

September 11, 2009

TO: Members of the MAG Management Committee

FROM: Carl Swenson, Peoria, Vice Chair

SUBJECT: ADDENDA TO THE SEPTEMBER 16, 2009, MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE AGENDA

An addenda to the September 16, 2009, Management Committee agenda has been prepared to include the Arizona Department of Transportation Red Letter Process and the Central Mesa Light Rail Transit Locally Preferred Alternative. Both of these items were considered at the August 27, 2009, Transportation Review Committee meeting and were inadvertently omitted from the Management Committee agenda. Please contact the MAG office if you have questions about the addenda to the agenda.

### **ITEMS PROPOSED FOR CONSENT\***

#### **TRANSPORTATION ITEMS**

\*5G. Arizona Department of Transportation Red Letter Process

In June of 1996, the MAG Regional Council approved the Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) Red Letter process, which requires MAG member agencies to notify ADOT of potential development activities in freeway alignments. Development activities include actions on plans, zoning and permits. ADOT has forwarded a list of notifications from January 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009. If a member wishes to take action on a notification, the item can be removed from the consent agenda for further discussion. The item could then be placed on the agenda of a subsequent meeting for action. Please refer to the enclosed material.

5G. Information and discussion.

\*5H. Central Mesa Light Rail Transit Locally Preferred Alternative

On June 17, 2009, the METRO Board of Directors approved a locally preferred alternative (LPA) resulting from the alternatives analysis on the technology and alignment to extend high capacity transit improvements in the Central Mesa corridor. The LPA included a light rail transit (LRT) extension on Main Street east to an interim end-of-the-line east of Mesa Drive as Phase I. In addition, METRO also approved forwarding Phase II recommendations to MAG for future funding consideration, which included a future extension of the LRT corridor on Main Street to approximately Gilbert Road and to improve service frequency on the Main Street LINK Bus Rapid Transit to match LRT. The Mesa City Council approved these recommendations on May 18, 2009. The MAG Transportation Review Committee recommended approval. Please refer to the enclosed material.

5H. Recommend approval of the Central Mesa locally preferred alternative as Phase I, which includes light rail transit on a Main Street alignment to the east side of Mesa Drive in accordance with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the consideration of the Phase II recommendations for future funding consideration as an "illustrative project" in the next RTP update.

# MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS INFORMATION SUMMARY... for your review

**DATE:**

September 11, 2009

**SUBJECT:**

ADOT Red Letter Process

**SUMMARY:**

The Regional Council approved the Red Letter Process in 1996 to provide early notification of potential development in planned freeway alignments. Development activities include actions on plans, zoning, and permits. Key elements of the process include:

*Notifications:*

- ADOT will periodically forward Red Letter notifications to MAG.
- Notifications will be placed on the consent agenda for information and discussion at the Transportation Review Committee, Management Committee, and Regional Council meetings.
- If a member wishes to take action on a notification, the item can be removed from the consent agenda for further discussion. The item could then be placed on the agenda of a subsequent meeting for action.

*Advance acquisitions:*

- ADOT is authorized to proceed with advance right-of-way acquisitions up to \$2 million per year in funded corridors.
- Any change in the budgets for advance right-of-way acquisitions constitutes a material cost change as well as a change in freeway priorities and therefore, would have to be reviewed by MAG and would require Regional Council action.
- With the passage of Proposition 400 on November 2, 2004, the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) includes funding for right-of-way acquisition as part of the funding for individual highway projects. This funding is spread over the four phases of the Plan. Funding for advance acquisitions may be made available on a case-by-case basis.

For information, the ADOT Advance Acquisition policy allows the expenditure of funds to obtain right-of-way where needed to address hardship cases (residential only), forestall development (typical Red Letter case), respond to advantageous offers or, with remaining funds, acquire properties in the construction sequence for which right-of-way acquisition has not already been funded.

