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Wildlife Linkages Working Group

Minutes of January 16, 2009, Meeting

Committee Members

Carolyn Campbell, Coalition for Sonoran
Desert Protection
Jennifer Christelman, Town of Marana
Rick Ellis, PCDOT, Chair
Phil Trenary, Town of Oro Valley
John Windes, AZGFD

Public/Agencies

David Grandmaison, AZGFD
Shawn Lowery, AZGFD
Richard Remington, Logan Simpson Design Inc.
Ray Schweinsburg, AZGFD

Staff

Jim DeGrood
Dennis Dickerson
Steve Matthews
Joan Reedy
Gabe Thum

1. Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order by Rick Ellis at 9:00 a.m. Introductions were made.

2. Approval of Minutes of Dec. 12, 2008

Motion was made by Phil Trenary, seconded by Carolyn Campbell, to approve the minutes of Dec. 12, 2008. Approved unanimously.

3. In-Kind Contribution Form

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

4. RTA Update

Jim DeGrood, Director of Transportation Services, provided an update on developments regarding the RTA projects at this point:

247 approved projects, 70 are now complete, 29 under construction, and 9 transit projects are implemented. Financially, through the end of December, 2008, \$57.2

million had been expended and there is a fund balance of \$120.6 million. The RTA Board will be talking about the efforts to stimulate and accelerate project delivery on the RTA. They also plan to review the performance of 31 additional projects approved early summer 2008.

5. Working Group Subcommittee

The Subcommittee includes: Ann Audrey, Carolyn Campbell and Jim DeGroot.

Jim DeGroot said he would set up more meetings similar to the one held with Mayor Paul Loomis, Town of Oro Valley, last month. Mayor Loomis, Mr. DeGroot said, seemed interested in seeing that additional study is conducted on RTA roadway corridors, especially the portions like the Tangerine and LaCholla projects slated for out-year implementation. Carolyn Campbell said Mayor Loomis thought it would be good to present reports to the RTA Board and agreed that presenting a report a couple times a year would be a good idea.

Mr. DeGroot will contact RTA Board chair elect Mayor Ed Honea, Town of Marana, next week to schedule a meeting with the Subcommittee before the next RTA Wildlife Linkages Working Group meeting. The Subcommittee will report back on the meeting at the RTA WLWG meeting in February.

6. EPAC Wildlife Task Force

Dennis Dickerson, Environmental Planning Coordinator, said there is a meeting of this Task Force this afternoon at 1:30 p.m. in the PAG main conference room. A report will be given on the Pima County Multi-Species Conservation Conversation Plan (MSCP).

Mr. Dickerson said at the last meeting the Task Force expressed that they feel there is a desire/concern for education, that young people are not experiencing the outdoors and gaining the appreciation of the outdoors or the wildlife that live there. As these individuals grow into adults the lack of exposure to the outdoors will translate into adults who vote and set priorities for government agencies that may not appreciate wildlife issues. This leads to questions like, how do you gain a greater awareness among young people, how do you get it into the educational program? The Task Force believed this topic was appropriate for further discussion.

The second topic that Kerry Baldwin talked about was the role of the Task Force and his desire that it become something akin to the informal committee that existed previously to review projects prior to their being submitted to the Working Group. Mr. Dickerson said this may be discussed again at today's meeting.

In general, this Task Force seems to be a group searching for a purpose. Dennis was asked to report back to the RTA WLWG in February.

7. RTA Bike-Ped Working Group

Carolyn Campbell, Coalition for Sonoran Desert Protection, reported that a couple months ago she was asked by a community bike-ped group if there could be a co-located bicycle infrastructure and wildlife infrastructure. Ms. Campbell has been invited to attend the RTA Bike-Ped Working Group meeting that is scheduled for Jan. 28 to discuss whether co-location would be a good or bad idea.

Ms. Campbell, a member of a list serve that deals with wildlife and transportation issues, made contact with the list serve for input on the subject. According to the list serve there hasn't been a lot of experience with this around the country but a lot of people have ideas and there has been some research. It was a good question to ask Ms. Campbell said, because some people said they were thinking about that too, but there was definitely a lot of hesitation. Some examples were mentioned indicating that wildlife avoided structures when there was the smell/evidence of humans. Some of it depended on the species that they were trying to get to utilize these structures. There were some that said that we need to do this but suggested the two be separated the best you can.

