

NOTES OF THE
MARICOPA ASSOCIATION OF GOVERNMENTS
PLANNERS STAKEHOLDERS GROUP

Friday, May 31st, 2002
MAG Office Building, Suite 200 Saguaro Room
302 North First Avenue, Phoenix

MEMBERS PRESENT

Wahid Alam, Mesa
Hamid Arshadi, Paradise Valley
Michael Cartsonis, Litchfield Park
Rodney Cobb, El Mirage
Nathan Crane, Avondale
Jesse Drake, Fountain Hills
Paul Ferris, Eloy
Phil Gardner, Peoria
Matt Holm, Maricopa County

Diana Kaminski, Tempe
Joy Mee, Phoenix
Frank Mizner, Mesa
Gary Neiss, Carefree
Hank Pluster, Chandler
Ron Short, Glendale
Ed Stilling, FHWA
Phil Testa, Surprise

OTHERS PRESENT

Michelle Green, MAG
Roger Herzog, MAG

Jack Tomasik, MAG

1. Update on MAG Regional Transportation Plan

At the last Planners Stakeholders Group (PSG) meeting people asked to be informed about the Regional Transportation Plan and how land use planners could become involved.

Roger Herzog, MAG, presented stating that there is a lot of information regarding the plan on our website. The consultant has prepared issue papers and focus group results which, are available on the website.

We are in the process of preparing a Status of the Regional Transportation Plan report, and that should be ready in about a week.

The modeling effort for this plan has been significant. Although we do not have official projections to work with at this point, we do have some population estimates that required us to add additional traffic analysis zones (TAZ's). Approximately 500 TAZ's were added for modeling purposes.

Roger went through a presentation (as attached) covering the status of Phase I of the RTP. The supporting studies for the RTP process and the outlook for Phase II

of the RTP update. This included a discussion of each of the completed and ongoing tasks. This included an update on each of eight modal and area transportation studies and an overview of the objectives for Phase II.

Questions/Comments

How do you match a scenario with the individual land use plans of communities? Will you be providing guidance as to what will be helpful in general plans to implement the regional plans?

Yes, we will develop implementation strategies for the future regional transportation system. The analysis is being based on four growth scenarios that are keyed on the target densities developed by each jurisdiction. Interviews were also held with planner stakeholders to obtain input on the growth scenarios.

This seems like a transportation plan in search of a vision for the region. There does not seem to be a place for a vision of the region. You are expecting the population of the region to triple, are you not? I suspect the focus groups are not people who look into the future but are people that are focused on current problems. Where in this quagmire will you come up with a vision of the region?

The vision in the growth scenarios is drawn from the target densities in each of the individual jurisdictions land use plans. In addition, later use of the adopted regional socioeconomic data, which represents a vision for the region, will be used to develop transportation needs and priorities. The focus groups provided input on regional values.

What will be the result or product of this process?

This will be a multi-modal plan for the region, which will identify future transportation needs for the region, including aviation. It will be a complete, comprehensive transportation plan for the region. We will have an element that looks at a 20 – 25 year time horizon as per federal requirements for funding. We also want to go beyond that in order to preserve Right-of-way now when it may be easier to acquire land and people will be better informed when they make their own land use decisions. Also we want to be looking at future technologies and consider the impact they may have on the transportation system.

Do you see anything different coming out of this plan. Anything new that we may not have thought of before?

Yes, looking out as far as we are will generate new thinking about transportation or highlight the need for new concepts. The task of dealing with the future population will require this.

Do you have anything specific yet?

The demand we are seeing in some of these corridors is staggering. Dealing with it will require a number of innovative approaches.

With that hint, do you think we will see a new regional land use structure that will force people to make other choices and potentially create a different land use pattern?

It's possible.

How is this plan going to work with the general plans, most of which are adopted? For example, the location of light rail stations has been decided. Will the plan change this sort of factor? I am concerned about the timing of this plan and how it will work with other efforts to determine infrastructure needs.

The transportation plan will not get to that level of detail; however, the timing of the availability of information with one process informing another is definitely an issue. Unfortunately, we have to work under the circumstances that we have. We do not have control over the timing of all of the information affecting the planning process.

How much are you looking at demand management as opposed to meeting demand?

We start with the potential demand; however, when we see the facilities that would be required to meet the demand, we understand that we may not be able to meet the needs. Then we will need to look at alternative solutions. This relates back to your question about whether or not anything new will come from this process. It is likely that there will have to be something new because we may not be able to meet the demand. This will come up in phase II, which we are expecting to end around late spring or early summer of 2003. Of course we have ongoing studies feeding into the Regional Transportation Plan, socioeconomic projections etc.

