

TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

April 12, 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 April 12, 2001 at 9:40 a.m.

COMMITTEE PRESENT

Jim Davidson, Chairman
Pat Pomeroy
Claudia Walters

COMMITTEE ABSENT

None

OTHERS PRESENT

Mike Hutchinson
Barbara Jones

COUNCIL PRESENT

Mike Whalen

1. Discuss and consider a proposed roadway enhancement project on Thomas Road between Recker Road and Power Road.

Transportation Director Ron Krosting addressed the Committee and stated that this agenda item is the result of Council and neighborhood comments with respect to necessary improvements to Thomas Road between Recker Road and Power Road. Mr. Krosting referred to illustrations on display in the Council Chambers and said that the illustrations only depict one design concept which provides for a 28 ft. wide median that effectively reduces the roadway from six lanes to four. Mr. Krosting added that the extra wide median would improve the appearance of Thomas Road in this area.

Mr. Krosting said that staff proposes to discuss design options with area residents in conjunction with meetings to discuss end-of-freeway conditions (as previously approved by the Transportation Committee and the Council), commencing with the neighborhoods bordering Gilbert Road. Mr. Krosting clarified that the roadway design does not represent staff's recommended design and is being presented as an option. He added that the roadway design would be expensive to build and discussed other design alternatives. Mr. Krosting noted that staff is seeking the Committee's input regarding roadway design and budget for the project.

Discussion ensued regarding the width and lane capacity of Thomas Road between Recker Road and Power Road, the City's future plans for improvements to Thomas Road west of Recker Road, the process of evaluating the roadway needs of the neighborhood and the City, staff's sequencing of input and approval from the neighborhood, the fact that if initial approval is received, input regarding design selection will be solicited from the Council, Transportation

Committee and the Transportation Advisory Board; Councilmember Walter's concerns regarding the importance of proper sequencing to promote the free expression of opinions from the public and Transportation Advisory Board members, and staff's concerns with respect to exploring projects without Council's approval to do so.

Councilmember Pomeroy voiced the opinion that it is appropriate for staff to first obtain Council's approval to proceed with the exploratory phase of this project prior to seeking public or advisory board input. Councilmember Pomeroy noted that this agenda item is the result of Council's direction to staff to address residents' concerns regarding necessary improvements to Thomas Road and anticipated traffic impacts as a result of the Red Mountain/Loop 202 Freeway expansion and the Recker Road interchange.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Walters to recommend to the Council that staff's request that they be directed to seek input from neighborhood residents regarding roadway enhancements and traffic calming measures for Thomas Road between Recker Road and Power Road, be approved.

Chairman Davidson added that input from the Transportation Advisory Board will also be solicited regarding this issue. He concurred with concerns voiced by Committeemember Walters regarding the importance of including the Transportation Advisory Board in the evaluation/approval process and stressed the importance of presenting the design options to the citizens without inferring that they are the recommendations of the Council or the Transportation Advisory Board. Chairman Davidson also stressed the importance of educating residents regarding traffic calming measures with a focus on improving neighborhoods. He also commented on the excessive cost of the option presented by staff and requested that a variety of less expensive design options be presented in the future for consideration and discussion.

In response to Chairman Davidson's concerns regarding the fact that the neighbors were under the impression that extensive traffic calming measures would be implemented along this segment of Thomas Road, Mr. Krosting advised that after meeting with neighborhood residents and determining their preferences regarding roadway design and traffic calming measures, staff will meet with the Transportation Advisory Board to evaluate any disparities between the neighbors' preferences and staff's recommendations.

Discussion ensued regarding other Mesa neighborhoods facing similar conditions and problems associated with significant arterial street traffic; the unique configuration of Thomas Road between Recker Road and Power Road; and the opportunity that exists to transform an awkwardly designed street (Thomas Road) into a model of effective traffic calming design.

Committeemember Pomeroy concurred with Chairman Davidson's comments regarding the high estimated cost of the design as presented and urged staff to develop less expensive options for consideration.

Discussion ensued regarding other design options and the importance of educating the neighbors on a variety of options including the utilization of photographs to depict various roadway designs.

