

**STATE TRANSPORTATION BOARD
STUDY SESSION MINUTES
Tuesday, May 4, 2010
Immediately following the Special Board Meeting
Human Resource Development Center (HRDC) Grand Canyon Room
1130 N. 22nd Ave.
Phoenix, AZ 85009**

Pledge

[The pledge was recited at the beginning of the Special Board Meeting.]

Roll Call

In attendance: Bob Montoya, Bill Feldmeier, Felipe Zubia, Kelly Anderson, Steve Christy (telephonic). Victor Flores was absent. Bobbie Lundstrom joined the meeting telephonically at 10:45 a.m.

Call to Audience

[None]

ITEM 1: Lone Tree Traffic Interchange – John Harper, Flagstaff District Engineer

The Lone Tree Traffic Interchange is being proposed by the City of Flagstaff and the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization. Mr. Harper showed a map of Flagstaff noting the location of the proposed project, just east of the system interchange at the I-17 / I-40 junction.

Chair Montoya asked what the distance was between the I-40/I-17 interchange and the proposed Lone Tree Interchange. Mr. Harper noted it was roughly a mile. Mr. Harper continued by saying that the proposed project has been discussed for the past several decades. It is meant to tie-in to the Lone Tree Corridor, just recently approved by the Flagstaff City Council, which will ultimately connect to Rte 66 to the north.

Last July 17, 2009, ADOT received a Lone Tree Traffic Interchange justification paper from the FMPO, detailing the need for the interchange. On November 13, 2009, ADOT received a letter from Flagstaff City Manager Kevin Burke formally requesting that ADOT place the Lone Tree Traffic Interchange into the Five Year Program.

The District's interest in this project is that now there is an opportunity to do a Route Transfer exchange and make this a win-win for both parties. If ADOT could fund an interchange, and then transfer to the City routes that no longer function as state routes in the City, then the City could take those over.

The East Flagstaff Traffic Interchange Project, which was completed several years ago, is part of the agreement to transfer routes, and he noted on the map which routes the City took over. As

part of that project, the City also agreed to a study of remaining routes in the City to see how these routes might be transferred over time. The Route Transfer study is almost complete, and lays out costs, potential improvements and observed deficiencies on those routes. It also recognizes that not all improvements are the responsibility of ADOT. The study does provide a baseline to determine how the City and ADOT can come to terms on the transfer as it might relate to a project such as the Lone Tree Traffic Interchange.

A Design Concept Report was done for the Lone Tree Traffic Interchange almost 20 years ago (1993) by ADOT. The City, along with the Corridor study, did an updated DCR for the Lone Tree Traffic Interchange. As part of the proposed project, the City and their partners are willing to donate the right-of-way, which amounts to about 12 acres and a cost of about \$5M. One unknown stems from the distance between the interchanges, and how westbound traffic from the Lone Tree Interchange will get into the system interchange. There is a consultant looking at this issue.

Mr. Harper concluded that both parties have something to gain from this transaction, and ADOT is willing to work with the City on an agreement and thinks it can become a win-win situation for both parties.

Mr. Harper introduced Mark Landsiedel, Community Development Director for the City of Flagstaff. Mr. Landsiedel noted that Rick Barrett, the Flagstaff City Engineer and Dave Wessel, Manager of the Flagstaff Metropolitan Planning Organization were also in attendance. He noted that they have a very good working relationship with Mr. Harper and his staff.

He brought the Board's attention to the fact that the City of Flagstaff envisioned the Lone Tree Traffic Interchange as far back as 1987. In 1993, ADOT's DCR was completed and in 2001, the City adopted a regional plan, showing the traffic interchange at the location. In 2008, following Lone Tree Corridor studies, they made a minor amendment to their Regional Plan, solidifying the location. They studied the highway from John Wesley Powell (a mile south of the interstate) to Rte 66.

He outlined the regional benefits of the traffic interchange:

- Decreased delays on Milton Road
- Shorten regional travel times
- Environmental benefits
- Improved emergency access
- Creation of a parallel north/south corridor through the City
- Access to State assets, such as Northern Arizona University and State-owned lands
- Enhanced access to regional destinations such as Flagstaff Airport
- \$100M in benefits from highway construction development
- Savings in travel time and gas
- Action on the I-40 DCR investment

The City has a number of assets that they can bring to the discussion:

- Route transfers
- Developer contributions from several major developments

- FMPO financial support
- Right-of-way
- Support from NAU and others

Following the completion of the East Flagstaff Traffic Interchange, the City committed to working with ADOT, the County, and the MPO to create a route transfer study, which is now complete except for some minor wording.

There are a number of advantages to Flagstaff in accepting route transfers:

- Improved responsiveness to the public
- Enhanced control over roadway development issues
- Improved development process
- Transfer terms could be used to accelerate some priority improvements within the City.

