

Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: November 19, 2009
Subject: Commuter Rail Yuma West Corridor – PRT Meeting
In Attendance:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Kevin Wallace, MAG | Rogene Hill, City of Avondale |
| Marc Pearsall, MAG | Ruth Clark, City of Avondale |
| Rick Pilgrim, URS | Eric Buskirk, City of Phoenix |
| Matt Carpenter, URS | Mitch Wagner, MCDOT |
| Jennifer Pyne, URS | Sean Banda, Town of Buckeye |
| David Schwartz, Goodman Schwartz | Ken Galica, City of Avondale |
| Megan Casey, Goodman Schwartz | Dawn Coomer, City of Tempe |

Introduction

Marc Pearsall, MAG, initiated the meeting by introducing the presentation, which followed the agenda as outlined:

- Overall Project Progress
- Ridership Forecasting
- Capital and Operating Cost Estimates
- Other Issues and Next Steps

Overall Project Progress

Rick Pilgrim reviewed the timeline and project progress since the September PRT Meeting. The Corridor Development Plan draft is underway, and the Study Team is examining system and peer city comparisons to develop cost estimates. A draft of the final report will be sent out to the PRT members for review prior to the next meeting in January.

David Schwartz gave a brief update on stakeholder involvement. The last stakeholder meeting took place on November 12 and had a good turnout, with good questions and feedback. The next (and final) stakeholder meeting will take place in February 2010.

Ridership Forecasting

Jennifer Pyne, MAG Study Team, presented a ridership forecasting update, including interlining results with the Chandler corridor in place of the Southeast corridor and updated approach for sensitivity tests and extension ridership forecasting. Jennifer also presented a reminder of the previously released ridership and boardings per revenue mile figures for each stand-alone corridor.

Jennifer presented the results of the interlined model runs:

1-Corridor Alternatives

The first alternative interlines the Grand Ave and Southeast Corridors from Wittmann to Downtown Queen Creek with 30/60 headways (on peak/off peak). Total 2030 daily boardings of 9,980 indicate an 8% increase in ridership with the interlining over stand-alone corridors, which is a bit lower than expected.

The Yuma West and Southeast Corridors were also interlined from Buckeye to Downtown Queen Creek with 30/60 headways. Total daily boardings are estimated at 8,530. This pairing also has an approximate 8% increase in ridership in the interlined scenario versus each stand alone corridor. Jennifer noted that a 10% change is considered significant, so the 8% is somewhat meaningful.

Multi-Corridor Alternatives

Several multi-corridor alternatives were also included in the model run. The first multi-corridor alternative consists of Grand Ave interlined with Southeast on 30/60 headways and Yuma West interlined with Southeast on 60/60 headways, resulting in an effective headway on the Southeast portion of the line of 20 minutes on-peak. This combination is associated with 11,290 projected daily boardings. The Yuma West ridership numbers are lower in this scenario, probably due to the less frequent service.

The next alternative replaces Southeast with Chandler, consisting of Grand Ave interlined with Chandler at 30/60 headways and Yuma West interlined with Chandler at 60/60 headways and resulting daily boardings of 7,030.

Rick Pilgrim added that the Union Pacific (UP) has said that their core track runs from Queen Creek to Buckeye, and that a commuter rail track would need to be at least 50 feet off the UP line. This would put a commuter rail track outside of the UP right-of-way, which significantly increases costs. Discussions are still underway with the railroad, but it is likely that substantive negotiations with the railroad would not occur until funding commitments to advance commuter rail are demonstrated.

The next multi-corridor alternative is Grand Ave interlined with Southeast on 30/60 headways and Yuma West interlined with Tempe on 40/60 headways. This results in nearly doubled daily ridership of 15,100. This level of service is fairly intense and results in significantly higher boardings.

The fourth multi-corridor alternative is Grand Ave interlined with Chandler on 20/60 headways and Yuma West interlined with Tempe on 40/60 headways. This shows total daily boardings of 10,580. This combination has a decrease in ridership from the scenario that included Southeast, which is likely due to the use of Chandler rather than Southeast.

Next is Yuma West interlined with Southeast and Grand Ave interlined with Tempe, both on 20/60 headways. This is one of the strongest combinations with total daily boardings of 17,960.

The last alternative is Yuma West interlined with Chandler and Grand Ave interlined with Tempe, both on 20/60 headways. This shows more moderate daily boardings of 13,230.

Rogene Hill, City of Avondale, commented that Avondale is currently in the process of updating its General Plan, and she would like to see those changes incorporated into this study. Rogene will share this information with the MAG Study Team. Rick Pilgrim answered that they would be interested to see the information and there can be acknowledgement in the final report of potential changes in Avondale's planned land uses. Ken Galica, City of Avondale, added that there is no finalized map or plan because stakeholder development is ongoing. At this time, Avondale anticipates that the updated General Plan will go to Council in Fall 2010 and to voters in Spring 2011. Marc Pearsall remarked that MAG has also talked about similar potential concerns with Buckeye and Goodyear. Kevin Wallace said that MAG would not formally adjust its socioeconomic data until 2012, following the established process for updating such data, but there might be a way that the Study Team can make use of the information. Rogene commented that there will likely be higher density, particularly in the City Center.

