



MEETING MINUTES

Meeting Date: June 1, 2005

Purpose: Fern Valley Interchange Project
Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting

Distribution: CAC Members, Project Development Team, public

From: Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Date Prepared: June 2 2005

CAC Attendees: Terry Helfrich, David Lowry, David Lewin, Bob Korfhage, George Cota, Dack Doggett, Pauly Hinesly, Joan Haukom, Lee Carrau (for Harry Page)

CAC Absent: Wendie Nichols, Mark Gibson, Bill Rombach

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
Nancy Reynolds, URS Corp. Project Manager
Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Other Attendees: Sandy Christiansen, Murray LaHue, Mike McKey, Bob Nelson, Gary Hall, Bill Nelson, Jeannell Wyntergreen

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 April 6, 2005, CAC Minutes was made. There were no corrections or additions. The minutes were approved as written.

2. Review Status of Alternatives & Options

Jerry Marmon, ODOT

Marmon introduced the decision matrix, mailed to CAC members prior to the meeting. It shows all alternatives and options by CAC and PDT. He explained how the matrix works and how it reflects the CAC/PDT process to date of eliminating concepts. He also introduced draft alternatives status report tables, mailed to CAC members prior to the meeting, that more fully details reasons for dropping concepts. He noted that for the NEPA process it is important to document decision making.

In CAC discussion, Dave Lewin noted v/c ratio for Lewin alternative should reflect the separation of truck traffic, which is an important element of the design. Marmon said he will check v/c information. Debbie Timms said she appreciated time and commitment of CAC members. She said now it is time to start looking at modeling results. To keep to the project schedule and provide adequate time for other decisions, the project needs to halt the process of adding options unless something stands out. Nancy said it's not too late to comment on the draft alternatives status report. The location of South Phoenix Road was noted in response to a question.

3. Existing Conditions

Christina Fera-Thomas, ODOT

Fera-Thomas referred to tech memo 2, which was mailed to CAC members prior to the meeting. She noted that it builds on some of the information introduced in the previous meeting. She pointed out the new information about crash history. Most crashes occurred at intersections, probably due to motorists adjusting to new signals. On I-5, crashes had no clearly identifiable cause or pattern. Most crashes, 65 percent, involved property damage only.

On Hwy 99, about 40 percent of crashes are rear-end crashes from following too close, speeding and vehicles pulling out without sufficient gap in traffic, which this project could address through intersection spacing. Data also seems to indicate need for pedestrian crossings. There are no safe places to cross for long stretches of highway. A new intersection, perhaps at Northridge would provide a break for pedestrians, she said. She noted that the area qualifies as a SPIS area, for Safety Priority Index System area, because of the high rate of crashes – more than double state averages for arterial roads in urban areas.

Peter Schuytema provided details about signal warrants, which usually call for signals due to high traffic volumes. No signalized intersections qualify for signals.

The CAC had no questions or comments.

4. Future Conditions

Christina Fera-Thomas, ODOT

Fera-Thomas referred to slides (copies distributed to CAC members) to show future year (2030) traffic volumes if nothing were done in the interchange area (no build option). Intersections that exceed standards now will become more congested, and other intersections will start to exceed standards or come close to exceeding standards. The forecast included the interchange area and sections of Hwy. 99 in the project area. There would be queuing from Fern Valley Road back along Hwy. 99. The estimates were based on normal expected growth, as projected in city and county plans.

The CAC had no questions or comments.

3. First-Level Connections Analysis, Revised

Peter Schuytema, ODOT

Schuytema said the CAC need to look at the analysis again because ODOT discovered inconsistencies in volumes in future year results. Essentially, volumes indicated for 2030 were too low. Fixing problem increased I-5 volume, which in turn increased traffic at connections.

He introduced results for the interchange alternatives first, noting that in the end there were no changes in recommendations. He noted the differences in finding. His recommendations were presented, along with results of previous CAC voting. The CAC had no questions or comments, and did not change their previous recommendations.

Schuytema noted that the revisions produced changes for the options. Also, the memo introduced findings for option 16 (4th Street), which was brought back for further consideration at city of Phoenix request.

David Lewin asked about results of building both options 6 and 15. Schuytema said later analysis will look at various combinations of concepts. Also it was noted that the analysis includes impacts of the new South Medford interchange.

