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Wildlife Linkages Working Group

Minutes of August 8, 2008, Meeting

Committee Members

Ann Audrey, COT Office of Conservation & Sustainable Development
Carolyn Campbell, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection
Jennifer Christelman, Town of Marana
Rick Ellis, Pima County DOT, Chair
Darin Kelly, ADOT (Alt.)
Janice Przybyl, Sky Island Alliance
Locana de Souza, AZ Game & Fish Dept.
Phil Trenary, Town of Oro Valley

Public/Agencies

Kerry Baldwin, Pima County NPR
Mark Holden, PC Planning
Ray Schweinsburg, AZGFD

Staff

Dennis Dickerson
Jim DeGrood
Jeff Hildebrand
Joan Reedy

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Rick Ellis at 9 a.m. and introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes of May 9, 2008

Motion was made by Ann Audrey, seconded by Phil Trenary, to approve the minutes of May 9, 2008. Approved unanimously.

3. In-Kind Contribution Form

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

4. RTA Update

Jim DeGrood, Pima Association of Governments' (PAG) Director of Transportation Services, reported that the RTA Board met in special session in July to consider issues surrounding the May 16, 2006, RTA vote. The Board will not meet again until the end of September or early October. The RTA CART Committee will meet Sept. 9.

At the RTA Board meeting in June, there were a number of requests from jurisdictions to increase allocations above what had been previously requested. These requests have received a lot of attention from both the RTA Board and the media. Staff has reviewed the performance of all projects completed to date.

Mr. DeGrood shared a project update table providing details on the status of project funding and revenues. He also distributed a recommended funding spreadsheet for the next fiscal year. The spreadsheet showed that \$8 million is available to be allocated for transportation-related Critical Wildlife Linkages projects, but to date, only \$1.3 million has been programmed (the two studies and the Town of Marana – Camino de Manana) and only \$11,000 has been spent.

In May, the Town of Sahuarita made a request for \$10,000 for a study project. Mr. DeGrood said the study was already covered by their design allocation. Sahuarita agreed to that, but said they would submit another project in the future when they had some results.

Mr. DeGrood was asked a question about the time it would take for a proposal from this working group to reach the RTA Board. If a project were recommended today, it would go to the September/October RTA Board meeting. Mr. DeGrood explained they are trying to follow the TIP cycle and take batches of projects through rather than individual projects on a case-by-case basis. This is particularly applicable to projects which have multiple sources of funding, and are following the TIP process already.

HANDOUTS: RTA Projects Update and Overall Project Update
Recommended Funding Spreadsheet for the Fiscal Year (FY10)

5. Remarks from the Chair

Rick explained that the basis for this meeting, even though there are no proposals, is that over the summer, questions have come up about better defining, refining and expanding the role of the Technical Working Group (TWG). The purpose of the group is to review the technical merits of a proposal by experts and across disciplines, Rick said. Rick asked Kerry Baldwin, Pima County Park and Recreation, to expand on his remarks.

Mr. Baldwin defined the TWG as offering to the jurisdictions a service of an informal technical review of proposals. If members of the TWG have comments on a proposal they do so during the Call to the Audience portion of the RTA Wildlife Linkages Working Group (RTA WLWG) meeting. It is not a formal part of the RTA WLWG process at all, but it is a linked piece, he said.

The TWG wants a more active constant place for discussion about corridors well beyond the discussion of an individual proposal. Kerry wants to get back to what it was, an informal communication point where everybody could talk about what's

out there, what we need, what's happening. Kerry feels there is a need to create another structure that allows anybody that is interested in the corridors conversation to participate – there are many topics that need to be discussed outside the limited context of proposals submitted through the RTA process.

Ray Schweinsburg added that there is tremendous value in knowing what is happening to animals in the Tucson basin that we do not know right now. We are reluctant to bring proposals through that we think will not pass the criteria for consideration under the RTA process.

Discussion followed with no action being taken.

6. Proposal Review

No proposals were submitted for review.

7. Future Agenda Items

Town of Sahuarita Proposal
ADOT Proposal

8. Call to the Audience

Janice Przybyl announced that the **Wildlife Linkages Scoping and Demonstration Workshop** demo on the Tortolita linkages and corridor design tool, conducted by Paul Beier and Jeff Jenness, Tuesday, August 19, is full. In October, there will be a follow-up workshop with all of the suggestions generated from the August workshop.

Kerry Baldwin passed out a handbook by Arizona Game and Fish Department that Pima County Parks and Recreation reprint and brought to Tucson, **Watching Arizona's Wildlife Handbook – Tips, Tools and Techniques**. In about a year they hope to have a workshop that goes along with the handbook.

Carolyn Campbell announced that in early September there will be a PAG Transportation Planning Committee meeting with an agenda item to discuss the incorporation of buffelgrass eradication in transportation projects.

Kerry Baldwin reported the county is working on an ordinance that will require utilities to control invasive species for five years following work performed on county right-of-ways. He also indicated the county is evaluating the possible modification of ordinances to make buffelgrass an environmental nuisance for health and safety purposes.

9. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Rick Ellis at 10:40 a.m.