Carried unanimously.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Krosting advised that neighborhood meetings to address end-of-freeway conditions will commence during the first half of May and reiterated that the first meetings will be held in the neighborhoods bordering Gilbert Road.

2. Hear a presentation regarding the Transit Cooperative Research Program's Project B-19 "Improving Public Transit Options for Older Persons."

Transit Administrator Jim Wright addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and stated that he is a member of the Transit Cooperative Research Program's (TCRP) Project B-19 review panel which is currently in the process of evaluating transit options for older Americans. Mr. Wright explained that a consultant (Westat) was retained to research various issues associated with public transit options for seniors and said that the purpose of his presentation is to provide the Committee with an interim report regarding the research results to date. He advised that the key issues analyzed by Westat include conditions and trends, mobility preferences of elders, enhanced service characteristics, barriers to change, exemplary practices and models, and dissemination. Mr. Wright referred to a hand-out provided to the Committee and outlined the research findings, as follows:

- *Future Conditions and Challenges:* The senior population is increasing dramatically; the number of trips taken by elders is also increasing; most trips by older persons are made by automobile and public transportation is rarely used.
- *Future Transportation Challenges:* Most future elders will live in communities poorly served by public transportation; most future elders will have been confirmed auto users all of their lives and "high mobility consumers"; demands for all kinds of transportation services will increase; future travel demands will be characterized by high levels of consumer choice and flexibility.
- *Service Attribute Components (5 "A's" of senior mobility):* Acceptability (reliability, connections, trust, comfort, respect); Accessibility (can physically use, can get information to use, proximity); Adaptability (flexible, responds to specific requests, meets trip needs and special needs of clients); Affordability (not excessive money, time or effort); Availability (frequency, hours/days available).
- *Specific Mobility Preferences of Older Persons:* Reliable (on time, can't wait long outside); door-to-door service; flexible (can change destinations and times); comfortable vehicles and waiting areas; responsive (don't have to wait 24 hours).
- *Problems with Current Travel Options:* Not 24/7; not door to door; monetary and non-monetary cost; image; physical/cognitive requirements.
- *Paths to Change/Industry Perspective:* Departure from traditional approaches; structural change in delivery; close collaboration and partnerships; shift focus from modes to customers.
- *New Paradigms for Local Public Transportation Organizations (applicable results from TCRP Project J-08B, TCRP Report 58):* Fundamental change (paradigm shift) is needed; focus on customers (service), not modes (assets); logistical control to satisfy customer needs; customer sees a seamless product; individualized, door-to-door service.
- *Mobility Solutions:* Many specific submarkets of older travelers; family of services (tiers of services and prices); no single solution to the mobility needs of an entire population.
- *Levels of Transportation Users/Seniors (in declining order):* Healthy, independent; some mobility limitations; frail, needs assistance.

- *Levels of Services Needed to Serve Seniors* (in declining levels/accelerated cost order): Fixed routes; service routes; paratransit service; escort.
- *Summary and Challenge*: Transportation providers not prepared for forecasted changes; desired features of ideal transportation services include reliability, door-to-door service, flexible service, customer-focused services; potential impediments to transit improvements include lack of funding and reluctance to embrace change.
- *Long-Range Objectives*: Help seniors understand how transit can make their lives better; reinvent transit as mobility management; a greater variety of services and pricing; improve quality of services; develop new modes that compete with automobile attributes.

Mr. Wright described Mesa's current public transportation services, including: fixed route bus service (fully accessible vehicles, ½ fare for senior citizens); East Valley Dial-a-Ride (door-to-door, on-demand, shared-ride mobility); Enabling Transportation (volunteer based mobility program through partnership with Mesa Senior Center). Mr. Wright added that a neighborhood bus service offering flexible routing to meet customer service requests within defined neighborhoods is proposed for FY02-03.

Discussion ensued regarding the Maricopa Association of Government's (MAG) projected dramatic increase in the number of senior citizens in Maricopa County by 2040, and the corresponding projected public transit use by seniors.

Mr. Wright read a letter published in the Arizona Republic which discussed a senior couple's plans to relocate from Sun City West to a downtown Portland high-rise apartment building within walking distance of necessary services. Mr. Wright said that the comments represent the desire of seniors to live in an environment where they can be independently mobile without having to drive.

