



MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: Jan. 4, 2006

Purpose: Fern Valley Interchange Project
Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting

Distribution: CAC Members, Project Development Team, public

From: Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Date Prepared: Jan. 2006

CAC Attendees: Terry Helfrich, David Lowry, David Lewin, Mark Gibson, Joan Haukom, Dack Doggett, Pauly Hinesly, Lee Carrau. Also: Bear Lake Estate liaison Murray LaHue, Harry Page

CAC Absent: Bill Rombach, Bob Korfhage, George Cota.

Project Team Attendees: Jerry Marmon, ODOT Environmental Project Manager
Debbie Timms, ODOT Project Manager
Gary Leaming, ODOT Project information
Brian Sheadel, ODOT Senior Designer
Peter Schuytema, ODOT Engineer
Christina Fera-Thomas, ODOT
Nancy Reynolds, URS Corp. Project Manager
Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Other Attendees: David Pyles, ODOT; Nick Fortey, FHWA, 12 members of the public signed in (sign-in sheet in file)

1. Review of agenda and process/Approve Minutes

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Guarino began the meeting at 6:30 with introductions and announced that Bill Rombach is unable to attend the meeting for health reasons, but he remains interested in the project and will receive an update from project staff about the outcome of the CAC and PDT meetings. (He subsequently resigned from the CAC.) She reviewed the agenda for tonight's meeting, and said the main focus will be to review refinements made to both designs, hear the traffic

analysis that is the foundation for the designs, and make recommendations to the Project Development Team on which designs to forward into the environmental assessment.

A request for approval of the Oct. 5, 2005, CAC Minutes was made. Terry Helfrich asked that a comment on page four be attributed to Gary Hall (minutes subsequently changed.) There were no other changes and the minutes were approved as amended.

2. Update on Project

Debbie Timms, ODOTs

Timms said the committees had wanted to see greater detail about access and lane configuration, so design refinements for the two alternatives, Lowry and CAC Table 1, were made and will be presented tonight for CAC recommendation.

3. Presentation/Discussion of Alternative Refinements

Brian Sheadel, Peter Schuytema, Christine Fera-Thomas, ODOT

Sheadel presented refinements to the two alternatives: CAC Table 1 and Lowry designs. The designs were presented on a large screen and handouts of each were distributed. The drawings were superimposed on aerial photographs so that everyone could see the exact impacts. Schuytema and Fera-Thomas offered traffic data to explain the reason for the various design features, such as access and numbers of lanes.

Sheadel began with the Lowry design, starting at the SPUI pointing out numbers of lanes, merging lanes and distances. Long merge lanes are required because of speeds involved and the needs of trucks. CAC members asked questions during the presentation. There was discussion about the traffic lights and how the signals will be timed for traffic flows at various times of the day. Sheadel noted the structure would be about the size of a football field, about 250 feet. The existing structure will be taken out and the SPUI will accommodate bikes and pedestrians. He pointed out the realignment of Fern Valley Road to the north. Access to Pear Tree would have to be maintained. The new off ramp would cut off much of Pear Tree Lane.

Continuing northeast, Sheadel reviewed Home Depot, Peterbilt and other property (orchard) access off the new N Phoenix Road. Developing the orchard as commercial land would require a separate traffic study to determine whether a light would be needed and where the driveways could be placed. CAC noted the danger now on the existing N Phoenix Road curve, which will be eliminated by this plan. ODOT is working with Home Depot on their access. The path for N Phoenix is very constrained geographically. He showed where the housing would have access.

Moving to the east side, Sheadel focused on the Bolz intersection. It would take out the old pharmacy and Nims. He pointed out the outside line is the back of the sidewalk and the limit of the highway project. In this area there are not huge grade differences. Anything under the lines would be taken out. He noted wide median on Hwy. 99 required for turn storage for traffic heading to I-5. Medians would be going down the middle of Hwy.99. Business access