Some disadvantages to the City are:

- Increased operation and maintenance
- Increased liability
- Additional regulatory responsibility and administrative burden
- Ownership cost and capital improvements

Immediate issues the City has been working through:

- Capital impact of wholesale transfer
- Rolling stock and materials storage
- Increased equipment and manpower for snow removal on arterial streets and school routes
- Usage of annual HURF allocation
- Level of service impact

Mr. Landsiedel concluded by expressing his confidence that ADOT and the City of Flagstaff can work together successfully on this project.

Mr. Zubia asked Mr. Landsiedel to explain what actually exists at this time, what is proposed, the timing involved, and the relationship to the General Plan. Mr. Landsiedel then explained those points, using a map, pointing out that the routes in yellow are proposed or being studied. None of the projects are in their Five Year Capital Plan, but the City does have a Bond Advisory Committee that is currently looking at bonding options for part of the project.

Mr. Zubia was curious if bqAZ looked at the interchange area at all. Ms. Toth would have to research that.

Mr. Feldmeier asked if the existing Lone Tree Route is the primary access to the Community College and Mr. Landsiedel answered affirmatively, noting there is no access to the college from the Interstate. The Juniper Point Master Plan envisions direct access to the Community College from its east side. Mr. Feldmeier was curious if the Lone Tree Route would be eliminated if the

new interchange was built, and Mr. Landsiedel replied that it would remain in place as a local street.

[Bobbie Lundstrom joined the meeting telephonically.]

Mr. Feldmeier sought to confirm if today's discussion was preparation for a more refined discussion in which ADOT would discuss exchanging routes for construction of the Lone Tree Interchange. Mr. Landsiedel confirmed his thinking. Mr. Feldmeier also asked if the City of Flagstaff was looking at having an agreement completed prior to the June meeting when the Board submits its Five Year Plan, and Mr. Landsiedel replied that they are looking to formalize an agreement with the State by the end of the calendar year, but that they do intend for it to be in the Five Year Plan. Chair Montoya remarked that the Five Year Plan would include verbiage "subject to..." in reference to the proposed agreement.

Mr. McGee's belief is that it is the desire of the City of Flagstaff to have the project included in the Five Year Plan. Mr. McGee noted that the total amount of money ADOT has to program in 2015 in greater Arizona is around \$30M, and this project would be in the tens of millions. ADOT would probably put some portion of the project into the plan now, scheduling it for the end of the fifth year. Subsequent to an agreement, the other parts could be allocated funds in Five Year Plan updates. By 2015, there would hopefully be enough money to build the project.

Mr. Zubia commented that in the past the Board has looked statewide at areas of immediate need, particularly with ARRA funds. That area of immediate need, coupled with the areas of most population, has generally centered on Pinal County. He has supported those projects 100% but it is now getting to the point where the Board needs to focus on other areas of need throughout the State. He stated that he absolutely supports this project, and if they can get it done sooner he would be in favor of it.

Mr. Anderson asked if any development organization has numbers on how this interchange would benefit the City in terms of increased dining, entertainment and so forth. Mr. Landsiedel replied it has not been examined from that perspective, although he can obtain that information and provide it to the Board.

Mr. Feldmeier stated that he looks at it as "wants vs. needs" and the interchange is not something the State needs, but by working with the City to build the interchange, the State could eliminate its urban routes through the Route Transfer.

Mr. Christy and Ms. Lundstrom echoed the statements of the other Board members, expressing their support for the project.

Chair Montoya, noting his bias as being from Flagstaff, stated his support for the project, comparing it to the Rattlesnake Interchange that they approved for Kingman. It provides secondary access and would relieve a bottlenecked situation.

ITEM 2: Fain Road Project – Dallas Hammit, Operations Engineer

Mr. Hammit introduced himself, noting he is the past District Engineer in the Prescott area. He also introduced Yavapai County Supervisor Tom Thurman and Yavapai County Engineer Phil Bourdon.

In 1998, Yavapai County, other local agencies and ADOT began work on the Fain Road SR 89A Corridor, which opened to traffic in 2003. He described the two projects, using a map for reference. Those projects cost \$55M, with the County contributing \$12.5M. The interchange cost \$7.2M. The County did the design, which amounted to \$282,000, and the Central Metropolitan Planning Organization contributed about \$700,000. Fain Road was paid for by the County. To date, \$77M has been spent on that Corridor. Of that, Yavapai County has participated in \$5M and almost \$3M has come from other local agencies. The whole Corridor is about 17 miles long.

The Fain Road section as it is today is a two-lane roadway, and all the right-of-ways were acquired by the County for the four-lane divided section. ADOT owns the section called SR 89A spur, and it is also a two-lane section. SR 69 is also in the area with five lanes and some seven-lane sections. Currently there is funding for SR 89 in 2013-2014 for \$25M. The plan is to make the roadway four lanes from the interchange up to Chino Valley. Part would be a rural divided roadway, and part urbanized roadway with a center turn lane or raised median. They just completed the Chino Valley project, so there are four lanes through the town.