Committeemember Pomeroy stated the opinion that the *Enabling Transportation* program provided in cooperation with the Mesa Senior Center appears to meet the needs of most senior citizens although it does require reliance on a volunteer driver.

Committeemember Walters voiced appreciation for the quality of the report and spoke about the importance of sharing the information with staff members involved in related MAG projects. She also commented on the importance of addressing the transportation and mobility needs of seniors.

Chairman Davidson voiced appreciation to Committeemember Walters for her work with MAG's Committee on Senior Mobility and voiced appreciation to Mr. Wright for his work in this project.

Chairman Davidson spoke about the difficult task of shifting our culture toward public transportation and expressed the opinion that seniors have historically led the way with cultural changes.

3. Hear a presentation regarding Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) and the status of the deployment of ITS technologies in Mesa.

Mr. Krosting introduced Signal Systems Supervisor Jan Siedler and Traffic Engineer Alan Sanderson to present an overview of ITS in Mesa.

Ms. Siedler referred to a hand-out provided to Committeemembers and spoke about the ITS concept, ITS in Mesa today and what is planned for the future, as follows:

- *ITS Concept:* Next step in the evolution of the nation's entire transportation system; applies technology to existing transportation facilities to get more efficient use; involves the latest in computers, electronics, communications and safety systems.
- *Four Major ITS Subsystems:* Traveler Subsystems; Center Subsystems; Roadside Subsystems; Vehicle Subsystems.
- *ITS User Services:* Travel and Traffic Management; Public Transportation Management; Electronic Payment; Commercial Vehicle Operations; Emergency Management; Advanced Vehicle Safety Systems; Information Management.
- *Emergency Management Systems:* Reduce freeway closures/restrictions; early identification and response to incidents; provide traveler information on incidents; freeway service patrol.
- *Mesa Today:* Highly mobile commuting public; 425,000 population; yearly influx of winter visitors; rapid growth, placing heavy demands on freeways and streets.
- *Traffic Management System:* Integrated control of 338 miles; 305 signalized intersections; 23 Detector Stations; 4 Variable Message Signs; 7 closed circuit television; coordinate with Tempe, Chandler & Gilbert.
- *Quality of Life Funds For ITS to Date - \$540,000:* \$170,000 new traffic signal controllers; \$97,000 fiber modems; \$61,500 spread spectrum radios; \$9,400 surge protection; \$114,602 ATMS upgrade; \$31,500 master plan telecommunications; \$16,000 microwave equipment; \$40,000 Stapley Dr. fiber project.
- *Transit:* Bus schedules on the internet; real time updates at central station in Phoenix; automatic vehicle location on 29 buses.
- *Planned ITS in Mesa:* Build telecommunications infrastructure to support traffic management system and ITS operations; work closely with Management Services to partner with private telecommunications service providers; expand monitoring and detection capabilities; continue to participate as a regional partner; acquire software to mine transit data.
- *Mesa Planned Transportation Management Center:* Operate system; manage congestion; monitor roadways; emergency storm center; all equipment federally funded.
- *Transportation Telecommunications Master Plan:* Identifies feasible communications technologies; logical communications architecture; staged implementation; budgetary cost estimates.
- *Federal ITS funding for Mesa:* 73% of ITS budget is derived from Federal funds; seven projects currently programmed; builds telecommunications infrastructure; expands monitoring and detection ability; testing leading edge real time adaptive control.

Ms. Siedler commented on the AZTech group (a private and government partnership which shares traffic, travel and emergency related information through a central file server); Mesa's traffic cameras located at the intersection of McKellips and Stapley; the use of variable message signs; the City's current inadequate infrastructure (requiring the use of leased telephone lines); Mesa's current Transportation Management Center and plans for the new center being developed at the 6th Street Service Center.

Ms. Siedler stated that ITS is a means to maximize the effectiveness of transportation improvements. She added that Mesa's ITS program is a long-term, incremental implementation process that will require additional staff to reach its full potential.

