

Minutes of the Work Session held June 14, 2010 at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers.

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Mayor Lopez-Rogers and Council Members

Jim McDonald, Vice Mayor  
Jim Buster  
Frank Scott  
Charles Vierhout  
Ken Weise

**ABSENCE EXCUSED**

Stephanie Karlin

**ALSO PRESENT**

Charlie McClendon, City Manager  
David Fitzhugh, Assistant City Manager  
Rogene Hill, Assistant City Manager  
Sue McDermott, City Engineer and Director of Development Services  
Carmen Martinez, City Clerk

**1) ROLL CALL BY THE CITY CLERK**

**2) AVONDALE TRANSIT CENTER STUDY**

The Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG), on behalf of the City of Avondale, conducted a study to develop a template for a possible Transit Center facility within the Avondale City Center environment.

Mr. McClendon reported that MAG funded a study on a potential transit center/park-and-ride facility in Avondale's City Center area. That study has been completed. No action is required, but if Council agrees with its findings, Avondale could consider this project for future funding requests.

Ms. Rogene Hill, Assistant City Manager, stated that MAG chose TranSystems to conduct the study, and that Jim Dickey was the lead consultant. In order to take advantage of Federal funding, a groundwork study must be done. The report would satisfy the requirements for the first stage of the process. The project has only been designed to a conceptual level thus far.

Mr. Dickey reviewed the results of the study. Two properties, both located east of Avondale Boulevard, were considered in the City Center area. Transit centers can include a wide variety of passenger amenities such as ticket vendors, benches, signage, etc. They often offer access to important locations nearby, and can serve multiple parking needs, such as offering convenient parking from which to access transit services. They are usually built in central locations, and are often placed close to freeways.

Estrella Mountain Community College has a transit center with surface parking. It can handle three or four buses, and offers basic shelters for shade. The Superstition Springs Transit Center also offers surface parking, as well as a variety of express and local bus services. TranSystems collaborated with Gunn Communications on a transit survey to identify potential users of this service. The survey was available online, and also had in-person and static display components. Nearly 600 surveys were completed. Almost half of

those surveyed said they would be likely to use the transit center for express bus or local service, circulators, or some future method of transit. The transit center facility itself could conceptually consist of a parking garage, with shaded structures where people would wait for buses.

Mr. Dickey said a parking garage could be built in several stages. The design is scalable so as to meet existing short-term needs. It could eventually be tripled in size to reach its full build out capacity. The first phase could provide enough parking to easily meet transit needs through the next five to ten years. As more partners settle in the City Center area, opportunities to expand the facility could increase. The transit center's five bays could accommodate enough transit to cover a 20-year period. One bay could accommodate an articulated bus, while the other four would handle standard size buses. The design allows for easy egress and ingress, and provides enough room for vehicle layovers. The facility is conceptualized with an outside parking ramp to access the parking area. The ramp could facilitate growth through all three stages of the building. The initial structure would also include the stairs and elevators required for all three phases. The scale of the building was designed to match the height of the anticipated buildings in the area.

The two-bay, four level garage option would provide about 493 spaces and is estimated to cost about \$11,732,000. The one-bay, four level garage would provide about 245 spaces, and is estimated at about \$7,845,000. Those estimates are very preliminary. Many things could affect the final cost. The additions would be built alongside the first phase, not on top of it. This would allow the building to remain open during construction. The veneer of the building could be movable as well, so it would not have to be replaced. The surrounding green space could eventually be used for something else. A wide variety of interim uses would enhance the usability of the structure, without committing it for the long-term. The first phase cost includes the roadway infrastructure necessary to access the facility. These costs would vary depending on the chosen location. This design is flexible enough to serve as a template for any number of sites.

Council Member Buster inquired whether this project is included in a CIP. Mr. McClendon responded that it has been identified as a project for which the City would seek federal appropriations and other funding sources as they become available. No local money has been identified at this point. It is still necessary to acquire land. Developers might be interested in wrapping the facility with additional development. Council Member Buster asked whether the operations and management could be funded through existing revenue streams. Mr. McClendon responded that the City is working to create a business owners association for the City Center area that would address, among other things, long-term O&M costs for such a facility.

