



MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: August 2, 2006

Purpose: Fern Valley Interchange Project
Citizen Advisory Committee, Project Development Team Meeting

Distribution: CAC Members, Project Development Team, Public

From: Sue Casavan, RVCOG

Date Prepared: August 2006

CAC Attendees: Bob Korfhage, Terry Helfrich, David Lewin, Joan Haukom, Dack Doggett, Pauly Hinesly, Lee Carrau, Harry Page, Lenny Neimark, Tani Wouters, Mark Gibson, David Lowry, and Madison Taylor

CAC Absent: No members were absent.

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

Other Attendees: 83 members of the public signed in (sign-in sheet in file)

PDT Attendees: Jerry Marmon, Brian Sheadel, Christina Fera-Thomas, Peter Schuytema, ODOT; Jim Wear, Phoenix; Dale Petrasek, Jackson County; Murray LaHue, Phoenix City Council; Nick Fortey, FHWA; Dan Moore, RVMPO/RVCOG

1. Introductions, Review Agenda, Approve Minutes

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Guarino began the meeting at 6:35 and explained that this was a joint meeting with the CAC (Citizen's Advisory Committee) and the PDT (Project Development Team). She said this was an informational session and that no decisions would be made this evening. The committees started with introductions and reviewed the agenda for tonight's meeting. She asked committee members to review the CAC and PDT minutes for changes or corrections. Tani Wouters asked to clarify her statement on page 6 as follows: "Tani W. congratulated the committee on what they have done in the past 2 years, and said the reason we (the business association and concerned citizens) have been able to accomplish in 5 months what the committees have been unable to do in 18 is because we were able to step outside the box in terms of exceptions and standards, then pull the community together and roll up our sleeves to explore new alternatives directly with ODOT". On page six of the June minutes "one month" was changed to "five months." Tani W. submitted the following personal comment: "No disrespect or lack of appreciation for the challenges, difficulties, and hard work that you, the members of the CAC and PDT, have had to face was intended or meant." Minutes were approved with additions and corrections as stated.

2. Public Comments

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Muriel Johnson said she was concerned with the Phoenix United Plan which proposes keeping the Fern Valley and North/South Phoenix intersection where it is now. She explained how this would affect the neighborhood and quality of life with increased noise, health issues, increased emissions, etc. She said the intersection appearing in this proposal was a conflict of interest as Mr. Neimark, one of the CAC members who helped craft the Phoenix United Plan owns a parcel of land on this corner. She called the ethics committee in Salem and asked about this issue which falls under the ORS 244 provision. She was told that a conflict of interest must be stated in writing by any individual who is appointed to a committee if the meetings are in public. She wanted to hear from everyone on the CAC if:

1. They were affected financially - loss or gain, for any part of a proposal
2. Their business was affected financially
3. A relative was affected financially

She said each resident moved to Phoenix for different reasons and felt the City of Phoenix should have never built a subdivision if they continually force them to accept the unacceptable, from truck roads in many backyards, several years of dangerous roads for pedestrians, bicyclists, and cars. She believed last count was 4 deaths and one critical injury in the last 1 and ½ years. She said we knew there was a truck stop and other commercial properties on the east side, but now that there are nearly 200 homes in the subdivision and they deserved a quality of life that is not compromised. She further added that their homes were worth enough value to have a voice in this decision. A homeowner's association was started last spring and members took a petition around stating they were not in favor of the east side intersection as presented in the Phoenix United Plan. She gave the committees 159 signatures.

Guarino asked CAC members to state their financial interest, if any, in the project area.

Pauly Hinesly: No interest financially or business wise, I am just a concerned citizen

David Lewin: I have no financial interest.

Bob Korfhage: I have no financial interest, relatives, or businesses related to this project.

Tani Wouters: I was voted in for the small business representation and we do have a small business in Phoenix.

David Lowry: I am a part owner in the largest commercial parcel on the interchange, approximately 35 acres, all of the plans go through that property and I was selected for the committee specifically to represent the large landholders that will be affected by the project.

Terry Helfrich: I am an employee of Harry and David and they have 15 acres within the project area.

Joan Haukom: I have no financial interest or business interest in the area.

Dack Doggett: I am representing large business and I am the store manager of Ray's Food Place which is right on 99 and will be affected by some of the decisions to be made.

Lenny Neimark: I was voted into the CAC to represent the development community and I do own property in Phoenix in the project area.

Madison Taylor: I don't have any business interests, relatives, or financial interests.

