

PRESCOTT CITY COUNCIL
COUNCIL WORKSHOP
JULY 17, 2007
PRESCOTT, ARIZONA

A WORKSHOP OF THE PRESCOTT CITY COUNCIL WAS HELD ON TUESDAY, JULY 17, 2007, in the Prescott Municipal Building, 201 S. Cortez Street, Prescott, Arizona.

Mayor Simmons opened the meeting at 1:00 P.M. and asked City Clerk Elizabeth Burke to call the roll, which was as follows:

Present:

Mayor Simmons
Councilman Bell
Councilman Blair
Councilman Lamerson
Councilman Luzius
Councilman Roecker
Councilwoman Suttles

Absent:

I. Brief Background; Alternatives for Service, Management and Funding

Public Works Director Craig McConnell gave a brief background on the transit study, noting that Council had been given a full review at a previous meeting. He said that the CYMPO board has requested that review by all of the communities be completed by August 3, 2007. He said that Council may give direction to CYMPO after today's presentation through staff, or they may wish to place the item on next week's agenda for further discussion. He said that the outline today was that the Council would discuss, public input would be received and decision/direction would then be made.

Mr. Norwood asked what Chino Valley recommended. Mr. McConnell said that at the Chino Valley Town Meeting of July 12 it was stated, "Sufficient ridership needed to be determined before providing bus service." They indicated that they supported Alternate No. 2 with vouchers and they would like to ask the voters about a transit authority.

Mr. McConnell reviewed the alternatives from the study: #2 would have federal money available, as well as local and state funding; #3 would provide a fixed route with ADA accommodations (voucher program for ADA, and limited service fixed route) and #4 would provide a full-service fixed-route service, with more buses and routes to include Chino Valley and Dewey-Humboldt.

II. Council Discussion

Councilman Blair said that they need to determine what level the community wants, and they need to be in concert with Chino Valley and Prescott Valley for the same plan. They need to know what level they can get with the entire quad city area.

Mr. McConnell said that CYMPO's role in this is to serve as facilitator. They want every entity's comments and will review them to see if there is a consensus; then they will start dialog with all of the entities. He said that they may use a voucher program or they can start financing discussions. Then they will define steps needed just ahead, not far in the future.

Councilman Blair said that Prescott is an entitlement community; they get federal money for various programs. He would like them and the other communities to use that entitlement money for transit.

Mayor Simmons asked if they could get private industry to contract with. Mr. McConnell said that first it has to be a local agency certified as being able to receive federal funds. Then that money could be used for different alternatives and management.

Councilman Lamerson said that he supports public/private partnerships, and he supports the shuttle bus. He said that they could phase it in slowly. There is an elderly population on the roads, and they could use the bus.

Mr. McConnell asked for input on what they would like to see in the way of regional management, what alternate they would like; who would run it and how to pay for it.

Councilman Lamerson said that he supports CYMPO. He said that his preference is Alternate #3, unless someone can show him differently.

Councilman Roecker said that the Town of Dewey-Humboldt doesn't have the funds and wouldn't be able to participate any more than now. Yavapai County wants to see Alternate #4. Councilman Roecker asked Mr. Woodfill, in looking at the handout, what the options are to come up with funding and to make it transparent to help the population under the costs involved. He said that Alternate #3 will quickly move into #4 because of the demands from the public, which concerns him. They should ask the public if they want to tax themselves.

Mr. McConnell reminded everyone that the role of CYMPO is as facilitator. He said that four of five of the entities have different views of the timeframe and how to run it, and it all needs to be discussed by CYMPO Executive Board and figure out how to come to consensus.

Councilman Roecker said that he was confused with the federal funding for a regional program. Jodi Rooney, Director of CYMPO, explained that the funds are banked, and should one entity come forward and want to start a program, they can use those funds.

Councilman Roecker asked if that meant that if Prescott Valley decided to have their own bus service, they could tap into those funds. Ms. Rooney said that was correct; however it would probably go regional and everyone would benefit.

Ms. Rooney said that ADOT wants someone to take the lead. Councilman Roecker asked how much an entity could take. Ms. Rooney said that there is \$600,000 available for this section.