In response to questions from Committeemember Pomeroy regarding the utilization of traffic information signboards, Mr. Krosting advised that the City presently has two signboards at the intersection of Southern Avenue and Dobson Road and two at the intersection of Baseline Road and Dobson Road. Mr. Krosting added that the sharing of traffic information also encompasses private partners that provide information via pagers, personal computers and other devices.

Further discussion ensued regarding the use of traffic information signboards; the fact that signboards are part of very expensive traffic management systems used primarily in conjunction with freeways, and the fact that ADOT plans to equip all of the Phoenix area freeways with traffic management systems, including cameras and signboards.

In response to questions from Committeemember Walters regarding the feasibility of controlling traffic lights in an effort to mitigate heavy traffic conditions, Ms. Siedler explained that operators are able to modify traffic light sequencing on a limited basis through the control center.

Discussion ensued regarding the utilization of information devices at bus stops to provide instant bus-related information; the high cost of this type of system and equipment, the fact that newer regional buses are being equipped with automated vehicle location devices to facilitate this type of service in the future, the general timing of Mesa's arterial street lights, specifically the timing of the street lights along Mesa Drive; disruption to the timing system caused by pre-emption from fire trucks, and the debate between leading vs. lagging left turns signals.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding ITS's ranking in the upcoming Transportation budget, Mr. Krosting advised that ITS is a Quality of Life tax project and will be ranked very high. He added that funding for ITS is supplemented with Federal aid.

Chairman Davidson voiced strong support for the ITS program and stated the opinion that the program should be a regular budget item, to be funded with general funds, and not be reliant on Quality of Life funds or Federal aid.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding the utilization of fiber optic lines, Ms. Siedler reported that ITS has tied into fiber optics located at Extension Road near the railroad and that eight intersections are currently tied into the ITS central system via fiber optics.

Chairman Davidson commended staff on their presentation and voiced support for providing the presentation to the Transportation Advisory Board.

4. Discuss and consider a proposed resolution approving and directing the Joint Master Planning Committee to evaluate options for implementing transit oriented development standards in conjunction with the planned Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Transit Project.

Transportation Planning Administrator Kevin Wallace addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and reported that staff has been working with Valley Connections to develop a process to implement transit oriented development standards along the light rail transit line. Mr. Wallace explained that transit oriented development will encompass walkable and more human scaled environments around transit facilities.

Mr. Wallace informed the Committee that this issue is extremely time sensitive due to time limits imposed with respect to the project's application for Federal funding. He added that addressing transit oriented development standards will improve the project's rating with respect to securing Federal funding.

Mr. Wallace stated that the proposed resolution will direct the Joint Master Planning Committee to evaluate the issues of transit oriented development and the manner in which the City progresses in relation to the light rail transit system. He added that staff does not presently have recommendations regarding a particular development strategy but does recommend that the Transportation Advisory Board also be involved in the process together with the Joint Master Planning Committee.

It was moved by Committeemember Walters, seconded by Committeemember Pomeroy, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation relative to adopting the proposed resolution directing the Joint Master Planning Committee to evaluate options for implementing transit oriented development standards in conjunction with the planned Central Phoenix/East Valley Light Rail Transit Project, be approved.

Carried unanimously.

Chairman Davidson expressed appreciation to staff for their efforts.

5. Discuss and consider a traffic calming project on Hermosa Vista Drive between Gilbert Road and Harris Drive.

Traffic Engineer Alan Sanderson addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and explained that although staff previously gained Committee approval to explore neighborhood interest in traffic calming measures for Harris Drive between McKellips Road and Hermosa Vista Drive, after considering this Committee's comments together with the general neighborhood approval of conditions along Harris Drive since the installation of a 4-way stop sign at Harris Drive and Lockwood Street, staff now recommends that Hermosa Vista Drive between McKellips Road and Harris Drive be considered for a pilot traffic calming project, rather than Harris Drive.

