



## MEETING MINUTES

- Meeting Date:** July 6, 2005
- Purpose:** Fern Valley Interchange Project  
Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting
- Distribution:** CAC Members, Project Development Team, public
- From:** Vicki Guarino, RVCOG
- Date Prepared:** July 14, 2005
- CAC Attendees:** Terry Helfrich, David Lowry, David Lewin, Bob Korfhage, George Cota, Dack Doggett, Pauly Hinesly, Mark Gibson, Harry Page, Bill Rombach.
- CAC Absent:** Wendie Nichols, Joan Haukom
- Project Team Attendees:** Jerry Marmon, ODOT Environmental Project Manager  
Debbie Timms, ODOT Project Manager  
Brian Sheadel, ODOT Senior Designer  
Peter Schuytema, ODOT Engineer  
Christina Fera-Thomas, ODOT  
Emily Moshofsky, URS Corp. Project Manager  
Vicki Guarino, RVCOG
- Other Attendees:** Sandy Christiansen, Murray LaHue, Mike McKey, Bob Nelson, Gary Hall, Bill Nelson, Jeannell Wyntergreen, Murray LaHue, Bruce Sophie, Lee Carrau, Larry Parducci, Dean Martin, Lorraine Sexton, Vicki Bear, Jim Wear, Carlos DeBritto, Sam Fung, Muriel Johnson, Carol Engle.

## **1. Review of agenda and process/Approve Minutes**

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG Facilitator

Guarino reviewed the agenda for tonight's meeting.

A request for approval of the June 1, 2005, CAC Minutes was made. There were no corrections or additions. The minutes were approved as written.

## **2. Review East-West Connections**

Christina Fera-Thomas, ODOT

Referring to a handout distributed at the meeting and a PowerPoint presentation, Fera-Thomas reviewed findings for east-west connections and concluding with the recommendation that both Northridge and South Stage crossings be dropped because neither would make a significant improvement to traffic flows at Fern Valley. Dave Lewin asked what a significant improvement would be; Peter Schuytema there would need to be at least a 10 percent reduction in traffic and modeling showed a 12 percent decrease, which is barely anything. The CAC voted, with 9 members agreeing with staff findings and voting to recommend the elimination of both Northridge and South Stage connections from further consideration; and one CAC member voting to continue consideration of South Stage Road.

## **3. Discussion of Options and Alternatives**

Christina Fera-Thomas, Peter Schuytema

Fera-Thomas began by presenting findings for the Fourth Street connection, describing the queue diagrams. Options showed queues with the connection remaining open at Ray's market. Dave Lewin pointed out that queuing is longer for the Ray's connection option with traffic lights.

Regarding the 4<sup>th</sup> St connection, Lewin said moving the connection to 5<sup>th</sup> Street might reduce delays, but would set up problems with connections to other roads. Staff findings show traffic backed up through the couplet. Lewin said this option appears to be worse than the baseline. He asked if there is any way to avoid creating the congestion problem; Peter Schuytema said moving the connection down a block and widening the couplet may improve traffic, but probably would create wetland problems. Lowry said this option would turn Phoenix into a traffic jam, so Ray's connection is better. If the project chose 4<sup>th</sup> Street, there would be environmental and traffic impacts, so the 4<sup>th</sup> Street connection isn't going to fly. Terry Helfrich asked for more information about the environmental impacts. Jerry Marmon said the project would have to show that this is the best alternative. In this particular instance, the project would have a weak case because there are better alternatives.

In discussion, it was noted that the Bolz, Cheryl and Ray's connections all have the same downtown impacts. Reviewing an aerial photograph of the area with the connection options drawn in, Debbie Timms noted that the Ray's option would cut off Cheryl Street and the Jack-in-the-Box restaurant, so the question is how to provide access. Terry Helfrich questioned the capacities shown; staff said the modeling is based on growth projected in the city comprehensive plan.

Fera-Thomas summarized findings for Fourth Street, showing a 6-lane cross-section, with excessive queues and insufficient storage. Looking at the 4<sup>th</sup> Street layout on the aerial, Terry Helfrich asked whether lights could solve the problem, and was told that in the modeling the lights were timed in best possible way. The model showed that there would need to be a 7-lane couplet and no driveway access. Also, there would need to be additional southbound lanes on Hwy. 99. Lowry said the triangular downtown area would lose much access. Bill Rombach expressed concern about impacts on southbound Hwy. 99. Timms responded that some right or left in/out turns could be preserved.

The CAC voted on the 4<sup>th</sup> Street option, with 7 members voting to recommend that it be dropped, and 2 voting to keep it in consideration. Pauly Hinesly said she was concerned about the cut off for Jacksonville, so she abstained. After further discussion about the traffic analysis, she decided to vote to drop, making the final vote 8 to 2 to recommend dropping the 4<sup>th</sup> Street connection option.

Discussion continued on the Cheryl, Ray's and Bolz connections to identify which one(s) might be eliminated from further consideration. Brian Sheadel showed aerials with each concept drawn in, starting with the Cheryl Street connection concept. It was noted that this option would require Hwy. 99 to be widened to accommodate the additional turning lane. This would take out businesses at northeastern corner of existing Hwy. 99/Fern Valley intersection. This also requires replacing bridge over Coleman Creek. In response to a CAC question it was noted that Hwy. 99 improvements would go as far as Rose Street. Dave Lowry said this also wipes out businesses and moves the center of gravity farther north away from downtown. Others noted benefit of connecting to an existing street, however more traffic would move to Rose and it would seem that would require a signal.

