizens on this issue.

Mr. Hutchinson noted that a recommendation by the Council to move forward was not needed at this point in time as staff will be returning to Council with additional information.

4. Acknowledge receipt of minutes of boards and committees.

- a. Design Review Board meeting held August 6, 2003.

- b. Historic Preservation Committee meeting held July 10, 2003.
- c. Human Relations Advisory Board meeting held July 23, 2003.
- d. Judicial Advisory Board meeting held August 6, 2003.

It was moved by Vice Mayor Kavanaugh, seconded by Councilmember Griswold, that receipt of the above-listed minutes be acknowledged.

The Mayor declared the motion carried unanimously by those present and voting. (Councilmember Jones was out of the room.)

5. Hear reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

There were no reports on meetings and/or conferences attended.

6. Scheduling of meetings and general information.

City Manager Mike Hutchinson stated that the meeting schedule is as follows:

Monday, August 25, 2003, 3:00 p.m. – Police Committee Meeting

Monday, August 25, 2003, TBA – Study Session

Monday, August 25, 2003, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Thursday, August 28, 2003, 7:30 a.m. - Study Session Cancelled

Thursday, September 4, 2003, 7:30 a.m. – Study Session

Monday, September 8, 2003, TBA – Study Session

Monday, September 8, 2003, 5:45 p.m. – Regular Council Meeting

Mr. Hutchinson updated the Council on the fuel situation.

7. Prescheduled public opinion appearances.

There were no prescheduled public opinion appearances.

8. Items from citizens present.

There were no items from citizens present.

Without objection, the Council adjourned the Study Session at 9:10 a.m. to go into Executive Session.

At 10:32 a.m., the Council adjourned the Executive Session and went on a briefing tour of West Mesa.

9. Tour of West Mesa.

Council Members and City staff members had an informational briefing tour of West Mesa (Mayor Hawker and Councilmember Whalen were excused from the tour).

The tour of West Mesa identified proposed projects, changes to existing facilities, vacant parcels and neighborhoods in transition or those with on-going problems. Specific sites pointed out included the location for the new Forensics Building near the Police Station, the day labor center, meal locations for the homeless, neighborhood improvement projects, Banner Mesa Medical Center (formerly Mesa Lutheran Hospital), land to be developed for a park and the future site of the Light Rail Station. Due to time constraints, the tour was cut short. Participants were provided a binder of printed materials that included information on the sites visited as well as those locations omitted from the tour, which ended at 12:10 p.m.

KENO HAWKER, MAYOR

ATTEST:

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Study Session of the City Council of Mesa, Arizona, held on the 21st day of August 2003. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that a quorum was present.

BARBARA JONES, CITY CLERK

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