Guarino thanked the committee and pointed out that the members consisted of a mixed representation and that these people make recommendations. She explained some of the members were asked to join the CAC strictly because of their interest and their concern about the area from a business standpoint and others were asked because they felt they had no financial interest in the area. She added that the people who make the final decisions, the PDT, are people who do not have a financial stake in the project area.

Leone Holden said she was a downtown business owner and Phoenix Chamber of Commerce President. She presented a letter from the chamber in which the Board of the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce voted unanimously in the affirmative to endorse the PABPO plan; membership is comprised of approximately 125 businesses and individual members.

Rosalie Lindvig said that according to the news media ODOT is currently borrowing money from future projects to pay for current projects, based on the fact that ODOT had stated many times they do not have the funds to build the SPUI in Phoenix, why are SPUI's still under consideration.

Art Anderson responded that as it stands right now we do not have another viable alternative on the table as voted on by the CAC and PDT. We have to keep viable alternatives under consideration until they are voted out. He said cost is an issue and if another alternative is found that is within budget it will be the CAC and PDT decision to move on.

Rosalie L. asked, we know we don't have the money and we are borrowing money to continue what we are doing now then why don't you rescind the SPUIs and go on with something more viable that the rest of the town and the business people can live with.

Jerry M. explained that there were a couple more alternatives on the table at this point, the SPUIs are still on the table and we will take an objective look at which ones meet the purpose and need, goals and objectives of this project and evaluate them objectively using the criteria we have established and at that point if these teams feel that the SPUIs should not move forward that will be the decision.

Jay Harland from Craig Stone & Associates handed out a memo (in project file) requesting the committee to consider access management, land-use issues, existing infrastructure, and project cost-effectiveness criteria in forming their recommendations to the PDT. He said one of the recent alternatives published on the Internet depicts North Phoenix Road looping to the east, well outside the urban growth boundary. This alignment does not comply with state land use law relating to transportation improvements. Lenny N. asked if one of the companies he represented was also represented by a member of the CAC. David Lowry said it was the property he earlier described.

David Lewin asked if some of the connections they were looking at cross EFU land and wanted to know if when they deal with EFU land if members needed to be aware of something.

Jerry M. said there are regulatory requirements for re-aligning roads on EFU land and they needed to be aware of what those are, particularly in assessing the feasibility of the alignment that goes on the east side of Arrowhead Ranch. The teams evaluated that particular alternative and it was correct that it would require a goal exception and that going around the east side of Arrowhead Ranch is not a feasible option.

Tani W. asked if a goal exception was required on some of the SPUIs they looked at.

Jerry M. said the SPUIs would not require a goal exception, although they were not entirely in the UGB.

Terry H. read a statement written by the Phoenix City Council, signed by the mayor and all council members. He said the Phoenix City Council forwarded a recommendation previously to the CAC and the PDT in support of the Table 1 SPUI as well as the Lowry SPUI. ODOT revealed the two SPUIs would greatly impact not only Highway 99 corridor business but the safety of the citizens. The City Council listened to both business and citizens and together with ODOT decided to see if any other alternatives would provide the same v/c ratio to make a similar fit for all concerned. A design emerged from the PABPO that utilizes the existing footprint of the Fern Valley Interchange. The Phoenix City Council believes this design is the best alternative for the city. However, if any discovery of flaws occurs they do not withstand. The City Council is therefore recommending to the CAC and PDT that the PABPO alternative be forwarded for environmental assessment. Terry H. added this letter was signed on Monday, August 1, 2006, and was based on information from the last CAC/PDT meeting two months ago.

3. Project Update

Debbie Timms, ODOT

Timms said the last meeting was June 7th and that tonight Nancy R. will present the history of alternative development to explain the process. She said since January, when we approved and recommended the two SPUIs, there has been considerable reworking of the designs, and new design recommendations produced by TPAU and PABPO. We needed to look at the two recommendations from TPAU and the PABPO and put them through the fatal flaw analysis, which means to look at a particular alternative based on design standards, geometric spacing, standard for signals, and the safety of the design if a major deviation is taken. She said this will be part of the meeting tonight.

4. History of Alternative Development

Nancy Reynolds, URS

Reynolds said she wanted members to step back and get some perspective on alternative development for big transportation projects. She explained everything occurring here is normal for a project like this. She said we have been working on developing this project for over two years. It is confusing, frustrating, time-consuming, and controversial. A lot of different perspectives have been brought to the table and we have been trying to balance them. The project is difficult to manage and complex but it can be done. She added that it is important to step back and think about the purpose and need of the project, whether it is something the community can live with, and whether it will function safely. The whole process is continuing refinement. People will be impacted, but we will try to minimize it as much as we can. Reynolds wanted to reassure members that this is how it works on all projects of this kind, and was happy to see the public involvement as it makes for a better project. The focus is on how to make the alternatives better.

