



MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: Oct. 5, 2005

Purpose: Fern Valley Interchange Project
Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting

Distribution: CAC Members, Project Development Team, public

From: Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Date Prepared: Oct. 6, 2005

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

CAC Absent: Bill Rombach, Harry Page, 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 reviewed the agenda for tonight's meeting, and said the main focus will continue to winnow down the number of alternatives that the project will continue to refine and evaluate.

A request for approval of the Sept. 7, 2005, CAC Minutes was made. There was a question raised about the Open House, and minutes will be corrected to reflect Open House public comments were least supportive of the Lewin SPUI design (not the Lowry design, as stated in the draft minutes). There were no other changes and the minutes were approved as amended.

2. Update on Project Development Team Action

Debbie Timms, ODOTs

Timms said the PDT agreed in September to drop the South Stage Road overcrossing from further consideration because it would not improve traffic on Fern Valley Road. The PDT postponed other project decisions.

3. Update on Public Comments and City Council Action

Debbie Timms, ODOT

Timms reviewed a memo outlining public comments and Phoenix City Council actions. She noted that comments included a letter with more than 100 signatures from Bear Lake Estates, opposing a second entrance off Hwy. 99. She noted that the City Council decided first to recommend the CAC Table 1 design, then in a formal meeting decided to recommend both Table 1 and the Lowry designs. Meeting minutes were available if anyone wanted to see them.

4. Review & Discuss Evaluation Criteria

Nancy Reynolds, URS, Jerry Marmon, ODOT

Reynolds referred to the evaluation criteria report distributed to CAC and the public. She said the PDT has to look at mandatory criteria and the only design that did not meet mandatory criteria was the diamond. That was because it doesn't meet the traffic criteria. What is on the matrix is staff view as to how concepts measure against the objectives. It is subjective, and a matter of opinion for evaluation purposes only; the CAC doesn't have to adopt the opinions on the matrix. The matrix is a tool to help people make recommendations. She invited discussion about the ratings and additional comments. Lewin said he thinks the Lewin alternative has a fatal flaw and would like to withdraw it from further discussion. He said the problem is queue lengths at the southern end of the loop. The group agreed to wait until the vote to remove it from discussion. Nancy also said the group doesn't have to agree on ratings.

In discussion about capacity Lowry said all three plans meet criteria. However, there are differences between the alternatives as to how much capacity they have. He said the Lowry alternative should be rated medium. Lowry said he received the RVMPO TAZ map for the area, and the traffic forecasts aren't large enough especially for Phoenix. Schuytema said growth outside the boundaries is added to the traffic model. Lewin asked if it would be correct to say that capacity will be used up before 2030 because a lot of Phoenix potential growth isn't included in the model. Lowry also doubted the significance of future forecasts.

He said the CAC has to make decisions based on another factors. He can't say one concept would be better traffic-wise than another. Jerry pointed out that the project can't make decisions based on speculative information, but Lowry said the CAC could make such decisions. Lowry said Table 1 won't necessarily be better. Lewin said decisions have to be based on some set of criteria and these are the best available. The population forecast may be too low for Phoenix but it would have to be approaching Medford in size before the outcome of the modeling would change. Terry Helfrich said there will be some kind of growth in east Phoenix eventually, but Fern Valley has limited growth potential. He thinks the model fits better the way Phoenix is likely to grow. Staff noted that if a project has excess capacity it would attract traffic that otherwise would go elsewhere. Lee Carrau asked how wide North Phoenix Road will be; Schuytema said in the project it will be four lanes.

Lowry asked about truck movements and questioned the queuing noting that on Table 1 trucks would have to make two left turns to return to the interstate – how is it better than what is there now? he asked. Marmon said the queue would be shorter because there would be little traffic. Helfrich asked about the location of the Pear Tree entrance; except under Table 1 the entrance would stay on Fern Valley. Lewin said emergency vehicles would have longer distances to travel under Table 1, but staff noted that there could be longer travel times with the Lowry design because of queued trucks. It is a tradeoff between distance and travel times.

There was a question about the process. Marmon said there is no limit on the number of options to forward for more study. The next step will be to look at variations on the design. He asked if the group is comfortable with the criteria. Hinesly asked about bike paths and noted that all of the options rank similar. Marmon said the diamond is not as pedestrian friendly as the SPUI. Lowry questioned the low rating for the Lowry SPUI design because it impacts just a corner of one development. Reynolds said it would be substantial because it would be a large, busy intersection that also would impact the neighborhood. Helfrich said citizens have complained about concepts that are too close to Phoenix Hills, and Table 1 is better for Phoenix Hills.

