

MINUTES OF THE  
MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS  
REGIONAL COUNCIL TRANSPORTATION SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING

January 16, 2001  
MAG Office - Saguaro Room  
Phoenix, Arizona

MEMBERS ATTENDING

Mayor Keno Hawker, Mesa, Chair	Mayor Bill Arnold, Goodyear
Mayor Elaine Scruggs, Vice Chair, Glendale	* Supervisor Jan Brewer, Maricopa County
Mayor Ron Drake, Avondale	Roc Arnett, State Transportation Board
Mayor Cynthia Dunham, Gilbert	

\*Those members not present.

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Keno Hawker, Mesa, at 9:00 a.m. Chairman Hawker stated that non-action items would be heard until a quorum was met.

3. Update on Phase One of the MAG Regional Transportation Plan

This agenda item was taken out of order.

Eric Anderson stated that a contract has been signed with the consultant to proceed on developing Phase 1 of the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). To assist in the RTP development process, five expert panel forums have been scheduled. The initial event will include a kickoff dinner at the Phoenix Airport Marriott at 5:30 p.m. on February 22, 2001. Mr. Anderson stated Anthony Downs, a nationally known speaker, will be the keynote speaker at the dinner. He indicated that four to five additional panelists, in addition to Mr. Downs, are being determined for the forums. The forums are scheduled to take place from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m., at the Arizona Historical Society in Tempe. Mr. Anderson gave members the scheduled dates of the upcoming forums. Demographic/Socioeconomic Change on February 23, 2001; the New Economy on March 2, 2001; Environmental and Resource Issues on March 9, 2001; Land Use and Urban Development on March 23, 2001; and Technology/Modes of Travel on March 30, 2001.

Mr. Anderson stated that the consultant will undertake a survey of 1,500 households in March and will conduct focus groups in March, April and May to gain input on issues in the Valley. Mr. Anderson stated that MAG has been working with ADOT to combine public outreach efforts in the development of MAG's RTP and ADOT's Long Range Plan. He noted that ADOT cannot proceed on their efforts until the Governor's Transportation Vision 21 Task Force completes their recommendations.

Chairman Hawker requested that an e-mail be sent about the forums. Mr. Anderson indicated that the co-sponsors have not been solicited for financial support, but rather have been asked to provide assistance in reaching their members. Chairman Hawker asked if the East Valley Partnership had been contacted. Mr.

Bourey replied that attempts to contact the East Valley Partnership have been unsuccessful. Chairman Hawker stated that he would contact the Partnership. Mayor Drake asked for clarification of the dinner time on February 22. Mr. Anderson replied that dinner would begin at 6:00 p.m., preceded by a reception at 5:30 p.m.

6. Governor's Transportation Vision 21 Task Force Update

Mr. Bourey stated that the recommendations from the Governor's Transportation Vision 21 Task Force are expected soon. He stated that the Governance Subcommittee is examining a recommendation for formation of a five member elected body responsible for regional transportation projects with taxing authority. Additionally, the Task Force is discussing the revenue stream through sales and gas taxes. Mr. Bourey stated that the Task Force met January 12 and are scheduled to meet again on January 29, 2001. He stated that the draft recommendations would be reviewed at public hearings. Mr. Bourey stated that the final report could be expected in April. Chairman Hawker thanked Mr. Bourey for his report and asked if there were questions.

Mayor Drake asked for clarification of the establishment of the elected regional transportation body. Mr. Bourey explained that the Legislature would need to pass a State law to establish this body, followed by an election of members. Mr. Bourey noted that the jurisdiction is unclear. Mayor Drake asked the impact to MAG. Mr. Bourey replied that MPO authority cannot be usurped. The MPO has the responsibility for planning. Mr. Bourey stated that establishment of the body, intended to streamline, would add another layer of government. He stated that contracting with another party was suggested. Mr. Bourey stated that staff has conveyed to the Task Force that the establishment of this body would not be well received by the Regional Council.

Mayor Arnold asked for clarification of the taxing authority. Mr. Bourey stated that a sales tax could be instituted by the regional body without a vote of the people. Chairman Hawker asked about the status of elected members. Mr. Bourey stated that discussion had taken place that no member could be serving a concurrent office at the same time.