In addition to forestalling development within freeway corridors, ADOT, under the Red Letter Process, works with developers on projects adjacent to or close to existing and proposed routes that may have a potential impact on drainage, noise mitigation, and/or access. For this purpose, ADOT needs to be informed of all zoning and development activity within one-half mile of any existing and planned facility. Without ADOT input on development plans adjacent to or near existing and planned facilities, there is a potential for increased costs to the local jurisdiction, the region and/or ADOT.

ADOT has forwarded a list of notifications from January 1, 2009, to June 30, 2009. Of the 140 notices received, 31 had an impact to the State Highway System. These 31 notices are attached.

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

No comments were received at the August 27, 2009, meeting of Transportation Review Committee.

**PROS & CONS:**

PROS: Notification can lead to action to forestall development activity in freeway corridors and help minimize costs as well as ensure eventual completion of the facility.

CONS: By utilizing funds for advance purchase of right-of-way, these funds are not available for other uses such as design and construction.

**TECHNICAL & POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

TECHNICAL: Unless precluded early in the process, development within freeway alignments will result in increased right-of-way costs in the future.

POLICY: With the passage of Proposition 400 on November 2, 2004, the RTP includes funding for right-of-way acquisition as part of the funding for individual highway projects. This funding is spread over the four phases of the Plan. Funding for advance acquisitions may be made available on a case-by-case basis.

**ACTION NEEDED:**

Information and discussion.

**PRIOR COMMITTEE ACTIONS:**

Transportation Review Committee: This item was on the August 27, 2009, agenda for information and discussion.

MEMBERS ATTENDING

- Peoria: David Moody
- ADOT: Steve Hull for Floyd Roehrich
- # Avondale: David Fitzhugh
- Buckeye: Scott Lowe
- Chandler: RJ Zeder for Patrice Kraus
- El Mirage: Lance Calvert
- Fountain Hills: Randy Harrel
- \* Gila Bend: Rick Buss
- \* Gila River: Sreedevi Samudrala for Doug Torres
- Gilbert: Michelle Gramley for Tami Ryall
- Glendale: Terry Johnson
- Goodyear: Cato Esquivel
- # Guadalupe: Gino Turrubiarres

- \* Litchfield Park: Mike Cartsonis
- Maricopa County: John Hauskins
- # Mesa: Scott Butler
- \* Paradise Valley: Bill Mead
- Phoenix: Ed Zuercher
- \* Queen Creek: Mark Young
- RPTA: Bryan Jungwirth
- Scottsdale: Dave Meinhart
- Surprise: Randy Overmyer
- Tempe: Chris Salomone
- Valley Metro Rail: John Farry
- Wickenburg: Rick Austin
- Youngtown: Grant Anderson for Lloyce Robinson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ATTENDING

- \* Regional Bicycle Task Force: Jim Hash, Mesa
- \* Street Committee: Darryl Crossman, Litchfield Park
- \* ITS Committee: Mike Mah: Chandler

- Pedestrian Working Group: Brandon Forrey, Peoria
- \* Transportation Safety Committee: Kerry Wilcoxon, Phoenix

\* Members neither present nor represented by proxy.  
# - Attended by Audioconference

+ - Attended by Videoconference

**CONTACT PERSON:**

Eric Anderson, MAG, (602) 254-6300, or John Eckhardt III, ADOT, (602) 712-7900.



**Arizona Department of Transportation  
Intermodal Transportation Division**

206 South Seventeenth Avenue Phoenix, Arizona 85007-3213

Floyd Roehrich Jr.  
State Engineer

July 30, 2009

Mr. Dennis Smith  
Executive Director  
Maricopa Association of Governments  
302 North First Avenue, Suite 300  
Phoenix, Arizona 85003

Re: Red Letter Report - Notices from January 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009

Dear Mr. Smith:

Below is the list of "Red Letter" notices received by the ADOT Right of Way Project Management Section from the period of January 1, 2009 to June 30, 2009. During this period, our office received notices from Local Municipalities as well as various Developers, Architects, Engineers and Attorneys.