Schuytema said option 16 was only compatible with SPUI, not diamond, alternatives. He said the city asked for this option, noting that it does reduce Fern Valley traffic. Dack Doggett said it's not necessarily bad to pull traffic away from downtown businesses. Schuytema said an apparent problem with this option is traffic movements. Lewin asked about a queuing problem crossing the couplet, and was told that so far in analysis that isn't showing up. Lewin also asked about environmental concerns with creek and greenway. Project staff said there are many potential environmental impacts. It was noted that CAC had eliminated this option earlier because of environmental concerns. David Lowry said it was not worth going on with it. Schuytema said it does cut traffic volume on Rose and Cheryl and Bolz, making a significant change to local circulation. For that it is the best of all the alternatives. Lowry worried that this option would just be thrown out later for environmental reasons. Peter said traffic is only one of criteria, but there will be

construction issues like a need to build out to 4 lanes. It's likely the connection would have to shift to 5th street. So far, it works at this level of analysis for traffic. The CAC raised questions about access to the shopping center and trailer park, and noted that other options would also impact access. Lewin said the CAC won't know until further analysis all of the pros and cons. Doggett said the option would require two new bridges. Marmon said the project also would have to keep in mind possible socio-economic impacts of the connection to business on west side. Nancy said regarding federal approval that it is difficult to obtain on recreation areas. The project must look at alternatives and must prove no other prudent and feasible alternative exists to taking the park land. A project has to try to minimize park and environmental impacts. Lewin said it seems that if other alternative has less impact, it is more likely to be chosen. Some CAC members said it may be ok to go forward, but they expect will be deleted later. Others said if the CAC knows it will be deleted eventually, recommending further consideration now would be a waste of time. They asked Terry Helfrich to explain the city request. He said option 16 seems to provide better access through the city and people coming in from the west hills would have easier crossing. There is a need for better east-west flow, so this option seems to be good for connectivity. Lowry said it makes for a longer trip people coming in from the north area; and Schuytema agreed that this is a problem. Also he said the fewer west side options there are the better, easier, and faster the modeling for further analysis.

Note: the chart below reflects voting that occurred on the options after the above discussion, except for the Option 16 discussion in the shaded area, which is described below. Non-voters had no objections.

Option	recommendation	CAC Vote	
		Agree	Disagree
Option 4 – Fern Valley Connection to Bolz Ln	(Drop)	8	1
	<i>Keep</i>	6	
Option 5 – Fern Valley Connection to Cheryl Ave	Keep	7	1
Option 6 – Old South Stage Rd Overcrossing to N. Phoenix	Drop	8	2
	<i>Keep</i>	7	
Option 8 – First St Extension to Bear Lake Estates	Drop	8	1
Option 15 – Northridge Terrace Overcrossing	Keep	8	1
Option 16 – Fern Valley Connection to 4 th Street	<i>Keep</i>	7	1

Note: The vote on Option 16 reflects opinions after Fera-Thomas' presentation of preliminary alternative screen results. The original vote on Option 16 was: 1 in favor of keeping and 5 disagreeing with the staff recommendation and wanting to drop it from further consideration

The following discussion appears here out of order. It occurred after the presentation of preliminary alternative screen results. David Lowery left the meeting at this time and was not part of the discussion below

After Christina Fera-Thomas' presentation, CAC members agreed that options would have significant impacts on the city. Terry Helfrich noted urban renewal plans, but said some businesses benefit from a fourth street connection. Korfhage said different data changes a person's idea of what they can expect. Marmon said there may be other options for crossing the creek. Nancy said that it could be helpful to see further analysis, and that it is not yet clear that this option has to be thrown out. Responding to CAC questions, Schuytema said it is too early in process for more details on potential impacts and the CAC would need to see a footprint before fully assessing the impacts.

CAC members said they wanted a revote on Option 16, the results of which appear in the chart above.

4. Preliminary Alternatives Screening Results

Christina Fera-Thomas, ODOT

Fera-Thomas referred to a hand out distributed during the meeting. She noted that the idea was to make all of the connections work traffic-wise, and meet 2030 v/c demands, so her report was showing some very large intersections, often with dual turn lanes. She described the traffic volumes forecasted at each intersection for each of the concepts.

