



Stakeholders Group Meeting #1

Meeting Notes

Meeting Date: February 10, 2011, 2:00 p.m.

Location: MAG Saguaro Room

1. Welcome and Introductions

Mr. Kevin Wallace of MAG initiated the meeting by welcoming the attendees, reviewing the meeting agenda, and discussing the role of the Stakeholders Group. He noted that the stakeholders process would be informal and that questions were welcomed throughout the meeting. He then discussed the study's genesis from the Regional Transit Framework Study completed in 2010.

Mr. Wallace reviewed the components of the study and mentioned that it would look at 'what if' scenarios for future growth around transit corridors. He also explained that the study would focus on developing implementation tools to assist MAG member jurisdictions interested in pursuing sustainable transportation and Transit Oriented Development opportunities. In addition, he noted the study would develop a transit score card to rank and prioritize future high capacity transit investments.

Mr. Wallace then introduced Mr. Mark Shorett, the consultant project manager. Mr. Shorett provided an overview of the project team members, including the Arup Project Director Ellen Greenberg, who was ill and unable to attend today's meeting, Swaback Partners (urban design and place type development), Fehr & Peers (transportation modeling and analysis), and Strategic Economics (real estate and market analysis). Mr. Shorett also noted that the project team included an expert review panel that would assist in reviewing recommendations and deliverables throughout the 18 month study process.

2. Perspectives on Sustainable Transportation

Mr. Shorett referred to the visual presentation and gave a brief background on the origins of sustainability. He noted that in 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development established the internationally accepted definition of sustainable development: "Sustainable development...meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." He added that while sustainable transportation was just two words, it had many interpretations locally, nationally, and globally. He then provided an overview of different industry associations and their positions on sustainability, including the

International Association of Public Transport (IAPT), the American Public Transit Association (APTA), and the American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO). Mr. Shorett explained that the project team would work with the Stakeholders Group to define sustainable transportation for the MAG Region. He then reiterated that this was an early goal and that there was no one size fits all definition for sustainable transportation.

Mr. Shorett then presented a series of peer region case studies that Arup had investigated for this study, including Denver, Colorado, Perth, Australia, and the Rosslyn/Ballston corridor in the Washington DC metropolitan area. After providing his overview, Mr. Shorett asked if there were any questions or comments. Discussions on biking, walking, best practices, and implementation tools followed. One final question from the attendees was if any investments were made in the roadway network within the Rosslyn Project. Mr. Shorett noted that he would inquire and follow up at a future meeting.

3. Study Overview

Mr. Shorett then provided an overview of the study process to the Stakeholders Group. He discussed how the study would help define “Sustainable Transportation” for the MAG region, and then subsequently work to define transit’s role in providing a sustainable transportation system. He then explained how the study would summarize options and recommendations for enhancing the land use/transportation connection, review development patterns and densities necessary to support the various forms of high capacity transit, and evaluate the economic viability of alternative land use scenarios. Mr. Shorett completed his overview by describing several key study elements, including the roles of the Stakeholders Group and the expert review panel, research and analytical approaches, and how the various implementation tools would be developed.

Mr. Shorett asked the Stakeholders Group if they had any questions or comments. There was a request for the study to include a thorough analysis of market/demand-based transit demographics, performance based scenarios, as well as the supply side of transit. Specifically, it was asked what cities could bring to the table to entice private development and private sector involvement in public transit. Discussion followed regarding Place Types and the market for mid-rise and high-rise developments within the area and the need to address the long-term water policies for the MAG region. One attendee suggested that the study should consider a zero population growth scenario to better understand how that might impact the reallocation of land uses in the region.

Mr. Shorett was asked by an attendee to describe the ultimate objective of the study. Mr. Shorett explained that the study would help evaluate the opportunities for integrating transportation and land use in the MAG region. He then noted that the Stakeholders Group would help define the specific details of how this might occur. Discussion about transit operations and cost effectiveness followed. One attendee suggested that the Stakeholders Group should ensure that the study results make it into the hands of the policy makers, so that the effort could continue for eventual adoption of a plan by the region.

Another attendee noted that the FTA has recently been revising its proposal evaluation criteria, in regards to Alternatives Analysis and New Starts planning, with less emphasis on cost effectiveness and more focus on Sustainable and Land Use issues. Mr. Wulf Grote, METRO, explained that federal Alternatives Analysis requirements were constantly being updated. Mr. Wallace noted that the more detailed evaluation associated with a federal Alternatives Analysis would not be completed as part of this study.

One final comment was that the transit score card shouldn't necessarily be linked to density, as the region's existing bus systems are in poor shape with all of the financial cutbacks, and that the model of today may not reflect tomorrow's ridership potential.

4. Regional Transportation Framework and Issues

Mr. Shorett provided an overview of his team's current impression of the regional transportation framework and issues. Particular themes identified by Mr. Shorett after reviewing multiple planning studies included reducing traffic congestion, supporting economic development, respecting private property rights and local land use decisions, serving anticipated and desired growth patterns, providing for regional coordination, and supporting interregional coordination.

Mr. Shorett explained that planning for sustainable transportation was not new to the region and state, although previous studies were typically framed in different terms. He discussed several studies that occurred between 1974 and 2010, including the 1974 Urban Form and Growth Management Options for the Phoenix Region Study and the 1994 Urban Form Study. Mr. Shorett then discussed several smart growth initiatives and studies. He concluded his overview of this section by discussing potential opportunities to expand the existing framework to include a host of sustainable transportation options.

5. Other Issues and Next Steps

Mr. Shorett emphasized the need for ongoing coordination with the Stakeholders Group throughout the study process. He noted that his team would coordinate with other related efforts such as the Central Phoenix Framework Study, ADOT State Rail Plan, and ongoing high capacity transit extension studies. In addition, he reiterated the importance of coordinating with ongoing city TOD planning, General Plan updates, and sustainability and research initiatives.

Mr. Shorett then discussed anticipated next steps for the study, including development of a project website and review of the first project working paper. He noted that the next Stakeholders Group meeting would be held in the May timeframe, and an upcoming public panel in coordination with the Urban Land Institute.

Mr. Shorett inquired if there were any final questions or comments from the group.

It was noted by one attendee that he appreciated the focus on transit. He also hoped that the MAG region would seriously focus on and adopt a policy of sustainable transportation.

It was then noted that the study was too narrowly focused and needed to include roads, vehicles and high capacity transit corridors in order to find a way to balance and distribute jobs and housing into dense nodes.

An attendee asked what the Study needed from the Stakeholder Group at this time. Mr. Wallace stated that much of the work effort was in the consultant's hands at this point in time, and that the real work for the Stakeholders Group would begin at the next meeting. Mr. Shorett replied that the project team wanted to ensure that they were using the latest city general plans and current data, and that data collection would remain an important work element over the next several weeks.

Mr. Wallace thanked those in attendance for their contributions to the first Stakeholders meeting and closed the meeting.