The Bolz connection was illustrated on the aerial. Lane configurations and land uses were discussed. Terry Helfrich noted that everything drawn in red is part of the project, including widening Hwy. 99 and adding sidewalks to meet urban standards. There were questions about maintaining access to Cheryl Street and Ray's Market. There were questions about putting a signal light at Cheryl, but that intersection probably is too close to permit a light. Generally, it was noted that this option preserves more access, CAC members said. Several CAC members liked this, but Lowry said that we may see later that that is not so good. Jerry Marmon said that is why there will be further analysis. Sheadel said traffic could use the old road for access, but the project still would have to replace the bridge over Bear Creek. In response to a question from Dave Lewin, it was noted that this option would work with all of the proposed interchange alternatives. Lowry suggested focusing on this option because right-of-way issues are more favorable. Also, CAC members liked the connection opportunities. Marmon said the project can make other adjustments as process continues. Dack Doggett said he could accept this as option, but was concerned about maintaining access to Ray's Market; Sheadel said probably Ray's could have left turn access at Cheryl.

The Ray's connection option was introduced on an aerial photo. Lewin clarified that with modifications, this option would become the Bolz option. Fera-Thomas described features of the Ray's option. Lowry wanted more details on Bolz regarding alignment south of Ray's and

maintaining left turn access to Ray's on Cheryl. CAC members were concerned that there won't be access to Bolz. The CAC said there needs to be access to Bolz, and were concerned about how to keep both Cheryl and Bolz accessible. Members discussed current and potential traffic patterns by the high school.

The CAC voted 10-0 to recommend dropping the Cheryl Street option from further consideration.

All 10 CAC members voted to recommend keeping Bolz – with possible adjustments – for further consideration.

Members voted 9-1 to recommend dropping the Ray's option. In considering the Ray's option, Doggett asked if there could be some other version of this, but it became clear that the trade off would be losing access either Cheryl or Bolz, which was not acceptable.

Fera-Thomas continued by showing slides to briefly review east side options. Discussion included possible slight adjustments in lanes and other connections. Options included the Lowry option with either a two-way stop or four-way stop. There is a two-lane roundabout option which would have a rather large diameter to accommodate trucks. Another option is to add a signal. With the Lewin SPUI option, it's not yet known where the accesses would be. Results show the shortest delays on the Table 1 SPUI, which also has potential to accommodate new development. Lowry said a significant concern for these alternatives will be access to the businesses.

#### **4. Next Steps**

Jerry Marmon, Debbie Timms, ODOT

Lane configurations for the east side options will be reviewed at the next meeting. Lowry asked how much work is left on the east side alternatives. Jerry said it should be done in a couple of months. Those alternatives will go into the document.

#### **5. Public Comment**

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Jeannell Wyntergreen said that through the RPS process, Phoenix is looking to become the south valley employment center, and has support from the region and state agencies for this concept. This east side would be a future employment zone – light industrial, heavy commercial uses. If studies or design can't be done for future growth, can we take into consideration the fixes that would be needed in 10 years as the population and economic development is built up? Staff asked to receive details on this employment zone. Jeannell offered to provide maps and documents Phoenix has available, and make a presentation at the next CAC meeting.

Vicki Bear said some alternatives like the Table 1 SPUI go right through Home Depot, which will be built before this comes to fruition. Staff noted that there won't be a new road built through the Home Depot site – the Table 1 SPUI is a concept to work with at this point.

Vicki Bear said it would behoove the CAC to have Wyntergreen speak to the group in order to look at the road plans through an overlay of the future growth of this area of Phoenix. She said Phoenix may be developing too rapidly to ignore developing the South Stage overpass idea.

Carlos DeBritto said that in 25 years, there will probably be an additional interchange. So why not focus at the southern end now. If you put this interchange in the middle of town now, eventually it will have to be broken down to put in south and north interchanges.

Vicki Bear asked if it is too late to entertain the idea of putting this interchange south of where it is now? Debbie Timms said the CAC looked at that and the feeling was that would really break up the town if you weren't given the east-west connectivity where downtown is.

There was discussion on the impact of right-in, right-out access to Bear Lake Estates and the Shoppes at Exit 24. Vicki Bear asked the CAC to look at the economic impact to the shopping center as well as connectivity to Bear Lake Estates, Holiday Park, Coleman Creek, and emergency services to those areas.

Sam Fung said he represented the owner of Bel Air mobile estates, and that regarding the Bolz connection, another option would be to look at connecting to First Street instead. Debbie Timms noted that the CAC considered that possibility in previous meetings, and the stage for looking at those kinds of options is past in order to keep to the timeline.

Bill Rombach the Bolz option is the best option. To drop South Stage from consideration, however, is not a good decision because of the impact it will have on Fern Valley.

There was discussion that if South Stage is kept, money will be cut out of the interchange project. Traffic volume will also be lessened at the Fern Valley interchange. The City of Phoenix supports the South Stage overpass because of their employment center plans and Jeannell Wyntergreen said ODOT has expressed support. Timms said the project purpose and need statement designates the urban growth boundary as the limit of this project area. Through the RPS process, ODOT will be modeling the planning impacts. Members discussed the changes this modeling will make to the options this group has been reviewing.

Dean Martin expressed agreement on keeping the Bolz connection. He asked for clarification on the next steps. Staff confirmed that once the decision is made, then the refinements and details dealing with access to the retail shopping and mobile parks will follow.

## **6. Next Meeting**

Next meeting will be August 3 in the same location.