<u>LOCAL MUNICIPALITIES</u>	<u>NOTICES RECEIVED</u>	<u>IMPACT RESPONSES</u>
Arizona State Land Dept.	01	01
City of Avondale	01	00
Town of Buckeye	02	02
City of Chandler	05	00
Town of Gilbert	03	02
City of Glendale	01	00
City of Goodyear	15	01
Maricopa County	18	05
City of Mesa	02	00
City of Peoria	03	01
City of Phoenix	25	10
City of Surprise	46	05
City of Tempe	00	00
Other	<u>18</u>	<u>04</u>
<b>Total Received</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>31</b>

**MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS REPORT OF IMPACT RESPONSES**

**ARIZONA STATE LAND DEPARTMENT:**

**06/17/2009 Accipiter Communications / #18-113322 & #18-113332 / Various locations**

Notification was sent in regards to the installation of fiber optic lines in various locations around the Loop 303. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that application #18-113332 will have the greatest impact on the Loop 303 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**CITY OF AVONDALE: No impact responses sent.**

**TOWN OF BUCKEYE:**

**02/05/2009 Sundance Business Park / PP07-17 (504-19-007E) / SWC of Watson Rd & I-10**

Notification was sent in regards to the Public Hearing notice from Matt Klyszeiko with RBF Consulting on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III requested the developer to send us a copy of there Site Plans so we can review them to ensure no access, encroachment or drainage issues exist that could affect our highway system and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**05/05/2009 Watson Marketplace / PP08-04 (504-19-014J) / SWC of Watson Rd & I-10**

Notification was sent in regards to the Public Hearing on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-10 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**CITY OF CHANDLER: No impact responses sent.**

**TOWN OF GILBERT:**

**05/05/2009 Parcel # 304-28-009A/ SEC of the 202L and Wade Rd.**

Notification was sent in regards to the Public Hearing regarding the zoning change on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 202 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**05/13/2009 Skilled Nursing Facility / DR 09-16/ SEC of the 202L and Pecos Rd.**

Notification was sent in regards to the Design Review regarding the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 202 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**CITY OF GLENDALE: No impact responses sent.**

**CITY OF GOODYEAR:**

**05/13/2009 Centerscape at Palm Valley / 09-20000004/ SEC of Bullard Ave & McDowell Rd.**

Notification was sent in regards to the Zoning Change request on the above referenced subject. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-10 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**MARICOPA COUNTY:**

**05/05/2009 Mirage Plastering/ Z2008127/SEC I-10 & L202**

Notification was sent in regards to the Plan of Development on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-10 EB ramp to the Loop 202 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**03/11/2009 Verizon S.U.P.- PHO Whittman /Z2008102/ NWC of US 60 & 211<sup>th</sup> Ave**

Notification was sent in regards to the Public Hearing on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the US 60 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property. We also informed them that Maricopa Association of Governments is conducting a study for future improvements on US 60 that could affect this property.

**03/11/2009 Sabre Business Park / Z2009012 & CPA200901 / East of the 303L to Sarival**

Notification was sent in regards to the Plan Amendment and Zoning Change on the above referenced project. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 303.

**03/10/2009 F-5 Equipment Building/ Z2009014 / 4900 S. 51<sup>st</sup> Avenue**

Notification was sent in regards to the Plan of Development on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the SR202.

**03/10/2009 American Outdoor Advertising/ Z2009002 / So. of the SEC of Elliot Rd. & I-10**

Notification was sent in regards to the Plan of Development on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-10 and that they need to verify whether the proposed sign complies with ADOT's requirements relating to Outdoor Advertising Control.

**CITY OF MESA: No impact responses sent.**

**CITY OF PEORIA:**

**06/18/09 Olive Retail Park PH II / PR 09-09/ S/O SWC of 91<sup>st</sup> Ave and Olive Avenue**

Notification was sent in regards to the Site Plan on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 101 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**CITY OF PHOENIX:**

**03/12/2009 Clear Channel Billboard/ ZA-108-09/ West of I-17 North of Williams Dr.**

Notification was sent in regards to the Zoning Change on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-17 and that they need to verify whether the proposed sign complies with ADOT's requirements relating to Outdoor Advertising Control.

