



177 N. Church Avenue, Suite 405, Tucson AZ 85701
Phone: (520) 770-9410 Fax: (520) 620-6981

RTAmobility.com

Wildlife Linkages Working Group

Minutes of November 21, 2008, Meeting

Committee Members

Ann Audrey, COT Office of Conservation & Sustainability
Charles Barclay, ADOT (alt.)
Carolyn Campbell, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
Rafael Cancino, Town of Sahuarita
Jennifer Christelman, Town of Marana
Rick Ellis, PCDOT, Chair
Chris McVie, Tucson Audubon Society
Janice Przybyl, Sky Island Alliance
Phil Trenary, Town of Oro Valley
John Windes, AZGFD

Public/Agencies

David Benjes, PDOT
David Grandmaison, AZGFD
Mark Holden, PC DS
Michael Ingraldi, AZGFD
Natasha Kline, NPS
Ries Lindley, Tucson Water
Shawn Lowery, AZGFD
Scott Richardson, US Fish & Wildlife
David Schaller, COT OCSD
Karla Reeve-Wise, PCDOT

Staff

Dennis Dickerson
Joan Reedy

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Rick Ellis at 9:05 a.m. at the Joel D. Valdez Main Library, fourth floor board room. Introductions were made.

3. In-Kind Contribution Form

Dennis Dickerson passed around the in-kind form for member participation.

4. RTA Update

Due to a meeting conflict, Dennis Dickerson, Pima Association of Governments' (PAG), Environmental Planning Director, gave a written report prepared by Jim DeGroot which in summary stated: As of November 20, at the RTA Board meeting, the board approved 244 projects, 60 projects are complete with 29 projects in construction and 8 implemented transit services. Projects currently under construction include: Silverbell/Ina, Silverbell/Cochise and Alpha/Duval Mine Road Intersections, as well as 15 HAWK signals, five bike lane projects and six

signal technology projects. Approved funding levels for the Fiscal Year 2010 categorical program included \$1 million for transportation-related critical wildlife linkages. All funding of projects is subject to working group review and recommendation.

7. Working Group Subcommittee Report

Carolyn Campbell reported the Subcommittee (Carolyn Campbell, Christina McVie and Jim DeGroot) is scheduled to meet with the current RTA Board Chair on Dec. 2, 2008. This meeting has been established for a discussion between Mayor Paul Loomis, RTA Board Chair, and the Subcommittee to discuss the goals of the RTA Wildlife Linkages Working Group.

2. Approval of Minutes of Oct. 10, 2008

Motion was made by Christina McVie, seconded by Janice Przybyl, to approve the minutes of Oct. 10, 2008. Approved unanimously.

5. Status Report on Active Projects and Proposals

Rafael Cancino, Town of Sahuarita, said they are working on a proposal to cover the cost of the larger corrugated pipe needed for their project.

Ann Audrey, City of Tucson, presented an update on Houghton Road which included Rita Road adjacent to Davis-Monthan Air Force Base. One aspect is to funnel wildlife through culverts that have already been designed.

Town of Marana – Jennifer Christelman reported on Camino de Manana and stated that construction is expected to commence in the near future.

Chairman Rick Ellis, requested to rearrange the agenda. No objection was noted.

8. Update on Oro Valley Annexation efforts and Arroyo Grande (Phil Trenary/Scott Nelson)

Phil Trenary reported that this project is a year out. Mr. Trenary said he wants Scott Nelson to give a presentation before the RTA Wildlife Group. Mr. Trenary reported that the Pima County Flood Control project will overlap the wildlife corridor project since the wildlife corridor is in the flood plain.

Carolyn Campbell gave an update on the Arroyo Grande proposed development. Ms. Campbell stated that Pima County has backed out of the process due to concerns regarding the availability of open space. Support letters are needed to reserve open space (Ms. Campbell indicated that she would draft a support letter). Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) support is also uncertain. ADOT has a public meeting scheduled for the first part of January, 2009.

6. Proposal Review

Karla Reeve-Wise, Environmental Specialist, Pima County Department of Transportation, reviewed the elements of the proposal that were amended based on comments from the committee. She also explained this area was chosen because of the high deer mortality rate.

John Windes questioned why no amount has been set for the research phase. He noted that approving Phase I would appear to be useless if Phase II is not conducted. He also questioned the prioritization of this project as compared to State Route 77. Phil Trenary questioned that the proposal is a study to know where to do a study. Dennis Dickerson asked if there is an estimate of phase II costs; Ms. Reeve-Wise answer was that no estimate is available. Natasha Kline, National Park Service, was asked to comment and she observed that pre-work should be funded in house and studies by matched sources.

Following extended discussion on the proposal, Ann Audrey moved to approve the Pima County, Sunrise Road Wildlife Permeability Study as amended. Seconded by Janice Przybyl . A roll call vote was requested. The tally results: Yes – 8 No – 2. Motion passed.

Handout: Sunrise Road Wildlife Permeability Study Proposal, Pima County Department of Transportation, Revised October 31, 2008.

Memorandum Department of Transportation, Sunrise Road Wildlife Permeability Study, October 31, 2008.

Letter and Memorandum: (a) Jeanine A. Derby, Forest Supervisor, August 27, 2008 and (b) Kerry Baldwin, Natural Resources Division Manager, September 22, 2008.

Handout: Transportation-Related Critical Wildlife Linkages, "Project Management", Page 67, RTA Administrative Code, adopted by resolution 2006-04, June, 2006.

11. Remarks from the Chair

Chairman Ellis said he has mixed feelings about how this proposal will move forward and distributed the constraints noted on page 67 of the RTA Administrative Code. Mr. Ellis explained that RTA dollars need to go toward construction and is concerned that there won't be support for the proposal that was just acted on and it is his intention to hold the proposal. Rick Ellis explained that studies take a lot of time and nothing is going in the ground.

Discussion followed concerning the rumor about the shift of money out of or re-allocated out of this category.

During the discussion, Ann Audrey suggested that all jurisdictions present a three year priority list of their potential projects to the committee. No formal action on this suggestion was taken.

9. Eastern Pima County Survey/Connectivity Linkage Study update from Ray Schweinsburg, Arizona Game and Fish Department.

Due to the absence of Ray Schweinsburg, David Grandmaison, Arizona Game and Fish Department, provided a brief update on the proposal for a Pima County Linkages Assessment (Statewide/Countywide assessment).

10. Compilation of Wildlife Hot Spots (Jim DeGroot)

Mr. DeGroot was not in attendance, the item was deferred.

12. Informal Technical Group Comments

Questions were raised at the meeting whether this group is still in operation. Rick Ellis said to his knowledge it is still available as a resource to those seeking advice on their proposals. Janice Przybyl wants Kerry Baldwin to come to the meeting and report on the group or send a written report or ask someone to come to the meeting to make a report.

13. Future Agenda Items

Standing Item for Proposals
Roadkill Studies update – Natasha Kline
Scott Nelson presentation on Arroyo Grande Proposal
Review Imminent Project List
Compilation of Wildlife Hot Spots (Anticipated RTA and Other)
Update on the Presentation to the RTA Board Members
Invitation to ADOT District Engineer, Greg Gentsch – Update and timing on Route 77 and I-10.

Rick Ellis agreed, at Christina McVie’s request, to send a letter to Greg Gentsch, ADOT Tucson District Engineer, to either come to one of the meetings and give an update on Route-77 and I-10 or send a written response.

14. Call to the Audience

No members of the audience commented.

15. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Rick Ellis, seconded by Phil Trenary, at 11:10 a.m.