would be via Cheryl, not left turns off Hwy. 99. U turns may be allowed, but that would be up to a traffic safety review. A new backage road would have to be built to provide new access to Rays (from Hwy. 99 and Cheryl access would be right in only) off Cheryl because of traffic queues on Cheryl. CAC members noted the businesses in the area that would be taken out by the project. Sheadel said Hwy. 99 would be going from a 5 lane road to an 8-9 lane road, and it has been shifted as much as possible to limit impacts. Going north on Hwy. 99, the bridge on Coleman Creek will have to be replaced to accommodate both the road and allow fish passage. At the Shoppes at 24 the off ramp is not expected to impact the buildings. Access would be provided off Fern Valley with a new link to Fern Valley. To get back to the freeway, traffic would have to circle around on Hwy. 99; there is insufficient space for a traffic signal. CAC was concerned that this design concept caters to east side business, but west side businesses have right-in access only. It was noted that this was one of two options. Sheadel said an objective is to keep the existing interchange open, so the new interchange has to be north or south of the existing interchange. Luman access remains left- and right-turn access and there is still access to the Shoppes at 24. The size of the road is based on growth projections.

Fera-Thomas referred to her handout to review the traffic v/c ratios and queuing, noting that none of the intersections would exceed standards. Timms said the lanes and other features are needed to meet v/c standards.

Sheadel moved to the Table 1 option, walking through the features of the east side. The existing Fern Valley would be turned into a cul-de-sac. There are no impacts on Pear Tree Lane. There would be a signal at Fern Valley. Access to the orchard would be provided, but it's likely that the entrance would be combined with other uses. There was discussion of whether there would be a median required on the new connecting road between North Phoenix and Fern Valley. It is uncertain whether it would be necessary, and the city may take over at least part of the road and would decide on whether and how to build the median. North Phoenix would have two lanes in each direction with turn bays. The illustration showed Home Depot. (Lowry design doesn't impact Home Depot plans.) This design has much less property impact.

Moving to the west side, Sheadel said the Shoppes would have a right in and right out access, with a loop around on Luman Road and underpass for full traffic movements so looping traffic around to Hwy. 99 wouldn't be necessary. Rays' full access could be by way of Cheryl, eliminating the backage road. There would be a median down Hwy. 99. Business impacts on Hwy. 99 would be about the same as those under the Lowry design. The CAC noted that this design seems simpler, but Sheadel said the costs would be about the same between the two designs. CAC members asked about riparian differences: Table 1 has a more direct creek crossing and so slightly less impact. CAC asked if pedestrian and bike access would be better under one alternative than another: Opportunities are about the same, but bike/ped could connect through the cul-de-sac to Hwy. 99, which could help the greenway development. There was a question about park-and-ride facilities: The state doesn't purchase property for park-and-ride facilities, but can work with RVTD and the city to identify sites.

4. Public Comments on Alternatives

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Guarino asked for comments related directly to the alternatives and the information presented. She said people could bring up other issues related to the project during a second public comment at the end of the meeting. Comments were:

Robert Newby questioned the queues and the reason for separating new and old Fern Valley road. Schuytema said the separating is necessary to have room for trucks to wait for the signal.

Derek DeBoer said neither design is acceptable. The impacts on existing businesses and residences would be huge. Timms noted that the no build alternative has detrimental impacts too.

Lorraine Sexton said people were losing every gas station in town due to the project.

Clark Rudy, Representing Petro, said the Lowry alternative is workable on the west. In response to his questions, Sheadel explained functioning on the east side.

Robert Newby asked for a stairway on the SPUI structure for pedestrian access.

Lenny Neimark, speaking for the Southeast quadrant, preferred Lowry alternative. He said that Phoenix Hills residents may disagree, but he sees less impact with the Lowry alternative because it provides better local traffic circulation.

5. Recommendations on Alternatives

Nancy Reynolds, URS, Debbie Timms, ODOT

David Lowry wondered about an underpass for the existing North Phoenix Road on the Table 1 design so that there would be a connection between old Fern Valley and old North Phoenix under the SPUI ramp. Staff responded that this might lower v/c ratios on some intersections, and would spread traffic load. It would be redundant. One concern is that it would take more Home Depot land.

David Lewin asked if one alternative is favorable for emergency traffic and was told that it hasn't been calculated. An audience member said Table 1 is devastating. LaHue said residents on east side were concerned about emergency vehicle response with the Table 1 design. Timms said emergency vehicles don't stop at intersections, saving time. Also the group noted that Medford emergency crews come in from the north for that area, so Table 1 might be faster.