In response to Council Member Buster's inquiry, Mr. McClendon estimated that Avondale used to get around \$1 million in transit grants, but the LTAF is no longer available. In response to Council Member Buster's further inquiry, Mr. Dickey explained that ridership estimates were determined by merging the existing riders with opportunity riders that would accompany improved services. For instance, many vanpools connect the Avondale area with downtown Phoenix. Facilities like this often become the impetus for more vanpools and ride sharing. The estimate also used transportation data projections through 2025, and informed assumptions on other rider usage.

Council Member Buster requested a comparison to other Valley cities. Mr. Dickey explained that many factors drive parking and ridership behavior. The Ahwatukee park-and-ride, for instance, is overcrowded, has been expanded at least once, and could be expanded again. It features a lot of express service. Many users travel from Maricopa. Avondale's plan is smaller, and the build out number is lower. The Avondale facility could similarly serve people who drive in from more distant communities to access express transit. Mayor Lopez-Rogers added that trip lengths factor into people's decision to use transit.

Council Member Weise expressed concern that Goodyear is building a park-and-ride at Dysart Road and the I-10, which could affect Avondale's plan. Mr. Dickey responded that it is difficult to predict the impact it would have. Over the past 20 years he has noticed patterns in transit growth, and those patterns could repeat in Avondale. People are inclined to travel in the direction of their ultimate destination when trying to reach a park-and-ride. The people who live east of the Goodyear park-and-ride would likely prefer to come to Avondale's. He believes the ridership predictions for this area of the Valley are accurate.

Council Member Weise noted that one transit study conducted in Melbourne, Australia revealed that only one in five persons actually took their car to a transit center to get downtown. The rest preferred to live in the vicinity of the transit center. That fits in with what the City is trying to do in City Center. The City should look to attract multi-family residential housing to that area. It would be much better to have people walk to the transit center, than drive there. In response to Council Member Weise's inquiry, Mr. Dickey explained that \$800,000 would be required to get the transit center concept to the next stage. If funding were available, Council could be ready to build a facility in about a year.

Mr. McClendon said the vision for the City Center dictates that the development be planned with sustainability in mind. In essence, the City is trying to create demand for this facility by bringing people to live, work, and shop in this area. A more typical situation would be to build the park-and-ride in response to pent-up demand. Transit has been part of the City Center concept from the beginning. The challenge will be to convince regional authorities to use a different approach when considering this case. This mixed-use development approach increasingly makes Avondale more competitive when it comes to securing Federal grant opportunities.

Council Member Weise noted that the residential component of the City Center has always been important. It makes sense to be proactive with this. However, if the City cannot get the funding the project is dead. Mr. McClendon responded that if the City can acquire a reasonably priced site, an interim surface lot could suffice until enough critical mass builds up around it to justify the first phase of the parking structure. A residential developer might be willing to partner with the City on the facility at that time. There are steps that can be taken in the next couple years that would not require the full \$12 million commitment.

Mayor Lopez-Rogers said it contributes to Avondale's goal of becoming more sustainable. She said Congressman Grijalva needs to understand that this project anticipates the future. As the nation moves towards more sustainable urban development, this facility will prove its value.

Vice Mayor McDonald inquired whether the facility is envisioned as a gathering spot for vanpools to Palo Verde. Mr. Dickey said his scenario specifically modeled existing, known eastbound vanpool trips, not the westbound ones. Some van pools start by circulating through neighborhoods to pick people up at their houses. These vans could drop passengers off at the transit center as well. Vice Mayor McDonald inquired whether Avondale would pursue funding individually through MAG, rather than through the RPTA. Mr. McClendon responded that Avondale is open to any kind of path that would be available. One problem is that the local funding is all obligated. This project could be sold as part of a bigger vision for a different style of community. If something opens up at the regional level, Avondale would jump on it.

Vice Mayor McDonald asked whether the City would be required to keep parking free as surrounding development increases. Mr. McClendon said that unless free parking is a premise from the beginning, the City would have options for recovering costs later on. One possibility is a parking improvement district over the City Center that developments would participate in. There are many options that would be fair to the people who need it now, as well as the future. Recovering cost through parking fees is definitely a possibility. It could potentially take the form of an HOA fee as well.

Mr. Dickey said he has studied the prevailing trends and believes that more emphasis will be placed on sustainable mixed-use development in future grant programs. In that regard, this project would rank very high. Having it ready to go would position Avondale to take advantage of new programs as they become available. Mayor Lopez-Rogers encouraged the City's continued partnership with MAG.