5. Follow-up: South Stage & David Lewin Option

Brian Sheadel and Peter Schuytema, ODOT

Sheadel presented the follow-up work on South Stage. He said the question of adding an interchange at South Stage Road and keeping Fern Valley as it is has been analyzed. He said they found when adding an interchange at South Stage Road that it would not affect the eastern side of Fern Valley and that under current comprehensive plans for Phoenix and Medford there was no significant benefit to having the interchange at this time. It would primarily benefit South Medford and it actually pulled more traffic into the study area and increased local traffic on I-5. Sheadel said under the processes there was no significant benefit to this project.

David Lewin asked about an overpass at South Stage and said a lot of growth will take place in the area of South Stage.

Schuytema explained the overpass was looked at also and they did not find a significant benefit. He said it does not meet the purpose and need of this project and cannot be part of this project.

Murray LaHue asked about the impact of housing from the golf course and the additional 1,352 houses that will be added. He said the traffic does impact Fern Valley and that they are using Fern Valley. He commented that it needed to be kept up front and thought about.

Timms said the City of Medford is looking at an overcrossing in that area, the developers are looking at areas where an overcrossing would be needed and that they are looking at mitigation and additional costs.

Madison T. asked Peter S. if the study was based on seasonal workers at Bear Creek as it greatly increases the amount of traffic.

Peter S. said employment information is confidential and it is up to the individual employer of how they present it.

Nick F., of FHWA, said one thing they look at is adverse operational or safety impacts with a new interchange and if it would have operational effects on freeway traffic. He explained

that they would look for other alternatives that would route traffic using a local network that could make maximum use of the local network and not be routed to the freeway.

Dan M. said a South Stage overcrossing is in the long-range plan of the Medford Regional Transportation Plan but the golf course development is not currently part of the Medford Comprehensive Plan and was not included in the model. He added that when the development takes place the plan and model would be updated with the current information and the transportation associated with that identified. He said that would be done in the future and analyzed.

David Lewin asked if it was in the Medford plan for the overcrossing to include enough space for an interchange twenty years down the road.

Dan M. said he did not have that information but that question could be asked and reported back to these committees.

David Lewin gave an overview of his alternative design and said his motive was to see if a better alternative with less impact could be designed. He said it is surprisingly close to what PBA came up with.

- Keep as close as possible to the existing 5 lanes down Hwy. 99
- Remove median on Cheryl and permit all turns into Cheryl
- Need to determine if it can handle the traffic, still looking at it

Fera-Thomas said she thought they would be able to make the 5 lanes work.

Jim W. commented that they have used the term fatal flaws, he thinks one of the biggest flaws is not accommodating for future growth, and that Phoenix is growing rapidly. He said the interchange would be at capacity soon and they needed to consider South Stage in future plans.

6. Alternatives Revisions

Brian Sheadel and Peter Schuytema, ODOT

Brian Sheadel said ODOT engineering and interchange design group took a look at the PBA Diamond and the TPAU Diamond. He reviewed the PBA option first.

PBA Option - Three things came up that need to be revised

1. Bolz connection that goes eastbound back to the interchange was designed as a 25-mph curve. The whole facility was designed at 35-mph so it is 10-mph below standard. Need to negotiate 25-mph curve with potential head-on situation with westbound traffic. We went to a 30-mph curve with concrete barrier.

2. On the east side of the freeway connection to Pear Tree Lane the previous proposal showed as right-in right-out. When people try to make right-out they will try to get across 3 lanes to get to North Phoenix. Weaving distance deemed unacceptable and was modified to right-in only.

Joan H. asked if the traffic would come out on Furry and Brian S. said that is correct.

3. The design team found a lack of available left turn storage for northbound and southbound on-ramps, that the deceleration lanes were too short so changes were made. Sheadel said this kind of interchange will probably not last 10 years and therefore is not economically viable to construct. If it was widened to 8-lanes, it handles the 20 year design but extra width takes more

ROW on the approaches east and west of the interchange and the structure is considered large for the area and out of context.