**03/10/2009 S.W Behavior Health/01-20803/2313 W. Yuma St.**

Notification was sent in regards to the e-mail on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-17 and that we need a copy of the site plans, so The Arizona Department of Transportation can review and comment on them to ensure there are no encroachments, drainage, and/or access problems.

**03/11/2009 Holiday Inn/ Project 09-199/NWC of Tatum Blvd & 101Loop.**

Notification was sent in regards to the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-17 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property. We requested a copy of the site plans from the developer, so ADOT can review and comment on them to ensure there are no encroachments, drainage, and/or access problems.

**03/10/2009 Park & Ride/ Project # 09-557 /I-17 & Happy Valley Road**

Notification was sent in regards to the e-mail on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-17 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property. We requested a copy of the site plans from the developer, so ADOT can review and comment on them to ensure there are no encroachments, drainage, and/or access problems.

**04/09/2009 Laveen Health Services/ Project # 09-873 /NEC of 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue & Dobbins Road**

Notification was sent in regards to the e-mail on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 202. We requested a copy of the site plans from the developer, so ADOT can review and comment on them to ensure there are no encroachments, drainage, and/or access problems.

**04/09/2009 Clear Channel Billboard/ Project # 99-18990 / 2211 N. Black Canyon**

Notification was sent in regards to the e-mail on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-17 and that they need to verify whether the proposed sign complies with ADOT's requirements relating to Outdoor Advertising Control.

**04/09/2009 Clear Channel Billboard/ Project # 02-417 / 1335 E. Maricopa Freeway**

Notification was sent in regards to the e-mail on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the I-17 and that they need to verify whether the proposed sign complies with ADOT's requirements relating to Outdoor Advertising Control.

**05/05/2009 Chase Bank/ Project 09-1685/SWC of Scottsdale Rd & 101 Loop.**

Notification was sent in regards to the e-mail on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 101 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property. We requested a copy of the site plans from the developer, so ADOT can review and comment on them to ensure there are no encroachments, drainage, and/or access problems.

**05/06/2009 Staybridge Suites/ SDEV 0800823/NEC of SR 51 & Greenfield Rd (Thomas Rd).**

Notification was sent in regards to the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the SR 51 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**06/18/2009 Park & Ride/ SDEV 0900232/SWC of 40<sup>th</sup> St & Pecos Rd**

Notification was sent in regards to the amendment on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 202 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**CITY OF SURPRISE:**

**02/05/2009 X175 Hart's Field Ranch/AUPC 08-340/14102 W. Pinnacle Peak Rd**

Notification was sent in regards to the Administrative Use Permit on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 303 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**03/10/2009 David Hanner /PA09-002/SWC of Grand Ave & Norwich Dr.**

Notification was sent in regards to the Zoning Change on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the US 60 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**03/12/2009 Grand Hotel Plaza/SPA09-033/14783 W. Grand**

Notification was sent in regards to the Site Plan Amendment on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the US 60 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**04/10/2009 Lone Mountain Retail/ GPA08-331 / Grand Avenue and Deer Valley Road**

Notification was sent in regards to the General Plan Amendment on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the US 60 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property. We also informed them that the Maricopa Association of Governments is conducting a study for future improvements on US 60 that could affect this property.

**05/05/2009 City of Surprise/GPA09-005/ Various Locations**

Notification was sent in regards to the Public Notice on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that the proposed project could have an impact on our highway facilities in this area. ADOT would like to review the plans when they are available and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

**CITY OF TEMPE: No impact responses sent.**

**OTHER:**

**03/11/2009 Z-85-08-7 / SEC of 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue & Lower Buckeye Rd**

Notification was sent in regards to the Zoning Change on the project referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the SR202.