Jerry Marmon said the project was looking for a recommendation on which alternatives to forward into the Environmental Assessment. If one stands out as better, it would be forwarded on. If the designs were viewed as equal, then both could be forwarded. Timms

said the CAC would be making a recommendation to the Project Development Team, which will make the decision.

Lewin said it seems that each concept has distinct strengths and weakness, but now with refinement, both seem equal. There was discussion about possible differences in emergency response times. Also, the Lowry design would separate truck traffic, but not quite as well on west side as Table 1.

Lowry brought up the possibility of the Table 1 design with an underpass. Staff said that if this group wants it, ODOT will commit to look at the underpass idea. He said both seem like good plans. He is concerned about east-side traffic circulation. It seems that the Lowry design is a little better for the community on the east side. On the west side, Table 1 is better because of jug-handle access opportunities.

Harry Page wants a design that would keep school buses away from truck traffic, and Table 1 seems to do that.

Terry Helfrich said he likes both designs. Table 1 serves Rays and other west-side businesses far better. The east side offers opportunity for new development. It also seems to be better for Phoenix Hills. He likes the way access was provided to Luman Road and the Shoppes 24 – he said it is great and the best that can be done and people will get use to new routes. He said he was leaning to favoring Table 1.

Joan Haukom said that as an east-side resident, neither design moves trucks far enough away. She would like to see better ped-bike access. The better design is Table 1, but likes both.

Murray LaHue said he likes both designs.

Pauly Hinesly likes west side of Table 1 and east side of the Lowry design. She suggested forwarding both so that both can be put to test. At this point, the CAC has done the best that it can.

Mark Gibson said both have positives and negatives, and he doesn't want to omit either at this point.

Dack Doggett said the designs hurt all Hwy. 99 businesses, but he can't see solution. Extensive work has gone into the designs, and he's concerned that the project favors new businesses over existing businesses, and catering to something – potential future growth -- that doesn't exist. It seems like traffic is being diverted away from businesses. He would favor Table 1 over the Lowry design.

Lee Carrau said Table 1 is a little better – it probably would be faster to get to Rays from the east side than it is now. Table 1 would be better for the west side, but in any development of this kind someone will get hurt.

The CAC voted as follows:

Alternative	Yes	No	Abstain
CAC Table 1	9	0	0
Lowry	5	2	2

A “yes” vote indicated a desire to carry the concept forward into the Environmental Assessment; “no” vote indicated a desire to drop the concept from further consideration from this point forward.

6. Next Steps

Debbie Timms, David Pyles, ODOT

Timms said all the same information from this meeting will go to the PDT tomorrow and they decide which concepts to forward into the Environmental Assessment. Then the committees will step back while the study is conducted. There will not be any meetings for a while, while all environmental impacts are analyzed. This will take a few months.

Committees will reconvene to review some of the technical data in perhaps three or four months. After that, a public draft Environmental Assessment will be released and there will be a 45-day public comment period and formal public hearing. The public hearing will have a more formal format than the Open House meetings.

Helfrich asked about the project schedule and Timms said the project has taken the amount of time that it needed to take to bring out and address community concerns. However, the project has fallen a bit behind schedule.

Pyles introduced himself and the Interchange Area Management Plan, a project addressing land uses around the interchange. He distributed a handout about the project, which described the purpose of an IAMP—protecting the function of the interchange. The plan governs land use and accesses, and is required by state rules for major project such as this one. (Handout in project file.) Pyles said this CAC may be a logical base from which to draw members for an IAMP CAC. All CAC members are invited to apply for the IAMP CAC. Timms said this plan has to be done before construction can start. The plan will have land use and access impacts. Pyles said that although the project is not yet started, some staff would be going on. The plan is to be done by mid summer, and finalized in the fall with city adopting in the winter. There was some discussion about possible conflicts among some CAC members who might serve on this CAC. Pyles said meeting should begin in February or March.

Timms announced that there will not be a CAC meeting in February, and that staff would notify members in advance of the next meeting. She thanked the CAC and the public for attending.