7. Update on Regional Transit Efforts

Jim Dickey, RPTA staff, provided an update on recent transit efforts. He commented that the RPTA will be submitting a TCSP grant, due January 31, 2001, for a commuter rail corridor study. Mr. Dickey stated that \$750,000 is available in the grant process. He stated that partnering with interested parties is being examined to solidify the grant process. Mr. Dickey stated that Phoenix is involved in a bus/rapid transit project that will include more express service. He stated that these corridors could be precursors to rail routes. Mr. Dickey stated that interfacing with light rail is a key factor. Work is continuing to identify an interface of transfer. Mr. Dickey stated that RPTA will soon be submitting the Short Range Transit report to MAG.

Chairman Hawker asked the extent of the commuter rail corridor study. Mr. Dickey replied that the grant process is wide open and parameters could be defined. He mentioned that the grant money could allow a feasibility study to be framed. Chairman Hawker asked about commuter rail and freight compatibility. Mr. Dickey commented on the identification of right of way issues. Chairman Hawker commented on spending

money on a project that may not work. Mr. Dickey stated that the two questions are on using right of way and funding. He stated that there is a perception of competition with light rail, which is not the case.

Mayor Scruggs stated that full disclosure is needed that commuter and light rail are two entirely different modes. She indicated that the public has expressed interest in commuter rail, which will bring in those not previously interested in commuting. Full disclosure would identify those attempting to thwart efforts to have a commuter rail system in the region.

Chairman Hawker commented on using conclusions from previous light rail studies. Mr. Dickey stated that previous studies form the basis for the commuter rail study. Mayor Drake asked about rail from downtown Phoenix to the Palo Verde Nuclear Plant. Mr. Dickey stated that this could be a viable option and much interest has been expressed in this route. Mr. Bourey commented that there is national competition for TCSP money. He noted that all TCSP funds were earmarked in the last Congressional session.

Dennis Smith stated that the City of Glendale has expressed interest in commuter rail. He indicated that other member agencies are also interested. Mr. Smith stated that the Valley as a whole needs to be examined to get funding to support this study. Chairman Hawker noted his support. Mr. Smith stated that funds could be available in the closeout of FY 2002-2006, in addition to the possible TCSP money. Chairman Hawker asked if members objected to staff pursuing this option. No objections were noted. Mr. Dickey stated that ADOT has indicated support and they have a budgetary allocation that could be applied to this.

2. Approval of November 29, 2000 Meeting Minutes

This agenda item was taken out of order.

Chairman Hawker noted that a quorum was present and asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the November 29, 2000 meeting. Mayor Dunham moved, Mayor Drake seconded, and it was unanimously carried to approve the minutes of the November 29, 2000 Regional Council Transportation Subcommittee meeting, as written.

4. Loop 303 Preferred Alignment

Eric Anderson gave a presentation on the Loop 303 connection. He stated that the objective of the study was to identify a preferred corridor for Loop 303 from Lake Pleasant Road to I-17, a preferred connection with I-17, and a preferred option for use in environmental assessment and design concept studies. Mr. Anderson stated that the option would serve the mobility needs of the northwest Valley, is compatible with the general plans for the area, and would take into consideration environmental and other impacts. Mr. Anderson displayed a map of the study area. The Loop 303 Corridor was first identified in a 1985 study. A study of five alternative routes to connect the 303 with I-17 was undertaken by MAG and ADOT with the cooperation of Maricopa County and member agencies. At their December 12, 2000 meeting, the Transportation Review Committee recommended the Lone Mountain alignment as the preferred alternative for the 303 connection to Interstate 17. It is envisioned that it would be constructed as a parkway, with access only at major arterial intersections, with sufficient right-of-way to be purchased for a fully controlled access facility. In addition, it was recommended that the New River alignment would be designated for further study.

Mr. Anderson listed the five alternatives included the route shown in the 1985 study, New River, Dixileta, Carefree Highway, and Lone Mountain. Mr. Anderson stated that the Lone Mountain route provides east/west mobility. He noted that the New River option does not provide an east/west mobility to the north east valley. Dixileta which most closely parallels the option identified in the 1985 study, does not connect east of I-17, so traffic must enter the freeway, causing significant impacts to I-17. Mr. Anderson noted that development along Dixileta could cause some routing issues. Mr. Anderson noted the next steps in the process, whether a federal or non-federal process. A federal process requires a logical termini from Grand Avenue to I-17. Mr. Anderson noted increased risk in the federal process. Mr. Anderson stated that Lone Mountain can be the preferred option, but as part of the process, other alternatives must be considered. He noted the need for additional public involvement. Mr. Anderson stated the corridor would be added to the regional freeway system and funding strategies for right of way protection and construction need to be identified. Mr. Anderson noted that the Management Committee had modified the requested action as shown on the Subcommittee agenda to recommend the Lone Mountain as the preferred option, rather than recommending selecting the Lone Mountain as the preferred alternative.