06/24/2009 ZA-207-09 / 402 S. 54<sup>th</sup> Street

Notification was sent in regards to the Billboard referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the SR202 and that they need to verify whether the proposed sign complies with ADOT's requirements relating to Outdoor Advertising Control.

06/18/2009 Higley Park/ NEC of the 202 & Higley Rd.

Notification was sent in regards to the Billboard referenced above. Annette Close, ADOT Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 202 and that they need to verify whether the proposed sign complies with ADOT's requirements relating to Outdoor Advertising Control.

06/18/2009 Baseline Center /NWC of the 202 and Baseline Rd

Notification was sent in regards to the Public Hearing on the subject referenced above. Annette Close, Administrative Assistant III advised them that this project could have an impact on the Loop 202 and that they needed to obtain a permit before accessing ADOT property.

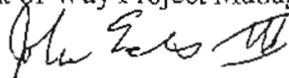
The Arizona Department of Transportation expends several resources to research future developments and plans adjacent to the state highway system, to ensure ADOT's Right of Way is not adversely impacted or jeopardized. Other notices received typically include road access, zoning changes, outdoor advertising, and annexations.

Receipt of early notification in the planning and design process, the "Red Letter" process, helps to reduce costs, saving money for both ADOT and tax payers. The Department appreciates the cooperation of the Maricopa Association of Government's members and looks forward to your continued support as we maintain and strive to improve all lines of communication.

Please feel free to contact my office should you have any questions. I can be reached at (602) 712-7900, or by email at [JEckhardt@azdot.gov](mailto:JEckhardt@azdot.gov).

Sincerely,

John Eckhardt III, Manager  
Right of Way Project Management



cc: John S. Halikowski, Director, ADOT  
Sabra Mousavi, Chief Right of Way Agent

# MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS

## INFORMATION SUMMARY... for your review

**DATE:**

September 11, 2009

**SUBJECT:**

Central Mesa High Capacity Transit Alternatives Analysis

**SUMMARY:**

The Central Mesa High Capacity Transit Alternatives Analysis report addresses the technology and alignment for extending high capacity transit improvements in the Central Mesa corridor. The study began the Federal Transit Administration's project development process in order to qualify for Section 5309 New Start federal funding. Specific purpose and needs of the project identified by the study included:

- Increasing efficient access to employment opportunities throughout the region for City of Mesa residents.
- Providing improved travel times over local bus in a congested environment.
- Connecting the western and central segments of the City of Mesa with light rail.
- Facilitating continued growth and development of a comprehensive and interconnected regional transit network that is multimodal, offers a range of effective mobility choices for current and future transit riders, and attracts new transit riders into the growing regional system.
- Supporting economic development and ensure enhanced connectivity among existing and planned regional and local activity centers and attractions.

A two-tiered alternatives development process was implemented to evaluate the Central Mesa corridor. The outcome of the evaluation resulted in the advancement of the light rail transit (LRT) on Main Street. METRO staff recommended to Mesa City Council on May 18, 2009 to advance light rail transit as the preferred technology and Main Street as the preferred alignment. The locally preferred alternative (LPA) includes a light rail extension on Main Street east to an interim end-of-the-line east of Mesa Drive as Phase I. The LPA will be advanced in accordance with the financially constrained MAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and subsequently METRO will seek formal FTA approval to enter the next phase of the project development process.

METRO staff also recommended, as funding becomes available, a future (Phase II) extension of light rail transit to Gilbert Road. The extension would provide better regional transit connections and opportunity for a significant park-and-ride facility. Staff also recommends that funding be pursued so that the service frequency on the new Main Street LINK bus rapid transit, from the Sycamore LRT station to Superstition Springs Mall, can be improved to match light rail. At this time, Phase II is not identified in the MAG RTP, but the Phase II recommendation will be forwarded to MAG for consideration as an "illustrative project" for inclusion in the RTP.