**3) PROPOSED INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH TOLLESON FOR TRAFFIC SIGNAL AND STREETLIGHT MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR**

Staff presents the City Council with information regarding an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Tolleson to provide traffic signal and streetlight maintenance.

Mr. McClendon stated that an agreement has been reached with Tolleson that would create a new revenue source for the City. Ms. McDermott said the purpose of the IGA is to outline maintenance and repair of signals and lights within the Tolleson city limits. Currently their signals are maintained by Maricopa County DOT, but that agreement is being terminated. Tolleson's streetlights are currently owned by SRP, but they are negotiating to purchase them. The term of the contract would be one year, with an automatic renewal. The IGA identifies the roles and responsibilities of both cities.

Currently Tolleson has 13 traffic signals and 100 streetlights of their own. Once they obtain the SRP's lights, they will have 800 total streetlights. Avondale would assist with bluestaking. Avondale would respond to emergencies immediately, and would respond to high priorities within 24 hours. Regular requests and work orders would have a response time of 3 days, while maintenance would occur on a quarterly basis. Avondale's transition to a quarterly maintenance schedule has dramatically cut down on call out times.

Tolleson would provide Avondale with maps and as-builts on their equipment, and allow the use of their bucket equipment. Tolleson would handle its own pole knockdowns. The Police Chief and Superintendent will coordinate on-call procedures, and preventative maintenance schedule. Reimbursement would be \$80 per hour during regular business hours, at a two-hour minimum. After hours it would be \$100 per hour at a three-hour minimum. Quarterly signal maintenance would cost Tolleson approximately \$1,600 per signal, totaling about \$21,000. Hourly rates include both equipment and staff time.

Ms. McDermott indicated that a report could be prepared for approval on June 21. Mayor Lopez-Rogers queried whether Avondale would be recovering its costs under the deal. Ms. McDermott answered affirmatively. Council Member Scott inquired about the nature of street light maintenance. Ms. McDermott explained that crews check for outages that have not been reported. They troubleshoot problems and ensure the system is working.

Council Member Buster asked about the additional 700 streetlights. Ms. McDermott responded that Tolleson has put their own streetlights in new developments. The additional 700 lights are those that SRP is selling back to the City. Avondale has about 9,000 streetlights in comparison.

Council Member Weise asked about emergency scenarios. Ms. McDermott responded that Tolleson would provide police service when a traffic signal is down at an intersection. Council Member Weise speculated about a regional emergency that impacts both cities at once, and asked which city would have the priority. Ms. McDermott responded that Avondale's emergency would come first, but the City would work with Tolleson on an adequate solution. She added that it would be difficult to evaluate every possible scenario in advance. Council Member Weise expressed concern that staff time could be spent developing an IGA that ends up being rejected by Tolleson's Council. Ms. McDermott noted that Tolleson's Public Works Director intends to take it to Council on June 15.

In response to Mayor Lopez-Rogers' inquiry, Ms. McDermott explained that since Avondale made the transition to a regular maintenance schedule, there have been no callouts in the first six months of the year. Council Member Vierhout felt it was good for cities to cooperate in this manner. He encouraged more such agreements with other cities in the future.

#### **4) PROPOSED AMENDMENT TO THE MUNICIPAL ART COMMITTEE BYLAWS**

City Council receives information regarding proposed amendment to the Municipal Art Committee Bylaws.

Mayor Lopez-Rogers requested that this item be tabled in order to accommodate Council Member Karlin's request to address this issue.

#### **5) ADJOURNMENT**

With no further business before the Council, Council Member Weise moved to adjourn the work session. Council Member Scott seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously.

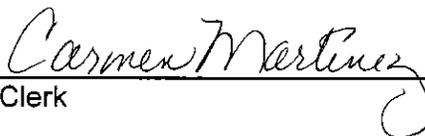
Meeting adjourned at 6:55 p.m.

  
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Mayor Lopez-Rogers

  
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Carmen Martinez, CMC  
City Clerk

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the foregoing minutes are a true and correct copy of the minutes of the Work Session of the Council of the City of Avondale held on the 14<sup>th</sup> day of June 2010. I further certify that the meeting was duly called and held and that the quorum was present.

  
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City Clerk