

Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: April 29, 2009

Subject: Grand Avenue Corridor Development Plan PRT Meeting #3

In Attendance:

RPTA: Carol Ketcherside, Stuart Boggs

Goodman Schwartz: Megan Casey

METRO: Wulf Grote

Blaydes Consulting: Lonnie Blaydes

Fennemore Craig: Mark Bolton

Town of El Mirage: Pat Dennis

City of Glendale: Matt Dudley

City of Peoria: Lisa Estrada, Dave Moody, Rob Gubser

City of Surprise: Sintra Hoffman, Randy Overmyer

City of Phoenix: Lorenzo Barcellone

MAG: Marc Pearsall

URS: Tim Baldwin, Kammy Horne, Rick Pilgrim, Matt Carpenter, Lonnie Blaydes, Ron Rypinski

Meeting Notes:

1. Introduction

Rick Pilgrim, MAG Project Team, initiated the meeting by introducing the presentation which followed the agenda as outlined:

Grand Avenue Update/Progress Report:

- Summary of existing and future conditions analysis
- Updated operations planning/scenario development and initial cost comparison concepts
- Initial station concept analysis results
- Update on ridership forecasting process
- Summary of stakeholder involvement (including March 25th RTAT meeting)

2. Summary of Existing and Future Conditions

Rick Pilgrim, Tim Baldwin, and Matt Carpenter, MAG Project Team, provided a presentation with regard to the information collected for the Grand Avenue Commuter Rail Development Plan Existing and Future Conditions Analysis.

Dave Moody, City of Peoria, asked whether the information collected within the Analysis was from MAG's transportation model. Rick Pilgrim confirmed the information presented is based on MAG modeling data. Further, all original MAG population data was used as the baseline for the information presented.

Wulf Grote, METRO, mentioned that if this project is to utilize federal money official population numbers should be used.

Dave Moody, City of Peoria, mentioned that if the next step within this process is to conduct an Alternatives Analysis, official population numbers must be used.

Sintra Hoffman, City of Surprise, mentioned that the maps presented within the presentation were not entirely accurate based on population growth and recent annexations. Sintra indicated the City of Surprise would provide a better annexation map.

Carole Ketcherside, RPTA, mentioned the zones (sub-areas) could be confusing. Carole suggested that zone numbers or letters could be better option to present the information.

Stuart Boggs, RPTA, suggested the land uses should be broken into developable or non-developable.

All agreed that general plans will be re-evaluated when commuter rail is designed and formally established.

Sintra Hoffman, City of Surprise, asked whether train activity numbers presented were still current, due to the economy. Rick Pilgrim indicated the activity numbers presented were received from LaTonya Finch, BNSF Railway.

Marc Pearsall, MAG, indicated BNSF Railway has been supportive of public/private partnerships. Marc added that some restrictions are physical, but can be overcome. Marc stated that some improvements are in process to the corridor, including additional capacity, and sidings at 91st Avenue. Finally, Marc mentioned that commuter rail implementation seems very possible within this corridor. Lonnie Blaydes, Blaydes Consulting, agreed with these observations.

All agreed that with respect to passenger train maintenance, the likely solution would be through contract by BNSF Railway.

Rick Pilgrim mentioned a common sense plan would be to put together some sensible cost estimates, then approach the railroad with funding.

Lonnie Blaydes, MAG Study Team, mentioned that the railroad could potentially utilize the funding secured for a commuter rail service track rights on another project.

2. Updated Operations Planning/Scenario Development and Initial Cost Comparison Concepts

Tim Baldwin, MAG Study Team, provided an update regarding operations scenarios as

part of a sketch planning process for the Grand Ave Corridor.

Tim explained that there are essentially two initial operation scenarios:

2020: Startup – initial concept with no major change in infrastructure (such as relocation of yards)

- Four trains inbound in a.m., four outbound in p.m.
- Hourly service

2040: full Service (requires major freight infrastructure changes)

- 15-minute peak service, 30 minute off-peak service, 30 minute off-peak Phoenix to Beardsley
- 30-minute peak/60-minute off-peak Beardsley to Wickenburg

Costs associated with each scenario are broken into phases, which are illustrated within the PowerPoint presentation. Each of the following options include the incorporation of positive train control.

Phase A, minimum service, four in, four out, peak hour, peak directional: Upgrade mainline. Sidings at two stations (end of line).

Phase B, minimum service, bi-directional: siding between Olive Ave. to Peoria Ave, south of Ennis Wye. Sidings at two more stations.

Phase C, all day, sixty minute headways: sidings at Alhambra, Glendale, and El Mirage. Northwest leg of Ennis Wye, upgrade track, and sidings at two more stations.