The Mesa City Council approved these recommendations on May 18, 2009. The recommended alternative was coordinated with and recommended by the Downtown Development Committee, Economic Development Advisory Board, Museum and Cultural Advisory Committee and the Transportation Advisory Board. In addition, a majority of the board of directors representing the Downtown Mesa Association voted to support the recommended alternative.

The attachment memorandum from the METRO Board of Directors provides additional background on the study and recommendations. The memorandum addresses study criteria and analyses, estimated costs, public input, and recommended alternatives.

**PUBLIC INPUT:**

METRO prepared a Public Involvement Plan for the study. There was no public comment at the August 27, 2009, Transportation Review Committee meeting.

**PROS & CONS:**

PROS: The Mesa extension of high capacity transit to Mesa Drive was included in the Regional Transportation Plan and is a Proposition 400 project. Approval of the Alternatives Analysis recommendation will allow the process to move forward to the next step in the project development process once the approval of the Federal Transit Administration is received.

CONS: None.

**TECHNICAL & POLICY IMPLICATIONS:**

TECHNICAL: The Alternatives Analysis conducted by METRO found that this alternative has the greatest ability to fulfill the goals and objectives outlined in the purpose and need statement for this project. These goals include: 1) Increased efficient access to employment opportunities throughout the region for Mesa residents; improved travel times over local bus options; connecting the western and central segments of Mesa with light rail; facilitating continued growth and development of a comprehensive, interconnected system; and, support economic development and ensure enhanced connectivity among existing and planned centers and attractions.

POLICY: The Mesa City Council approved these recommendations on May 18, 2009 and the METRO Board approved the recommendations on June 17, 2009.

**ACTION NEEDED:**

Recommend approval of the Central Mesa locally preferred alternative as Phase I, which includes light rail transit on a Main Street alignment to the east side of Mesa Drive in accordance with the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and the consideration of the Phase II recommendations for future funding consideration as an “illustrative project” in the next RTP update.

**PRIOR COMMITTEE ACTIONS:**

On August 27, 2009, the Transportation Review Committee recommended approval of the Central Mesa LPA as Phase I, which includes LRT on a Main Street alignment to the east side of Mesa Drive in accordance with the RTP and the consideration of the Phase II recommendation for future funding consideration as an “illustrative project” in the next Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) update.

MEMBERS ATTENDING

- Peoria: David Moody
- ADOT: Steve Hull for Floyd Roehrich
- # Avondale: David Fitzhugh
- Buckeye: Scott Lowe
- Chandler: RJ Zeder for Patrice Kraus
- El Mirage: Lance Calvert
- Fountain Hills: Randy Harrel
- \* Gila Bend: Rick Buss
- \* Gila River: Sreedevi Samudrala for Doug Torres
- Gilbert: Michelle Gramley for Tami Ryall

- Glendale: Terry Johnson
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- Maricopa County: John Hauskins
- # Mesa: Scott Butler
- \* Paradise Valley: Bill Mead
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- RPTA: Bryan Jungwirth
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Valley Metro Rail: John Farry

Wickenburg: Rick Austin  
Youngtown: Grant Anderson for Lloyce  
Robinson

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ATTENDING

- \* Regional Bicycle Task Force: Jim Hash, Mesa
- \* Street Committee: Darryl Crossman, Litchfield Park
- \* ITS Committee: Mike Mah: Chandler

- Pedestrian Working Group: Brandon Forrey, Peoria
- \* Transportation Safety Committee: Kerry Wilcoxon, Phoenix

\* Members neither present nor represented by proxy.  
# - Attended by Audioconference

+ - Attended by Videoconference

**CONTACT PERSON:**

Wulf Grote, METRO, (602) 322-4420, [wgrote@metrolightrail.org](mailto:wgrote@metrolightrail.org)



# BOARD MEMO

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AGENDA ITEM 8

To: Chairman Simplot and Members of the METRO Board of Directors

Through: Richard J. Simonetta, Chief Executive Officer

From: Wulf Grote, Director, Project Development

Date: June 10, 2009

Re: Central Mesa High Capacity Transit Alternatives Analysis Recommendations

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## **PURPOSE**

This report provides a recommendation resulting from the Alternatives Analysis for the technology and alignment to extend high capacity transit improvements in the Central Mesa corridor. The recommended technology is light rail transit (LRT). The recommended alignment is east along Main Street from the starter LRT line at Sycamore & Main Street through Downtown Mesa to the east side of Mesa Drive (shown in the map at the end of this report).