Mr. Sanderson noted that with the next section of the Red Mountain/Loop 202 Freeway ending at Gilbert Road, Hermosa Vista Drive will be the closest collector street and is expected to experience significant traffic as a result of the end-of-freeway condition at Gilbert Road. He added that due to the fact that most of Hermosa Vista Drive between Harris Drive and Gilbert Road is only 50% built, and the fact that a City project to complete Hermosa Vista Drive is presently in the design phase, it would be more cost efficient and less disruptive to revise the street design and build in traffic calming features rather than add them to a fully built street.

Mr. Sanderson commented on the traffic calming design options that were provided to Committeemembers and stated that the designs are being presented as options only with no specific recommendations from staff. He added that staff is seeking the Transportation Committee's and the Council's approval to meet with neighborhood residents and seek input regarding the street design and traffic calming measures to be implemented along Hermosa Vista Drive.

It was moved by Committeemember Pomeroy, seconded by Committeemember Walters, to recommend to the Council that staff's recommendation that they be directed to seek neighborhood residents' input regarding street design and traffic calming options on Hermosa Vista Drive between Gilbert Road and Harris Drive, be approved.

Committeemember Walters concurred with staff that Hermosa Vista Drive is a more appropriate location for a pilot traffic calming project than Harris Drive.

In response to a question from Committeemember Walters regarding staff's plans for Hermosa Vista Drive on the east side of Gilbert Road, Mr. Krosting stated that staff will meet with residents on the east side of Gilbert Road in conjunction with the series of neighborhood meetings regarding anticipated impacts of the end-of-freeway conditions. He stated that after meeting with residents on the east side of Gilbert Road, a second traffic calming project for Hermosa Vista Drive may be proposed.

Committeemember Walters voiced concerns regarding the impacts to the east side of Hermosa Vista Drive with the end-of-freeway condition at Gilbert Road.

Discussion ensued regarding expected impacts to Old Gilbert Road and Lockwood Street with the end-of-freeway condition at Gilbert Road and the possibility of restricting left turns at Old Gilbert Road.

Chairman Davidson stated that he is supportive of seeing more substantive, expertise-driven recommendations from staff regarding the appropriate implementation of various traffic calming measures.

Mr. Sanderson advised that after meeting with neighborhood residents, staff will present recommendations and seek approval from the Transportation Advisory Board before returning to this Committee with recommendations.

Carried unanimously.

Committeemember Walters commented on the fact that she has heard conflicting opinions regarding the implementation of a turning restriction at Old Gilbert Road and voiced support for conducting joint meetings that will allow residents to hear the concerns of their neighbors on the opposite side of Gilbert Road.

Chairman Davidson thanked staff for their efforts.

6. Hear an update on freeway funding issues at the Arizona State Legislature.

Assistant to the City Manager Jeff Martin addressed the Committee regarding this agenda item and reported that he, Mayor Hawker and Government Relations Assistant Kevin Adam participated in meetings at the State Legislature on April 11, 2001 regarding the proposed \$25 million per year budget reduction to the State Highway Fund. He stated that the meetings resulted in the addition of language into the proposed budget that provides two assurances: 1) limiting the reductions to two fiscal years (2002 & 2003); and 2) assuring that the freeway construction program will not be delayed or impacted as a result of the proposed reductions. He cautioned that the additional language does not represent a guarantee that the legislature will

not continue the reduction after FY2003 and voiced concern that on the State level, transportation is not as high a priority as in the past.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson, Mr. Martin explained that there are concerns among some municipal officials that the language that was added to the budget was diluted due to the fact that the two assurances were separated. He further explained that although the City achieved its objective to secure documentation regarding assurances made by the legislature, future legislators and legislatures are not bound by assurances or promises made by their predecessors.

In response to a question from Chairman Davidson regarding the possibility of a delay in Mesa's freeway projects, Mr. Martin voiced the opinion that Mesa's freeways should be completed as projected by 2007. He stated that the biggest threat to the freeway construction program is the escalation of right-of-way costs and explained that last year's right-of-way costs for the San Tan Freeway exceeded the Arizona Department of Transportation's (ADOT) budget by 25%. He added that although ADOT was able to adjust its budget, additional increases may result in completion delays.

Chairman Davidson voiced appreciation to Mr. Martin for his efforts in this matter.

7. Adjournment.

Without objection, the meeting adjourned at 10:58 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 12th day of April 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