Ownership of SR 89 in the Prescott area is divided amongst ADOT and locals. There are currently three interchanges on the route. The City of Prescott currently has a project for an interchange called Granite Dells that will be done in early 2011. The Viewpoint Interchange is in the program for this year and ADOT is designing it and looking to build with an advertisement by the end of FY2010. Other locations have been identified for possible interchanges, which Mr. Hammit pointed out on a map. These include Coyote Springs, Great Western, Granite Dells, and Santa Fe Road. Taking into account what is already built and under construction, the Corridor has an investment of about \$106M, with almost half of that coming from local partnerships.

The Fain Road project is already designed, as the County advanced the design to get ahead of ARRA I. ADOT would need to review the design. The Corridor serves a great regional purpose, providing a good corridor with access control from Prescott Valley to Chino Valley. It also is a good statewide corridor, providing a lower elevation alternative to I-17.

With the possible route transfer, ADOT would take over ownership and build the remaining two lanes of Fain Road. The County would take over the section of SR 89 from the interchange at SR89/SR89a to where the City owns it today, and the section around the VA cemetery. Yavapai County has a long-range design concept for the future, called Great Western Extension, which would go north up towards I-40. The DCR estimates the cost to be around \$200M.

Mr. Zubia commented that it seemed like an excellent idea, particularly in terms of overall access throughout the State.

Mr. Feldmeier, noting his bias, remarked that he has watched the partnership develop between ADOT and the locals, and said he thinks this project is a great opportunity for route transfers to get ADOT out of local routes. He asked Mr. Hammit to comment on a timetable, and Mr. Hammit responded that funding is the only thing holding them back at this point. Within a year they could do the work, as they already have the right-of-ways.

Chair Montoya asked if the project would be funded if ADOT got ARRA II monies. Mr. Hammit said it was designed using federal standards, so it could be. Chair Montoya then asked for clarification on the mileage of the potential route transfers and Mr. Hammit said they would take 8 miles, and they already own 2, so it would be 8 for 3.

Mr. Feldmeier noted that the bypass would save a lot of regional traffic, especially in the wintertime. Mr. Hammit commented on present gaps in roadway maintenance such as for snow plowing. With the proposed change, there would not be "islands" of unplowed road to go through in order for ADOT to maintain their parts of the roadway.

Mr. Zubia asked what risk is on Fain Road at this time for uncontrolled access. Mr. Hammit responded that the only access point is at grade and in the future will be at interchange locations.

Chair Montoya was curious if there is a cost estimate for the anticipated traffic interchanges, and Mr. Hammit said it would be \$25M.

Mr. Feldmeier wondered if this project will be a placeholder in the Plan. Mr. Hammit responded that Yavapai County has said they are willing to take it to their Board for support and would be willing negotiators with an IGA. Prescott Valley is also in support of this. Even though he has not met with Prescott on this issue, he said that the project would benefit them.

Mr. Thurman commented that a lot of truckers are using Fain Road, which is two lanes, and the project would be a win for safety. He remarked that the County would take over responsibility for that section.

Mr. Bourdon mentioned that the Corridor also extends to a total of about 20 miles of an east/west corridor and that it provides a four-lane loop around Prescott, down Iron Springs Road to Williamson Valley. The County is currently widening their portion of Williamson Valley Road, south of Pioneer Parkway, and this should be completed in the next five months. The City is moving their project up as well.

ITEM 3: Route Transfers – Jennifer Toth, MPD Deputy Director

Ms. Toth explained that she would be talking about some general considerations regarding route transfers, history and potential.

The Arizona State Highway System includes a number of routes that do not function as State Highways, but rather as local systems. The State system is intended to provide a network for regional and statewide travel.

Highways on the State System that do not contribute to that purpose create challenges:

1. They use resources that could be used to meet other statewide transportation needs.
2. There are administrative and liability costs that are disproportionate to their contribution to the State Highway System.
3. Local jurisdictions have different objectives from those of the State in terms of how the roads are developed and used.

The Arizona statutes give the State Transportation Board the authority to remove routes on the State Highway System that no longer serve a state function. The Statutes refer to that removal as “abandonment”. Current terminology calls it “route transfer”.

Arizona Statute 28-7209 states that route transfers have to be done in cooperation with local jurisdictions. Pavement is required to be in a condition that no major maintenance is needed for five years, and a four-year advance notice is required on the transfer. The pavement and notice requirements may both be waived by mutual agreement. Intergovernmental Agreements, or IGAs, are the vehicle used to accomplish the transfers. To date there have been no forced abandonments.