## **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

In May 2007, METRO initiated a federally sponsored Alternatives Analysis in the Central Mesa corridor. The study begins the Federal Transit Administration's project development process in order to qualify for Section 5309 New Start federal funding. Through the study process, specific purpose and needs of the project were identified. They are:

- Increase efficient access to employment opportunities throughout the region for City of Mesa residents;
- Provide improved travel times over local bus in a congested environment;
- Connect the western and central segments of the City of Mesa with light rail;
- Facilitate continued growth and development of a comprehensive and inter-connected regional transit network that is multi-modal, offers a range of effective mobility choices for current and future transit riders, and attracts new transit riders into the growing regional system;
- Support economic development and ensure enhanced connectivity among existing and planned regional and local activity centers and attractions.

A two-tiered alternatives development process was implemented to evaluate the Central Mesa corridor. The first phase (Tier 1) included a conceptual level evaluation that analyzed the advantages and disadvantages of a wide range of potential alternatives to address the transportation needs of the corridor.

The Tier 2 evaluation was a more rigorous screening process. Six alternatives were evaluated in the Tier 2 phase of the study. These alternatives included two Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) alternatives (Main Street 2-Lane & 4-Lane) and four LRT alternatives (Main Street 2-Lane & 4-Lane, 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue). The Tier 2 process resulted in the identification of a preliminary corridor recommendation. Criteria evaluated in the Tier 2 process included traffic, land use compatibility, travel markets, environmental issues, historic properties, design and constructability, economic development potential, projected number of riders and costs. Additional criteria were used to evaluate the alternatives through the downtown area. This included the number of travel lanes and the availability of left turns; maintaining pedestrian crosswalks, bicycle lanes, on-street parking, curbs and sidewalks, landscape and streetscape elements; economic development potential and construction phasing. The outcome of the Tier 2 evaluation resulted in the advancement of the LRT on Main Street 2-lane and 4-lane alternatives.

Determining a 2-lane or 4-lane alternative in the downtown area and other urban design issues and concerns will be addressed in the subsequent environmental and planning phase. As such, the City Council recommendation also included direction for City staff and METRO to convene a working group of stakeholders and adjacent property owners and businesses to develop design guidelines for specific elements in the downtown and develop a specific business outreach program during construction.

Preliminary ridership forecasts are estimated at approximately 4,300 daily riders in 2030. Project capital costs are estimated to be between \$185 and \$200 million. This estimate is based upon early conceptual engineering undertaken during the Tier 2 evaluation in order to provide some comparison between the various alternatives. This estimate is in 2009 dollars and includes guideway, utility relocations, stations, park-and-ride lots, right-of-way, vehicles, construction management, etc. Once preliminary engineering is underway, greater definition will allow for a more accurate estimate.

### **Public Process**

METRO prepared a Public Involvement Plan for the study. The overall goal was to inform the residents, stakeholder interest groups and involved agencies about the project and to present the alternatives and issues for public and agency review. During the course of the study, the public involvement team conducted: five public meetings with 520 people attending; a business forum with 127 people attending; 38 meetings with property and business owners; over 40 presentations to advisory committees, neighborhood associations and civic organizations; and continuous updates via website, e-mails, newsletters and fact sheets.