Jennifer Pyne presented a comparison of all eight interlined scenarios (both single and multiple corridor alternatives). In some cases the use of the Chandler corridor reduces ridership. Most multi-corridor scenarios exceed the national average for boardings per revenue mile. Rick noted that the two-corridor interlined options (Grand-SE and Yuma-SE) are the most efficient from a ridership perspective. Several overall model run observations include:

- Interlining improves ridership and boardings per revenue mile over the individual corridors.
 - When Grand Ave or Yuma West are interlined with Southeast, ridership increase is under 10%
 - Boardings per revenue mile are improved the most on Yuma West corridor when interlined with Southeast
- Of the multi-line corridors, the Yuma West-Southeast/Grand Ave-Tempe model run performed the best in terms of daily ridership (18,000) and boardings per revenue mile (2.6)
 - Performance is influenced by the 20/60 headway.
- As expected, Southeast interlined combinations perform better than Chandler interlined combinations.

Jennifer also presented a chart summarizing the effect of substituting Chandler for Southeast, which shows decreases of one-third to one-fourth in ridership. Kevin Wallace noted that the Tempe line is modeled to downtown Phoenix, but a portion of

that track is on the UP core line and may not be a feasible option. Rick Pilgrim added that downtown Tempe is a focal point for the Southeast Valley area, and the connection with light rail is a potential option. Rogene Hill, City of Avondale, commented that UP might be more amenable if we don't focus on going all the way into downtown Phoenix as the major terminus of the Yuma West corridor. Rick answered that they may be an option for startup in stages, and that maybe the first goal is just to meet up with light rail. Kevin Wallace commented that the problem with that option in the West Valley is the distance between the railroad track and the light rail line, which is 2-3 miles and would result in a three-seat trip. Rick added that there is a still lot of flexibility on the West side for transit. The key with UP is trying to share track and have joint operations. Ken Galica, City of Avondale, asked if there was any flexibility on the 50' requirement with UP. Rick answered that he is not sure if UP will move from that position. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) requires 25 feet, and the MAG study initially assumed 35 feet.

Capital and Operating Costs Estimates

Rick Pilgrim presented cost estimating methodology, which represents a conservative approach:

- Includes both capital and annual operating and maintenance (O&M) costs
- Conceptual design level (1-2%)
- 2009 dollars
- Uses recent industry costs and costs from vendors where possible
- Structured to match Federal Transit Administration (FTA) format where possible
- Estimates contingencies

Ken Galica, City of Avondale, asked about the practicality of using today's costs due to the benefit of reduced costs the economic downturn. Rick answered that the Study Team will check on cost levels. It is challenging to decide what dollars are best to use. Dawn Coomer, City of Tempe, remarked that using current year dollars is easiest for consistency.

The Study Team is using a phased cost estimate approach for service along the Yuma West Corridor. Phase A could begin by 2020 with peak-only service between Buckeye and Central Phoenix with 30-minute peak headways. Phase B could begin between 2020-2030, also from Buckeye to Central Phoenix with 30-minute peak headways and three off-peak round trips. Phase C could begin between 2030-2040 with 30-minute peak headway service and 60-minute off-peak headway service from Arlington to Central Phoenix.

Rogene Hill commented that Phase A is likely to last longer than ten years. Kevin Wallace commented that implementation of commuter rail will require a new funding source and changes to the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP).

Detailed capital cost information will be presented at a future PRT meeting, with information on cost categories of: guideway and track (including structures), stations, support facilities (maintenance and layover), utilities, environmental mitigation (as a percentage of total cost), auto/pedestrian/bicycle facilities, systems (including Positive Train Control), right-of-way and property, vehicles and contingencies (including professional services for design and management).

Peer city comparisons were presented for capital cost per mile and annual operations and maintenance costs per rider. Rick noted that commuter rail is a premium service and the average farebox recovery rate is nearly 40%. Cost recovery is typically higher for commuter rail than for light rail.

Other Issues and Next Steps

Rick Pilgrim reviewed the next steps for the study. The Study Team is working to finalize costs and implementation requirements, including refinement of cost estimates and contingencies, finalizing cost estimates for other corridors for comparison purposes, and finalizing cost-effectiveness evaluations of the Grand Ave corridor and other corridors. The Corridor Development Plan will be finalized in November/December, and sent to the PRT members in early/mid January for review prior to the next meeting.

The next Yuma West PRT Meeting is scheduled for January 28, 2010 at 9:00 am.