She said the baseline diamond requires 8 lanes to meet standards. There would be heavy traffic at North-South Phoenix road crossing, but that it would not meet traffic warrants for a signal because of the way traffic will flow. There probably will be lots of delay. Lowry said if that is the case then maybe the state should reconsider warrants criteria. There was discussion about whether a truck and a car are recorded the same in traffic counts. Debbie Timms said the city might be able to get a signal but city would have to pay. Another alternative may be a round-about. Korfhage asked about forwarding alternatives that don't meet standards such as showing traffic lights when not warranted. He was told the plan submitted has to be based on all of the best possible information.

Re: Lowry SPUI also would need 8 lanes. Responding to a question, staff noted that the design features one light in middle that regulates left and through movements. It was noted that other connections like the factory outlet stores access would be worked out later, and further traffic analysis and may find that it can't be done. Results showed future volumes within standards.

Re: Lewin SPUI, shows an 8-lane cross section, and there would be a light at the Phoenix Road crossing because of projected heavy left turn volume. There would be dual rights and lefts. Volumes are high, but within standards.

CAC table 1 SPUI, 8-lane cross section, also meets warrant for light at Phoenix Road. Lewin asked about travel times: there would be longer time for east-west travel compared with other options, and would be about like it is today. The difference in time is one minute.

Fera-Thomas referred to the summary table. There were no additional questions.

Fera-Thomas review connection options, beginning with the existing connections.
Fern Valley Interchange Project
Citizen Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes

Re: Bolz connection. It would warrant signal at Hwy. 99, with analysis showing five lanes coming in and two out minimum. It will be close to capacity by 2030.

Re: Cheryl option. It would require the same lane configuration as Bolz with roughly the same volume results. It will be close to capacity by 2030.

Re: 4th Street connect, it changes the volumes and impacts on the couplet. It shows lower volumes at some intersections, but it was noted in discussion that a signal in conjunction with other options could solve volume problem. Schuytema said it brings more traffic into the area. Lowry said the CAC needs to compare like conditions and this option looks like the only one that works, but it works because of adding the traffic light. Schuytema said the analysis here accounts for traffic fluctuations, but that other options have far lower traffic volumes. Lowry said it is important to look at traffic signals and the warrant process should not lead to a wrong decision. Korfhage agreed that the CAC needs to include signal lights issue in analysis. Schuytema said that detail will be seen in future analyses. Korfhage said that needs to be explained. In response to a question, it was noted that speed doesn't affect outcomes, but the city has talked about lowering speeds. Terry Helfrich asked about Rose Street; Brian Sheadel said signals can make traffic work better, but there will be more crashes, queuing and more travel time. Schuytema said there are other pluses and minuses to signals that would require further analysis. In discussion it was noted that there are other impacts to consider and the CAC will have to look at impacts on the systems as a whole.

Fera-Thomas referred to the summary table. There were no additional questions.

Note: At this time, CAC members asked to revisit their voting on option 16, as noted above.

5. Next Steps

Debbie Timms, ODOT

Timms said the CAC will be looking at east-west connections and asked to try to drop options. There are too many now for detailed analysis. Such analysis would require creation of a very large volume data set.

There was discussion about whether the CAC at this point could decide between South Stage and Northridge now, or needed more volume information. In CAC discussion it was noted that there is interest in South Stage, and maybe not so much in Northridge. Some CAC members said they could to drop one now, but others said they did not have enough information for decision. The CAC agreed to take it up in July.

There was additional discussion about specific lights and access points and Timms said individual connections will be address later in the process.

Jerry Marmon noted that as the CAC makes decisions they will have to provide clear reasons.

RVCOG will poll all CAC members as to the best date for the July meeting.

6. Public Comment

Vicki Guarino, RVCOG

Sandy Christiansen, a member of the Phoenix Planning Commission, presented a new option out of concern for the creek crossing. The concept was illustrated on a map as a couplet over Bear Creak. In discussion, the concept was described with one-way only traffic and as a two-way couplet crossing. Concern was raised about providing adequate bicycle/pedestrian crossing. Christiansen said it offers smaller streets and more options for directing west traffic. There were concerns raised about too much out-of-direction travel. The CAC agreed that they wanted to see more analysis of the concept.

Mike McKee, a member of the Phoenix Planning Commission, suggested that the CAC start considering cost, and that the Bolz option probably would be cheaper. Also 4th Street environmentally may be too costly. On the east side, the project should choose the option that provides the fastest way to the Petro station because it could be costly if Petro sues. Also, Petro is important to city.