Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: **June 30, 2009**

Subject: **Grand Avenue Corridor Development Plan PRT Meeting #4**

In Attendance:

RPTA: Stuart Boggs

Goodman Schwartz: David Schwartz

METRO: Jim Mathien

Blaydes Consulting: Lonnie Blaydes

Fennemore Craig: Mark Bolton

Town of El Mirage: Scott Chesney, Pat Dennis

MCDOT: Denise Lacey

City of Peoria: Dave Moody

City of Surprise: Robert Maki, Randy Overmyer

City of Phoenix: Albert Santana

MAG: Marc Pearsall, Kevin Wallace

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

ADOT: Mike Normand

Meeting Notes:

1. Introduction

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

- Introductions
- Grand Avenue Update/Progress Report
  - Update on operations planning/scenario development/railroad infrastructure improvements, and initial cost comparison concepts
  - Update on ridership forecasting process, including sensitivity test results
  - Other issues
- Next Meeting: August
- Adjournment

2. Grand Avenue Update: Update on Operations Planning/Scenario Development/Railroad Infrastructure Improvements, and Initial Cost Comparison Concepts

Tim Baldwin, MAG Study Team, provided a presentation with regard to the operations scenarios, including the minimum cost versus maximum service scenarios.

Tim Baldwin indicated the Grand Avenue corridor is being treated as a starter line, for a base condition. Tim added that Grand Avenue is a potential entry level service for the MAG region.

The MAG Study Rail Operations Team has worked through level of service implementation scenarios, and refining in a timely manner. Tim Baldwin added that part of the scenario process includes determining a two hour window of service during the commuter rush hour.

Tim Baldwin explained the Federal Railroad Administration's requirement for positive train control in all rail corridors in the coming years.

Finally, regarding scenario costs, Tim Baldwin explained the Study Team is almost done with hard operational cost numbers for the Committee to review.

Dave Moody, Town of Peoria, mentioned there are other costs that are not being considered, including grade crossing improvements. Tim Baldwin responded by indicating a future environmental assessment of the corridor would include a traffic study. Utilizing the traffic analysis, the environmental assessment could include a list of grade crossings or separations.

Rick Pilgrim, MAG Study Team, indicated the Grand Avenue Corridor Development Plan would include 'problem locations', and ways to make improvements. This information would be in consultation with the Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway.

Rick Pilgrim added that both highway improvements and rail improvements need to be considered within the commuter rail planning process.

Wulf Grote, METRO, asked when determining ridership if seated passengers were only considered. Tim Baldwin confirmed that a seat for every passenger is part of the planning assumptions – approximately 140 per rail car.

Dave Moody, City of Peoria, asked whether the current rail operation has a rail maintenance facility within the corridor. Rick Pilgrim, MAG Study Team, confirmed there is a maintenance operation at Mobest, conducting light to medium maintenance. Rick added that heavy maintenance is performed at Barsto, California.

Lonnie Blaydes, MAG Study Team, added that most overhaul work for trains in a commuter system in Arizona would be done remotely.

A question was raised regarding whether a commuter train operation in this corridor could conduct maintenance and operations in Surprise. Rick Pilgrim, MAG Study Team, indicated this was something to further discuss and explore at future meetings.

An additional question was raised regarding station costs when implementing commuter rail service. Tim Baldwin, MAG Study Team, indicated the station construction and costs associated can be costly, up to $5-8 M each, as seen in Dallas, Texas.

With respect to parking, Tim Baldwin added that a typical surface lot parking would include approx. 500 spaces to start. Tim mentioned that a park and ride would include interface with buses, bicycles, and pedestrians, providing complete multimodal access.

Wulf Grote, METRO, posed a question on whether a joint development for a park and ride rail station could be part of a solution. Wulf followed by asking whether public-private partnerships were more common with commuter rail or with light rail transit. Tim Baldwin responded by indicating a high level review of modes will be taken into consideration in the planning process.

With regard to transit oriented development, Wulf Grote asked whether there have been any studies done on this issue. Tim Baldwin responded by mentioning Chicago and suburban development forming along commuter train corridors. Tim added that the North Star service in Minneapolis has inspired many small cities in the corridor to jump into transit oriented development mode.

Wulf Grote asked whether the operation scenarios being developed by the Study Team are taking into consideration grade separations and congestion impacts. Tim Baldwin responded by indicating the capital improvements will have a small bearing at this point of the analysis. Tim added that some assumptions could be made considering capital improvements, which could influence train headways at other crossings.

Rick Pilgrim, MAG Study Team, mentioned that operationally, it's best to work with only one railroad to begin operations. Rick added that Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railway has been very helpful to date and has been a good planning partner.

Wulf Grote, METRO, asked how light rail transit would connect passengers if the commuter rail station was built at Phoenix Union Station (3rd Ave.) – Wulf suggested that a station closer to Chase Field would make better sense.

Any terminus station east of Phoenix Union Station (3rd Ave.) would involve another railroad corridor (UPRR), which is outside of the Grand Avenue Corridor Study. Phoenix Union Station (3rd Ave.) would be three blocks south of the future I-10 west light rail station near 3rd Ave. at Jefferson-Washington.

Additionally, Randy Overmyer, City of Surprise, suggested that a station at 163rd Ave may make better sense, given this intersection will include a future, major arterial in the west valley.

Marc Pearsall, MAG, mentioned that a commuter rail station across from the State Capitol parallel to 19th Ave. has been looked at by ADOT, but it was assumed that in

order to accommodate a commuter train for 3-8 cars in length, that some of the through streets between Van Buren and Jefferson would need to be closed in order to avoid grade crossing traffic tie-ups with automobiles. Grade separations may remedy this, but would be very expensive.

Dave Moody, City of Peoria, suggested that the study process should evaluate multimodal connectivity, in the catchment areas set near station areas. Dave added that the catchment area near downtown Peoria should be part of the study process.

Wulf Grote, METRO, mentioned that if the commuter rail station was built at the State Capitol, this may influence the LRT West alignment.

Tim Baldwin, MAG Study Team, mentioned that the further the Grand Avenue commuter rail corridor is built (e.g. Circle City or Wickenburg), there is potential for more ridership, but less efficiency.

2. Grand Avenue Update: Ridership Forecasting Process, including Sensitivity Test Results

Matt Carpenter, MAG Study Team, provided an update regarding the Grand Avenue ridership forecasting process. Matt conveyed the Grand Avenue corridor commuter rail coefficients have been entered into the MAG TransCAD model. Additionally, Matt mentioned the peer city modeling information has been requested. Cities include Albuquerque, Dallas, Denver, Minneapolis, and Salt Lake City.

3. Next Meeting:

The next meeting will occur in August, 2009.