Peter S. said a modification of the 6-lane diamond is proposed that adds a loop ramp in the southeast quadrant. A 25-mph loop and is acceptable. With the loop ramp, both ramp terminals will meet the 20 year life span standard and will accommodate some future growth, but not as much as a SPUI. This will require the removal of Pear Tree Lane connection and the Texaco gas station. Peter S. said we spent a lot of time working through the alternatives and we ended up with something in between the two.

David Lewin asked if a SPUI automatically implied that it had to be 8 lanes on Highway 99, or if it would be possible to have 5 or 6 lanes.

Peter S. said SPUIs are interchangeable and will work with almost any configuration on Highway 99. The SPUI was designed to handle the current Phoenix comprehensive growth plan. He said the loop ramp could be added to the basic 6-lane, especially the PBA option. Adding it on to the TPAU diamond would have more impact on the truck stop. The loop could be phased in as a separate project fairly easily.

Tani W. asked if what they have done was a combination, a compromise, mixing and matching and working them together so there is not one extreme that is detrimental and another extreme that does not meet future growth. She commented that she thought it was a great compromise and that is right where we want to be.

David Lowry handed out maps and wanted to let everyone know that he will be passing this on to the design team. He said it looks at the question of whether North Phoenix Road should go to the east or the west of the knoll. He used a geological survey program and routed roads on both sides and found that by going to the west it was considerably shorter and by picking the correct route there was not much elevation change.

Due to time constraints discussion of this agenda item will continue at the September meeting.

7. Next Steps

Debbie Timms, ODOT

Timms said they will be finishing up discussion on the alternatives revisions and the David Lowry information. She said we will take the 2 new alternatives we have on board and using the evaluation criteria we will start weighing them against each other, filter them out and figure out what will go to the document.

8. Public Comment

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Lisa Sandrock commented that from most everything she heard there were 1,300 proposed houses that no one has taken responsibility for as far as traffic, Medford doesn't want it and Phoenix doesn't have it. She said it is not in Medford's comp plan and if there is no accountability how is it possible to do future projections without all the numbers.

Timms said Medford had to amend their comp plan and could not be counted until it was in the comp plan.

Jerry M. added that when the City of Medford does take that land into their UGB they will be required to account for it.

Glen Archambault said he has had a great deal of experience with the east side of the valley and wanted to point out something he felt was not apparent to most people. He explained on the east side agricultural lands are dropping in use rapidly. He commented that even though it is not within our zoning and land use planning we will see a tremendous increase in urban traffic from the east to the west side of the valley. The agricultural base is declining rapidly and without accurate numbers most of what we are planning will be inaccurate.

9. Comfort Check

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Pauly H. – I have been asked several times, ‘Are they going to make a decision tonight or not?’ There are a lot more things going on than a decision being made one way or another. A lot of things have been clarified tonight. It’s good to see a lot people here. Good meeting.

David Lewin – Glad to hear the next steps will be to review the alternatives on the table and to compare them using the same measuring stick. I wish we were moving along a little quicker than we are.

Bob K. – This was a good meeting tonight. I think we are moving in the right direction.

Tani W. – Just wanted to thank the technical ODOT staff for working really hard to find a workable compromise and I am glad to be a part of that.

David Lowry – I have been asked to distribute this material that evaluates these two routes. I’ll go ahead and pass it out to the members. There is the same point of origin for both routes, and I believe based on comments that it will have to be a more westerly route. It was said that Arrowhead Ranch would dedicate the right of way if it goes east, they will also dedicate it if it goes west provided they are brought into the Phoenix Urban Growth Boundary.

Terry H. – When we first started meeting it was a lot smaller forum, looking around tonight at all the participation and the citizens that are here I want to commend everyone for being here. It is good for everyone to be involved in the process and nice to see the community interest.

Joan H. – I am really happy to see residents from the east side here tonight, and the idea of moving Fern Valley further north being addressed again, thank you very much , folks. Good participation, good meeting.

Dack D. – I see we have a lot of options sitting here now in August compared to what we were faced with in January. Looking at the people involved now; I felt we did not have options that were viable at that time. We were forced to look at two SPUIs and now we have other alternatives to look at. As Jerry said earlier, no one has made a movement to remove the SPUIs off the table and I would like to do that. I think we would like to speed this up and start focusing on the other alternatives that are viable. Focus on the alternatives with the

least amount of impact that meet the purpose and need. I would like to move to rescind a vote to the CAC and the PDT back in January, and eliminate the SPUIs.

Discussion:

Jerry M. asked if this was a motion to the CAC.

Dack D. said we have alternatives now that we did not have in January.

Jerry M. said he was confused on the motion itself and wanted to know if it was to recommend dropping the SPUIs altogether.