Mayor Scruggs asked if adding the corridor to the regional freeway system and identifying funding strategies would happen whether in a federal or non-federal process. Mr. Anderson replied that they would. He commented on additional environmental concerns in the federal process. Mayor Scruggs asked for clarification of funding. Mr. Anderson replied (\$30 to \$40 million remain balance this year), MCDOT, regional freeway program, and ADOT discretionary five year program funding. Mayor Scruggs asked if a federal process is followed, would the funding be federal? Mr. Anderson replied that was correct, ADOT or additional federal funds.

Mayor Scruggs moved to recommend the Lone Mountain Alignment as the preferred option for the loop 303 connection to Interstate 17, to be constructed as a limited access parkway with access only at major arterial intersections and for sufficient right-of-way to be purchased for a fully controlled access facility. In addition, for the New River Alignment to be designated for further study in the Regional Plan. Mayor Dunham seconded.

Mayor Scruggs expressed concern for consideration of a corridor that is twelve miles from the original alternative. She stated that an alternative implies being in the vicinity.

Mr. Anderson stated that the New River option may not be considered, but the TRC included the continuation of the study of the New River option in their action in December. He indicated that the TRC recognized that another option may be needed in 20 to 30 years. Mayor Scruggs expressed concern for commitments made to voters. Chairman Hawker requested that the Bureau of Land Management be informed about the right of way needs for the corridor. Mr. Smith noted that two things need to take place: to add the corridor to the map and to secure funding. Chairman Hawker noted the concerns that several corridors need future study. Mayor Scruggs commented on placing the New River option in the Plan. Mr. Anderson stated that the intent was to provide the segment as a future study corridor. Mr. Anderson stated that after adoption the 303, currently being shown as a study corridor, will be shown as the corridor to I-17. New River Road would be shown as the study corridor. Mayor Scruggs indicated that a statement is needed to include the 303 in the regional plan for funding. She commented on including the corridor in the next update of the Long Range Transportation Plan as the preferred option for construction. Chairman Hawker

noted that a corridor designation is needed. He indicated that he was comfortable with the motion on the table, which could be considered further by the Regional Council.

Chairman Hawker asked for a vote on the motion, which carried unanimously.

5. Value Lane Study

John Green, Parsons Transportation Group, gave a presentation on the Value Lane Study. The purpose of the study was to examine ways to relieve growing traffic congestion in the MAG region by studying the feasibility of Value Lanes or HOT (High Occupancy Toll) lanes. These lanes would allow solo motorists the option of using carpool lanes for a fee. Mr. Green stated that public surveys indicated after an extensive explanation about the Value Lane program, that 80 percent were supportive of tolls for transportation improvements. He stated that it is not anticipated that drivers would utilize the HOT lanes on all trips. Mr. Green displayed maps of potential HOT lanes, both committed (near-term) and new (without funding). He stated that HOT lane fees would be based on the congestion levels to provide a travel demand management tool. Mr. Green stated that the public indicated a preference for the term “express lanes,” over “value lanes.”

Mr. Green stated that the conversion to HOT-2 lanes may be appropriate when HOV-2 lanes are underutilized. He gave example the conversion in San Diego. Mr. Green stated that if an existing HOV-2 becomes congested, conversion to HOT-3 makes use of unused capacity, as was done in Houston. He mentioned that when existing capacity is to be expanded, HOT lanes may offer more benefits than HOV or general purpose lanes. Mr. Green stated that in the case of a new freeway, fewer lanes may be required if HOT lanes are used during peak hours. He explained that on California 91, HOV-3 carpools get a 50 percent discount.

Mr. Arnett asked about users’ resistance to the conversion to a toll system on California 91. Mr. Green stated that no significant resistance was noted, due to the fact that the road had been built with private funds. Mr. Arnett asked the fee structure. Mr. Green gave as an example, a \$3.00 fee for HOV-2 at peak hour, and \$1.50 fee for HOV-3. He indicated the fee varies according to time of day.

Mr. Smith stated that the reason the value lane study is being considered is to help alleviate congestion. He commented that the New Economy requires speed, which is hampered by congestion. Mr. Smith indicated that it would be a tough sell to users, because the roads have been financed with tax money.