Phase D, relocate midwest, Glendale, second main Phoenix to Beardsley, third main at new yard, new IMF, El Mirage. Sidings at two more stations.

Phase E, third main line, Phoenix to Beardsley, and second mainline, Beardsley to Wickenburg.

Randy Overmyer, City of Surprise, indicated that the Surprise logistics center or Mobest could become potential commuter train building areas.

Carol Ketcherside, RPTA, indicated that the operations chart included within the PowerPoint should be titled 'Conceptual Capital Plan', rather than 'Conceptual Operating Plan'. Carol added that these are truly order of magnitude capital costs.

Tim Baldwin, MAG Study Team, confirmed that the costs in the plan do not include operations, trains or stations, just railroad development. Tim indicated that conceptual operating costs will be developed in the next steps of the corridor development planning process.

Stuart Boggs, RPTA, asked whether double tracking of the BNSF bridge at Agua Fria River was included within the preliminary order of magnitude costs. Tim Baldwin, MAG Study Team, confirmed this improvement is included.

Sintra Hoffman, City of Surprise, asked whether the MAG High Capacity Transit Study identified funding sources for recommendations with the study process. Tim Baldwin, MAG Study Team, indicated the MAG High Capacity Transit Study provided operations, maintenance, and capital order of magnitude costs. Marc Pearsall, MAG, advised there is no charge for cost estimation within this study.

Tim Baldwin closed this topic by indicating the project will evaluate operating costs and infrastructure improvements in subsequent tasks.

Initial Station Concept Analysis Results

Rick Pilgrim, MAG Study Team, provided an update with respect to station concept analysis results for the plan corridor.

Rick Pilgrim explained that a preliminary evaluation of the station location areas has been completed. The intent of this planning step was to recommend candidate areas to model ridership forecasts. The exercise utilized the station location recommendations made within the MAG High Capacity Transit Study, but added for consideration station areas in Wittmann and Wickenburg.

Rick Pilgrim further outlined the evaluation criteria utilized within the station concept analysis:

- Demographics, including employment and population
- Land use compatibility
- Intermodal connectivity

Rick indicated that an excellent ranking would include the following justifications:

- Relatively high projected population and employment
- Access to employment destinations/activity centers
- Mixed land use patterns, as well as local plans in support of TOD and transit services

Examples provided included downtown Phoenix, downtown Glendale, and downtown Peoria.

A good ranking would include:

- Strong projected population and employment
- Access to employment destinations/activity centers
- Access to at least one other transportation mode

Examples provided included west Phoenix, and north Surprise.

A fair ranking included:

- Projected population growth
- Limited connectivity opportunities
- Potential land use compatibility constraints

Examples provided included Wittmann and El Mirage.

Rick Pilgrim explained that the station area planning process does not include the elimination of any station area locations. The modeling process will begin forecasting ridership associated with this corridor, by way of the first modeling run for this project. Further collaboration with BNSF on collocation opportunities will occur.

Update on Ridership Forecasting Process

Matt Carpenter, MAG Study Team, provided an update with regard to ridership forecasting/modeling work currently underway.

Matt Carpenter indicated the MAG TransCAD model is being utilized for both the Grand Ave. project, as well as the more broad System Study. Matt shared that the addition of the commuter rail mode is currently underway.

The TransCAD modeling results will be compared to previous forecasts, including those modeling results generated within the MAG High Capacity Transit Study.

The MAG Study Team will evaluate ridership projections relative to various operation scenarios and potential station locations.

Matt Carpenter concluded by stating the ridership projections will be based on modeling work for years 2015, 2030, and 2050.

Jim Mathien, METRO Rail questioned the use of a 2050 build-out year for this planning process. Matt Carpenter, MAG Study Team, indicated this year would be confirmed with modeling staff.

Summary of Stakeholder Involvement (including March 25th RTAT meeting)

Megan Casey, Goodman Schwartz, provided a summary of the March 25th RTAT meeting, as well as the evaluation results of the meeting. The summary of the questionnaire results and March 25th RTAT meeting are attached.

Megan Casey advised the next RTAT meeting will occur on June 26th, however the next Commuter Rail Stakeholder Group meeting will not be a joint meeting on that date. The next CRSG meeting will be held in early July, date to be announced.

Other Issues

None at this time.

Action Items:

The City of Surprise is to provide updated land use data to support the Existing and Future Conditions Technical Memo as soon as possible.

MAG staff is to provide comments regarding the draft Existing and Future Conditions Technical Memorandum by May 15th.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting will occur in August, 2009.