Board policy adopted in August of 2003 states that routes that provide land access and local movement of people and goods should be the responsibility of the local government.

The Board policy lists four priorities for transfer of those routes:

1. A local agency has expressed interest in acquiring the transfer.
2. They are routes for which ADOT is constructing a bypass or alternate route.
3. They are existing business routes not necessary for system continuity, serving primarily a local access need.
4. They may be other routes as ADOT construction and maintenance activities result in opportunities for transfer or as requested improvements provide those opportunities to negotiate the transfers.

In terms of history, State highways are regularly transferred and abandoned in cooperation with local jurisdictions. However, there has not been a systematic approach to the problem of rationalizing the state highway system, despite several studies of route transfer procedures. Some shortcomings of those studies were that they recommended specific transfers rather than strategic thinking, and some past route studies were done mainly with ADOT planning partners, neglecting to include the local agencies affected.

State Highways range from those that focus on mobility to those that are intended for local access needs. As the State continues to grow, especially in emerging regions, the State routes are becoming “main streets.” The agency and the Board need to look strategically at how this issue is addressed.

Staff recommends a study to look at a strategic framework for identifying route transfers. This would include:

- A scanning of what other states are doing in route transfers

- How to make it a win/win for ADOT and local jurisdictions
- Developing a consistent process for route transfers
- Mechanisms to incentivize the route transfers

Mr. Zubia commented he sees this study tie in with the access management study and was curious what the status of that study was. Mr. Roehrich replied they cancelled the contract for that study and brought it in-house. However, there is a government moratorium on any new rule-making process, and they have not been granted a waiver to move forward. They hope to get a waiver from the Governor later this year, so they can go forward to implementation. Basically nothing has changed since last year. Mr. Zubia mentioned he has seen reference to proposed bills that deal with access management and he wondered if either of those bills would free them up to proceed with the study. Mr. Roehrich responded he is not sure what the exact effect of those bills would be. Mr. Zubia hoped that the two areas, access management and route transfers, would be linked together to provide a better level of service.

Mr. McGee remarked that he looks at the route transfers issue as a carrot and not a stick. The statutes are the "stick," but they have not been an effective method to try and force these transfers on a community. He recommended approaching it more from a criteria approach. A criterion could be level of service, or where are we in terms of alternate routes. The criteria should be used to determine where the focus should be, rather than starting the process by first selecting a route. It is also important to see how other states deal with this issue. He hopes that the study will bring out an approach that will allow the Department to focus on projects where there is a benefit to both parties, that being the "carrot" approach.

Mr. McGee continued that with the urbanization of small rural towns, this problem is only going to get worse and it sets up a natural conflict about how to own and operate these facilities. There needs to be a strategically thought out approach that will satisfy all parties, and then move forward from that.

Mr. Feldmeier commented that what he would like to see out of the study is the ability for the Department to be flexible in creating something that works for a particular community. He said that the Department already knows what some of these communities want, and wondered if they could just "plug in" to those needs and create partnerships right now. Mr. McGee was confident that the results of the study would be beneficial to the communities, and every community has different specific needs that would be considered.

Ms. Lundstrom wondered what the maintenance cost would be for the locals when transferring a route to them. Mr. McGee said it depends on the individual facility; sometimes the upfront maintenance is waived depending on what else is happening between ADOT and the municipality. In terms of future costs, that varies greatly also. In going through the transfer process, they have to consider what short-term benefits the local is going to receive versus the long-term cost of assuming the responsibility for that route.

Mr. Christy remarked that sometimes the locals want ADOT to take over a route, and not just the other way around. Chair Montoya commented that Fain Road is a good example of that.

Mr. Anderson mentioned there are a lot of studies already out there; it is how the information is extracted and assimilated. Ms. Toth replied that as a State they can tie the findings together from the access management study, bqAZ, and the statewide travel demand model and look at them from a local perspective as well as statewide connectivity standpoint.

Mr. McGee expressed his thanks to members of the Board for their comments. He said that in this era of diminishing resources, we have to be smarter in how we utilize resources. He commended Mr. Feldmeier for being a big proponent of looking closely at projects where they can leverage current resources, and get more out of it rather than just spending money. The two projects discussed today are both good examples of where the Department can fund projects that are sorely needed by locals and the State and the Department also gets back something in return. Instead of waiting for these projects to come to the Department, maybe the Department should take the initiative and go to the local communities as a partner to make the projects happen.

Mr. Feldmeier remarked that if these two projects are successful, they can be promoted and the locals will become ambassadors for the Department.

Motion by Mr. Anderson, seconded by Mr. Feldmeier to adjourn the meeting at 11:55 a.m. In a voice vote, the motion passed unanimously.



Bob Montoya, Chairman
State Transportation Board



John McGee, Executive Director of Planning and Policy
Arizona Department of Transportation