Dack D. responded that it was to rescind the recommendations that the CAC and the PDT were asked to vote on.

David Lowry said he wanted to raise a point of order; the meeting has moved on from a point of where we were to take those kinds of actions and I think personally this whole movement to remove the SPUIs that people are recognizing there is going to be tremendous need for capacity and to just remove those I think it would be irresponsible, but I don't think this is a point in the meeting to even consider it.

Jerry M. suggested that when we come back to the next meeting we will have comparisons of the SPUIs and other alternatives maybe from a process standpoint it would be more appropriate at that time because we would have some objective criteria to make that recommendation. He said there are still some unknowns.

Tani W. said the problem was back in January they felt they had no other choices; the idea is to rescind that vote at that particular time.

Debbie T. explained that if the CAC wants to take a vote to make a recommendation, the PDT members are the ones who take the recommendation and vote. She said the guidelines that these teams accepted asked us to take CAC recommendations and to give the PDT two months later to make the vote and she asked members if that was still workable.

Tani W. said we have all pulled back from the two SPUIs that were voted on and want to formally recognize that.

David Lowry said he strongly disagreed with part of what Tani was saying and said he had certainly not backed off from the SPUI idea. Where I am at and some of this group we say we are getting somewhere on the west side plan, I think I heard Peter say the west side plan would work with any of the alternatives, at least in theory, that's something to take a look at, I have not rescinded anything.

Bob K. said he also shared that feeling, he felt it was way too premature at this time without looking at all the alternatives on the same playing field to make any kind of recommendation or decision before that time.

Terry H. added that he needed to look at all the alternatives also.

Madison T. thought members did not understand the motion was not to remove the SPUIs from consideration, but only to rescind the recommendation that the SPUIs move forward to the EIS.

Debbie T. asked if they could say it the other way, can we leave the two alternatives on the table and add two others to prevent taking a step back.

Madison T. said that was the idea, to use the criteria and judge all 4 alternatives equally without making a decision until we have looked at all the criteria.

Lenny N. - Thank you for all your hard work, all the compromises. He asked that the members of the CAC get a blank template of the evaluation criteria.

Madison T. - Meeting went really well, sometimes there are communication problems and we are saying the same thing. Overall huge steps and compromises, community support for their opinions being considered, good meeting.

Mark G. - Think we might be making progress, not sure. I hope we will after 2 1/2 years, seems like we have some kind of compromise taking effect and that is good.

Murray L. - We need to take a look at all the alternatives using the same criteria. I want to comment on the attendance at this meeting, attendance precludes rumors and everybody's life is a little easier. If you need information call someone on these committees. You know who we are. We are available and ask if we can give you any guidance or information on what is current. Call someone who knows what is going on and ask the questions.

Jerry M. - I think tonight's meeting was great and I feel we are moving in a positive direction. We are coming to some kind of agreement in the middle and that is where we need to be.

Jim W. - I want to reiterate the tremendous impact that growth will have on this. There are another 150 acres on the Phoenix side of that golf course that will be the next to develop and they will use the Phoenix interchange. Any capacity that we gain there will get used up by Medford first and that is why the South Stage Interchange will become more of a need. How we address that here will be critical.

Brian S. - I am comfortable

Lee C. - Don't listen to rumors, all of us attend these meetings and this last year we have seen a tremendous increase and it is a big plus for us.

Harry P. - I just want to applaud everyone for staying the course I think it is very important.

Nick F. - It is important to go over the process. The idea is to get to the decision process and part of that process is taking a little longer -- looking at some other alternatives and working with them. Look at a full range of reasonable alternatives and impacts.

Dale P. - I am glad the process is starting to move ahead since January. I would like to echo Jim about that area between Medford and Phoenix and we all know it is coming. As we look at the alternatives we need to look at which ones will provide the best opportunity for growth.

Dan M. - I appreciate the opportunity to meet jointly with the CAC and PDT. This is a great forum. I have learned a lot more tonight about what the issues are and I look forward to working together in the future to resolve these conflicts in transportation.

Christina F. - Good meeting and we are heading in the right direction now.

Peter S. - The community is heading in the right direction.

10. Agenda Build for Next CAC Meeting

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Guarino asked if anyone had anything to add to the next agenda and told them to contact her if anything arises. She thanked everyone for coming.

11. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 8:55 p.m.

Next meeting : Wednesday, September 6, 2006 from 6:30-8:30 p.m.
 Phoenix High School Commons
 Phoenix, Oregon