Gabe Thum, PAG Senior Transportation Planner sent Ms. Campbell three bike maps that were distributed. Ms. Campbell said her immediate reaction was that there is not a lot of overlap. Rick Ellis said, "His understanding was that Bike-Ped stuff was going to be on existing roadways, corridors, washes, things like that.... It wasn't brand new alignments which would be providing a barrier, it was where there was already a roadway barrier or hindrance. So if we were fixing the roadway, we wouldn't do anything special for Bike-Ped that we weren't going to do for the roadway." Mr. Thum noted there is nothing currently planned, the Bike-Ped group is interested to see if there might be any overlap. Is it feasible, is it desirable, and if so where are the opportunities?

The members and Arizona Game and Fish representatives were asked for input. John Windes said it is better to separate them, but if there is only an opportunity to put an overpass in with the cooperation and support from a Bike-Ped group, then we should probably take advantage of that and try to construction something that would work for both, i.e. Piccacho Pass. Mr. Windes said it would still depend on how much it would impact the wildlife and there are no good answers without doing some research to figure that out.

Ray Schweinsburg was asked for his opinion. He said the concern he has is with the corridors. We have to get the animals across the highway. Planners feel a mixed use structure is an ideal situation and would want a lot of shared human activity. It would probably be OK with some species. It might be a good idea in some areas for green space, such as birding, watchable wildlife. But with species like big horned sheep or desert mule deer, or species that are sensitive to human encroachment it would probably not be a good idea. He indicated few, if any, problems having bicycle paths along roadways, it's when you go to the corridors

where you cross the roadways is the issue. Carolyn Campbell said that crossing the roadways is the proposal and would not want to encourage this.

Jim DeGrood said looking at the pressures the RTA will be facing he can see the need to explore joint use facilities, especially with bike loops and water courses. Tangerine Road, Mr. DeGrood said has a variety of trails that have been developed by the Town of Marana and Pima County. There is interest in getting crossings/grade separations incorporated in Tangerine as well as Interstate 10 on the northwest side. Ray cautioned that the joint use would depend on the species and the situation.

Rick Ellis added, in determining co-location infrastructure there would need to be enough origin destination use to justify doing an overpass or tunnel. The need is to determine if the co-mingling would be a possibility or even worth exploring.

Carolyn Campbell said we don't have the wildlife crossing structures planned out. If the Working Group only wants to talk about RTA projects and the RTA Bike-Ped projects that are currently funded, we can overlay them to see if there are overlaps. It could be an interesting and a bigger discussion for future projects. Ms. Campbell invited the biologist to attend the RTA Bike-Ped meeting Jan. 28.

HANDOUT: E-mail query results – The pro or con information of co-location of wildlife and people infrastructure.

Maps: RTA Greenways, Pathways, Bikeways and Sidewalks
RTA Bikeway Improvements, December 19, 2005
RTA Bikeway Improvements, February 1, 2006

8. Presentation on ADOT Projects

Rick Ellis, reported that due to the holidays he was unable to meet with Chuck Barclay. Mr. Ellis will prepare a report including SR 77 from ADOT for the February meeting.

9. Proposal Review

Rick Ellis said neither Chuck Barclay nor Siobhan Nordhangen is in attendance to provide proposal requested revisions for the Pima County Regional Wildlife Linkages Workshop – Arizona Department of Transportation proposal. The proposal will be placed on the agenda for February. Ray Schweinsburg said the proposal is being worked on.

Due to conflicts Rafael Cancino e-mailed he would be unable to present the Town of Sahuarita's proposal at today's meeting.

Phil Trenary and Jennifer Christelman distributed the Tangerine Road and La Cholla Boulevard Wildlife Linkages Proposal asking to have it placed on the agenda for the February meeting.

HANDOUT: Tangerine Road and LaCholla Boulevard Wildlife Linkages Proposal presented by the Town of Oro Valley and Town of Marana.

10. Remarks from the Chair

Rick Ellis, presented a prioritization sequence flow chart. Several suggestions were made: indicate prioritizing available funding, show further break down of boxes to indicate specific crossings, and concern for corridors and retrofits. It was suggested that we look at new and retrofit projects equally, i.e. Picture Rocks Road. There was also concern that too much emphasis is placed on the Pima County Regional Workshop, driving the rest of the priorities. Emphasis should be placed on standard wildlife requirements for all new construction, evaluating wildlife crossing needs and how they fit the larger picture.

HANDOUT: RTA Wildlife Linkage Prioritization Flow Chart
RTA Wildlife Linkage, Flexible Guidelines for Funding Allocation

11. Future Agenda Items

Pima County Regional Wildlife Linkages Workshop Proposal
Tangerine Road and LaCholla Boulevard Wildlife Linkages Proposal
Town of Sahuarita 3-5 year Plan Proposal
Jurisdictional Priorities Lists
Invitation to ADOT– Update and timing on SR- 77 and I-10

12. Call to the Audience

None were noted.

13. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Rick Ellis, at 10:36 a.m., seconded by John Windes.