Through the public outreach program, a general theme started to emerge in the feedback from the community. It centered on a few main points:

- Better serve the East Valley with an extension east to Gilbert Road;
- Improve LINK bus service to match light rail frequencies;
- Improve and expand bus service to connect with light rail;
- Enhance transit service to ASU Polytechnic and the Mesa Gateway Area;
- Promote economic development by connecting residents and employment to other regional centers; and

- Promote integration of light rail and land use planning to support sustainability and livable community initiatives.

### **Recommended Alternative**

METRO staff recommended to Mesa City Council on May 18, 2009 to advance light rail transit as the preferred technology and Main Street as the preferred alignment. The locally preferred alternative (LPA) includes a light rail extension on Main Street east to an interim end-of-the-line east of Mesa Drive as Phase I. The LPA will be advanced in accordance with the financially constrained MAG Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) and subsequently METRO will seek formal FTA approval to enter the next phase of the project development process.

Light rail transit is the recommended technology over bus rapid transit because of the following:

- Lower long term life cycle costs;
- Provides up to five times the passenger carrying capacity;
- Reduces passenger travel times;
- Eliminates a bus to rail transfer at Main and Sycamore;
- Offers greater economic development opportunities; and
- Better serves the documented travel demand.

Main Street is the recommended alignment over 1<sup>st</sup> Street and 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue because of the following:

- Closest proximity to major Downtown Mesa activity centers (closest to Downtown Mesa retail activities, Mesa Arts Center, City Hall);
- Lower capital costs;
- Forecasted number of daily riders;
- Reduces property acquisition requirements;
- Reduces passenger travel times;
- Offers the greatest economic development opportunities;
- Best opportunity to meet FTA criteria for cost effectiveness.

METRO staff also recommends, as funding becomes available, a future (Phase II) extension of light rail transit to Gilbert Road. This extension would provide better regional transit connections and opportunity for a significant park-and-ride facility. Staff also recommends that funding be pursued so that the service frequency on the new Main Street LINK bus rapid transit, from the Sycamore LRT station to Superstition Springs Mall, can be improved to match light rail. At this time, Phase II is not identified in the MAG RTP, but the Phase II recommendation will be forwarded to MAG for consideration as an "illustrative project" for inclusion in the RTP.

The Mesa City Council approved these recommendations on May 18, 2009. The recommended alternative was coordinated with and recommended by the Downtown Development Committee, Economic Development Advisory Board, Museum and Cultural Advisory Committee and the Transportation Advisory Board. In addition, a majority of the board of directors representing the Downtown Mesa Association voted to support the recommended alternative.

### **RAIL MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE CONSIDERATION**

At its June 3, 2009 Rail Management Committee (RMC) meeting, the RMC recommended that the Board approve the Central Mesa LPA as Phase 1, which includes LRT on a Main Street alignment to the east side of Mesa Drive and a recommendation for the LPA to be advanced to the environmental phase. Staff further requests approval to forward Phase 2 recommendations to MAG for future funding consideration. Phase 2 includes a future extension of the LRT corridor on Main Street to approximately Gilbert Road and to improve service frequency on the Main Street LINK BRT to match LRT.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

**Staff recommends that the Board to approve the Central Mesa LPA as Phase 1, which includes LRT on a Main Street alignment to the east side of Mesa Drive and a recommendation for the LPA to be advanced to the environmental phase. Staff further requests approval to forward Phase 2 recommendations to MAG for future funding consideration. Phase 2 includes a future extension of the LRT corridor on Main Street to approximately Gilbert Road and to improve service frequency on the Main Street LINK BRT to match LRT.**

**CENTRAL MESA RECOMMENDED ALTERNATIVE**



LEGEND					
	Study Area		Light Rail Line / Station		Central Mesa Phase 1 - Funded
	Tempe Canal		Transit Center		Central Mesa Phase 2 - Unfunded
	Railroad		Park-and-Ride		Valley Metro LINK BRT Alignment / Stop

\* Mesa Dr. Park-and-Ride lot would be interim until the extension to Gilbert Rd is complete. Rev. 05-22-09