5. Discuss/Recommend East Side Alternatives

Nancy Reynolds, URS, Debbie Timms, ODOT

Discussion of interchange type

Staff said the decision at this point is between the diamond and SPUI (Single Point Urban Interchange).

Public comment on interchange type

Jim Wear said the city and Petro truck stop have an agreement concerning continued access to Fern Valley Road. If access from Pear Tree Lane to Fern Valley Road goes away, Furry Road will be closed, which would put all of the station's traffic closer to the neighborhood.

A woman asked about Home Depot access and location; Timms said it will be worked out in the design process.

A woman asked about maintaining a crossing on Fern Valley Road; Sheadel said it can't be done because the structure would be very high and the slope and distance would be excessive: it would necessitate a very large structure.

There was discussion about isolating east side neighborhoods. Schuytema said there could be a multi-use path to serve neighborhood with separate access.

Dean Martin, Phoenix City Council member, and Jim Sharp of Jacksonville spoke in favor of a SPUI because it can handle large volumes of traffic safely.

CAC discussion/recommendation on interchange type

All eight members voted to drop the Diamond from further consideration. All eight members voted to keep the Single Point Urban Interchange.

Discussion of east side connecting roads

The remaining alternatives were identified. CAC members said they didn't have any more questions about the alternatives.

Public comment on east side connecting roads

Lenny Neimark favored the Lowry option, noting impact on existing businesses, travel time and safety response. He said Table 1 funnels traffic into Medford, merges Home Depot traffic with local traffic and marginalizes existing business. He expressed concern over Fern Valley Road turning into a dead end street under the Table 1 design. The best option would be some combination of Lowry and Table 1.

A woman said that for evacuation plans, Lowry is better because it keeps Fern Valley a through street, and it looks like it could move more cars and people out of the east side.

Dean Martin said the city council endorsed both the Lowry and Table 1 options. Also, the city planning department has said that Table 1 cuts off one corner of the Home Depot building's current design.

Gary Hall suggested regarding the Lowry option that moving the Fern Valley Road alignment north would give trucks access, and allows truck traffic to turn back onto old Fern Valley to get to the truck stop. Shifting Fern Valley north also may accommodate the belt line that ODOT has discussed. Staff noted spacing requirements that may not work.

CAC Discussion/Recommendation on east side connecting roads

The CAC was asked to make recommendation on the three remaining options by a show of hands. CAC noted that the queuing would be too long with the Lewin design option. They voted as shown on the table below.

Concept	Keep for further study	Drop now
Lewin	0	8
Lowry	7	1
Table 1	7	1

Refinement Discussion

The CAC began to look at the remaining options for refinement, and design details that could improve the options.

CAC Table 1 SPUI Design refinement discussion

- CAC Table 1 design problem is out-of-direct travel, so move intersection on Fern Valley connector as far south as possible.
- Have middle turn lane.
- Build underpasses on each side of freeway on each side for access.
- Topography is limiting with a steep slope, so the Fern Valley connector road could be shifted to the west to avoid the slope. Discussion continued about avoiding the slope.

Lowry SPUI Design refinement discussion

- Lowry concern about separating truck traffic from residential traffic. ODOT will flesh out idea of moving Fern Valley Road to the north, and keeping existing Fern Valley Road as a frontage road for truck access. The drawn intersection likewise would move north. The challenge will be getting a left out movement for Petro Trucks. This design refinement would probably satisfy agreement with Petro as far as providing access to them from Fern Valley Road.

7. Public Comment

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Dean Martin said this group is doing a great job and thanked the CAC.

John Graves commented that it's important to get the single occupant vehicles off the road. There should be a park and ride at every new interchange to encourage carpools and public transit use.

A man recommended that Petro be contacted regarding project design.

6. Next Steps

Debbie Timms, ODOT

There will be no meeting in November in order for ODOT to have time to do design refinements. If the best solution does not exactly meet the standards, there is a process for bending those standards as long as there are good reasons for the exceptions. She thanked the CAC and the public for attending.

It was announced that the next CAC meeting will be possibly be in December; people will be notified. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.