Chairman Hawker asked for clarification of HOV-1, HOV-2 and HOV-3. Mr. Green explained that the number refers to vehicle occupants. Mayor Scruggs asked about the technology that would provide the ability to differentiate the number of vehicle occupants, in order to charge the half price for carpoolers. Mr. Green stated that by entering the HOV lane, you are declaring yourself a carpooler. Those not qualifying as a carpooler are subject to fines. He indicated that it is basically an honor system with enforcement. The roadways are monitored by the Highway Patrol and monitors. Chairman Hawker explained that which lane a car uses to enter the freeway determines how much the transponder deducts.

Mr. Green displayed a map of HOV capacity. He noted level of service A, B or C in all HOV lanes. Mr. Smith commented on drafting a map showing the entire system with HOV lanes. Chairman Hawker noted

that this could enable the completion of the HOV system. Mr. Arnett asked why the San Tan and Agua Fria were not shown on the map. Mr. Green replied that the study showed these freeways were not congested. Mr. Arnett stated that, to be farsighted, the San Tan and the Agua Fria should be included. Mr. Green stated that the map reflected only near-term lanes to 2020.

Mr. Green explained the goals are to fill up underutilized lanes, divert some solo drivers, generate revenue for transportation improvements and provide travel time savings for solo drivers. He stated that the system would operate 24 hours per day on private roadways and peak hour on conversions. Access would be controlled by pavement separations to limit ingress and egress every couple of miles. Mr. Green explained verification zones for verification between users and violators, which would utilize cameras and DPS monitoring. Toll rates would be based on value/congestion pricing to maintain level of service D or better in HOT lanes. Mr. Green showed examples of HOT lane signage used in San Diego. Mr. Green stated that operator could be a private company and freeway maintenance provided by the Department of Transportation.

Mr. Green summarized the HOT lane assessments. He stated that the freeway segment on I-10 from 79th Avenue to 3rd Avenue is the highest priority. He mentioned that there is sufficient right of way to build additional lanes. Mr. Green stated that I-17 is not viable fiscally because right of way needed for widening would cost \$1.1 billion. He stated that the loop 101/Pima/Price will soon reach capacity and is a viable candidate for HOT lanes. Mr. Arnett stated that he would obtain construction data. Lanes on the Pima and Price could potentially be funded. Mr. Green commented on right of way costs for SR 51. He displayed charts showing the fiscal evaluations and results, and comparison for I-10/Papago, Loop 101/Pima/Price, US 60/I-10, SR 51, and Loop 202/Red Mountain. Mr. Green noted that FHWA Value Pricing Program could provide implementation funding.

Mr. Green summarized the priority rankings of five viable corridors for value lanes: 1) I-10/Papago, 2) Loop 101/Pima/Price, 3) US 60/I-10, 4) Loop 202/Red Mountain and 5) SR 51. He indicated that legislative action, funding and public outreach would be needed before implementation. Mr. Green stated that final reports are being prepared.

Chairman Hawker asked for the next steps. Mr. Anderson stated that the TRC would consider this project at their next meeting, and considered potentially by the Regional Council in March. Chairman Hawker asked if 80 percent of the public approved using toll revenue for transportation improvements, what did the remaining 20 percent prefer? Mr. Green the 20 percent did not want tolls or thought the money should be given back. Mr. Green expressed concern about the public perception that this would be an improvement for the rich. Mr. Anderson stated that data has found that users use the lanes when needed, and not all of the time.

Chairman Hawker expressed concern that filling up the lanes would result in them losing their appeal and incentive for carpoolers, in addition to taking away express bus routes. Mr. Green stated that congestion pricing keeps the traffic moving. Fees would be structured so that traffic would move at level of service B.

Chairman Hawker asked if the concrete separators would work with the existing freeway footprints. Mr. Green replied that plastic separators would likely be used here rather than concrete barriers. Mr. Smith

stated that the information presented could be shown in all parts of the Valley to inform the public that this is how the congestion problem could be addressed.

Mr. Bourey stated that the MAG Regional Council Transportation Subcommittee and the ADOT State Transportation Board public hearing is scheduled for Thursday, March 1, 2001. He encourage members to attend both the luncheon with the State Board at 11:30 a.m. and the public hearing, which will begin at 12:00 noon in the Saguaro Room.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

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Chairman

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Secretary