What is the cost of the contract?

Phase I is \$500,000 and Phase II has not been contracted yet. The other studies being done concurrently are approximately \$200,000 each.

MAG Regional Development

Is the freight study going to be folded into this?

Yes, we are aiming to initiate a freight study in FY03 and take freight issues into account in the planning process.

Do you think this Plan will only accommodate individual communities visions or will it do something else?

Yes, I think that it will accommodate the visions of communities, as we look farther into the future.

What is the best opportunity for this group to become involved in this planning effort?

The area studies present an excellent opportunity to become involved. We have been working with local jurisdictions to get input regarding socioeconomic data and transportation issues and needs. We will be working on policy and strategy development during the stakeholders meetings.

Phase II will provide more of the nuts and bolts of the study. As this part of the study emerges, we will benefit from input on how local objectives fit with the goals of the plan. We will need to work together to work out the scope of the plan.

Proximity to another jurisdiction should be a factor. Perhaps you could prepare a matrix including criteria and use a process of elimination for projects. Projects would be selected based on the number of criteria they meet.

2. Planners Stakeholders Group Mission Statement

Since there was so much interest and discussion regarding the RTP this item will be held until the next meeting.

3. Mesa General Plan Presentation

Frank Mizner presented the Mesa General Plan stating that we began the general plan process approximately two years ago as a minor update. Shortly after that, we had a new mayor and city manager. Direction came from them and City Council to combine the major studies we were undertaking at the time into a new general plan. The studies included general plan, transportation, economic development, parks, and recreation. We hired a consulting team late in the summer of 2001. In September the Joint Master Plan Committee (JMPC) was formed. The City of Mesa had experience with large committees in the past, committees of approximately 30 people or so, so there was a conscious effort to limit the committee for fear that it become too large and unwieldy. In September a committee of approximately 31 citizens and other representatives of interests in the community, was convened.

The committee worked on four different sub-committees – general plan, transportation, economic development, and parks and recreation.

Issues

- The GM proving grounds were one of the biggest issues for us. Of course they are under county jurisdiction. Working with GM was considered a high priority.
- Over flights from Williams Gateway Airport are also an issue.
- Redevelopment is big and will be big for Mesa in the coming years. We have done most of our outward growth.
- We are sensitive to adjacent communities, we understand the impact that Williams Gateway Airport may have on Southeast Maricopa County and Pinal County. We are also aware of the potential impact development of these areas may have on us. Our mayor is a supporter of the Airport and working with adjacent communities.
- Housing is being considered as an important issue in this plan.
- This council is very active and is making decisions.
- There has been a lot of public input which can be difficult. It is often easy to get people out to talk about immediate issues which may have an impact on citizens but attempting to get them interested in and concerned about long range planning is a problem. We prepared a citizen response matrix at the request of one of the council members. It logs citizen comment and details an appropriate response.
- Jobs/population balance is an important issue especially for a community that has such a reputation of being a bedroom community.

Question/Comments

What is the most new and innovative concept for Mesa's General Plan?

The focus on redevelopment is new for Mesa. The future of Mesa relies on redevelopment. A 1997 Goldwater Institute Study found that the biggest impediment to redevelopment is the neighborhood resistance and unwillingness to sell. Mesa is projected to grow to 620,000 people. This represents approximately 50% growth for the City. Much of that growth will come from redevelopment; this represents a cultural change for Mesa.

Was the County sympathetic to the City of Mesa's efforts with GM?

Yes, in fact the County would like to see Mesa annex all appropriate county islands. The plan represents a compromise. We expect that there will be a major amendment when GM is able to find a development partner for their 5000 acres. It should develop in Mesa and we think it will.

Is there a transit component?

Yes, we also have multi-purpose paths proposed for pedestrians, the plan is multi-modal. We cannot afford to expand arterials so we are going to have to make some financial decisions, perhaps by next spring.

Will the various modes be linked?

Yes they will.

The land use categories seem very specific.

Yes they are. They came from the planning and zoning commission because they wanted to plan to be consistent with the zoning so that people would be more aware of the potential uses that could be located either on their own properties or on other properties. We are always looking to strike that balance between flexibility and specificity.

Is there resistance to multi-family housing?

Yes, there is a negative community attitude towards this form of housing.

Thank you, for the opportunity to present to you today. A copy of the City of Mesa's General Plan can be obtain by contacting Frank Mizner, Planning Director or Wahid Alam, Planner II.

4. Next Meeting

The next Planners Stakeholders Group meeting will be held on June 28, 2002 at 1pm.