



Transportation Department Memorandum

DATE: September 9, 2009

TO: Mayor Scruggs

FROM: Jamsheed Mehta, AICP, Transportation Director

SUBJECT: Light Rail Update

In 2001, Glendale voters approved a half-cent sales tax to support transportation projects in the City of Glendale. One of these projects was light rail between 19th Avenue and downtown Glendale. Maricopa County voters also approved an extension of the county-wide transportation tax in 2004, including funding for a 57-mile light rail/high capacity transit system. A portion of the funding for this corridor needs to come from the cities of Glendale and Phoenix, but a major share of the funds must come from federal and regional funding sources. The currently adopted regional plan has light rail/high capacity coming to Glendale in 2019.

When Glendale voters approved the 2001 city half-cent tax, it was unknown at that time that in just a few short years the Westgate City Center and other developments along Loop 101 would become a regional sports and entertainment destination. Alternatives to the 19th Avenue to downtown Glendale light rail transit corridor were suggested given this new growth along Loop 101. A high level study was completed by METRO, the regional light rail agency, in cooperation with the cities of Glendale and Phoenix. The study concluded that a Loop 101 light rail/high capacity extension has the potential to draw commuters, customers, and sports fans from across the valley given the projected commercial, businesses, sports, and entertainment venues. The downtown Glendale corridor was also found to be viable for further study of potential light rail.

The City of Phoenix is currently planning a light rail extension along I-10 to 83rd Avenue. Glendale City Council, in December 2008, directed staff to begin working with the City of Phoenix to determine Phoenix's willingness to support a light rail/high capacity extension from I-10 at 83rd Avenue to the sports and entertainment destination along Loop 101. Support from the City of Phoenix is important given that five of the eight miles of the I-10/ Loop 101 extension and three of the five miles for the downtown Glendale extension is in Phoenix.

In early 2010, consultants will start what is called a federal "Alternative Analysis" to determine which light rail/ high capacity route, downtown Glendale or the I-10/ Loop

101, has the best chance to compete for highly sought-after federal government funds. The federal government typically funds about 50% of the cost of constructing light rail lines if it can be shown that the corridor can meet federal requirements of cost-effectiveness and new ridership. Each mile of light rail costs around \$80 million to build and around \$1 million dollars to operate each year. At any time there are approximately 200 high capacity transit projects around the country competing against each other for these limited construction funds. The result of this study will help elected officials from Phoenix and Glendale decide what corridor is the most feasible to get these scarce federal construction dollars and make light rail a reality in the City of Glendale.

Please let me know if you have any questions.

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