Councilman Roecker asked what the downside would be if they had CYMPO be the focus point to receive funding, and be the controlling body for the process. Ms. Rooney said that CYMPO can be the facilitator, but they need a coordinator. She said that transit is pricy and it doesn't pay for itself. CYMPO is non-profit; it would require an IGA. She said that a regional transit authority could be the taxing authority.

Mr. McConnell said that if Prescott Valley said they want to run a system in their town, they could enter into an IGA with CYMPO for federal dollars. If some want a regional system, they could do so.

Councilman Blair said that they need to do this for the region; they want to relieve congestion on 69 and 89, and if they want a bus service from Chino Valley to Prescott, let the private company do it.

Councilwoman Suttles asked what would happen to the private bus system and shuttle. Ms. Rooney said that a bus system won't meet all the needs of the citizens; they will still operate as they do today. She said that they could contract with the existing provider and can bid out for other contractors.

Mayor Simmons voiced concern with an added layer of government. He said that NACOG charges administrative fees and if they did it, the money would be used for administration, and not to the program.

Councilman Blair said that they need a well-defined plan. They need to move people from city to city, and it will take time to change those habits. He said that they have to be obligated to the system or it will fail. Councilman Luzius agreed. He said that Alternate #4, fixed route, could incorporate the current program. He said that Silvernale needs to be in the loop with their existing system.

III. Public Comment

David Quinn, 847 City Lights, representing the Northern AZ Interfaith Council, said that over the last 16 years there have been 7 studies; all of them made the case for a need of new options in public transportation in Yavapai County. He said that there are two issues: (1) what the solution would look like, and (2) if they can afford it financially.

Mr. Quinn said that a regional fixed-route system is needed; the voucher program doesn't cover enough people. He said that a regional system is required, and they would support the smaller route as a starting point. The costs should be look at gradually. He said that new resources of revenue will be needed. He said that local contributions of less than \$1 million by 2025 are contemplated. He said that public transit is more beneficial than an airport or golf course. He said that older citizens are driving, when they don't really want to. In 2004, citizens approved a General Plan and they pledged leadership in transit.

Pam Letreault, 2675 Lookover Circle, said that the League of Women Voters of Central Yavapai County did its own study in 2006 on transit. They adopted a position that a public transportation system would meet needs of residents and provide options to students and workers. It would provide mobility of the workforce, reduce congestion, educational opportunities, etc. She said that they would like to see it administered by a Regional Transit Authority, funded by federal, state and local grants, lottery money, dedicated taxes, fare boxes, advertisement and public/private partnerships.

Gwen James, 7381/2 James, asked for clarification on whether Option 3 would include Chino Valley. It was noted that Alternate #3 did not include Chino Valley. She asked why Chino Valley didn't consider that one. She said that Cottonwood has a system working well; they should contact them to see how they're doing it.

Bill Richards, 425 Fairway View Dr., said that he has given his views on transit recently. He said that there needs to be carpooling, taxis, dial-a-ride, buses; etc. and these systems aer important. They could connect providers by computer and phones with a computer-based carpool system. He said that they should not provide public funding for a system that serves few riders. Only 4% of the population would be served. He urged them to get together and plan for organized transportation.

Christy Mavis, People Who Care, 912 Ohio St, said they have volunteers who use their own vehicles and pay their own gas. They average 300 – 400 transports a month to medical, therapy, social service appointments only. They get calls from people they cannot help. They cannot transport people to work, and they can't transport a spouse to see someone in a nursing home. They cannot meet the

needs, and they have to turn people down for transportation. She said that they need to sit down and talk about this issue.

Dave Maurer, Director of the Prescott Chamber of Commerce, said that he is on the record for supporting a fixed-route system. Most communities have public transit system. He said that employees would use the system and he hoped that through CYMPO they could have suggestions on funding the system.

Mayor Simmons asked Mr. Maurer, in previously coming from Flagstaff, if the Chamber there was involved with the public transit. Mr. Maurer said that they had a viable system there, operated through the County and supported by a modest sales tax increase voted in by the taxpayers.

Mayor Simmons asked if he had any idea on ridership numbers. Mr. Maurer said that he didn't know anymore, but it is used and its use has grown with its expansion.

Councilman Luzius said that NATA (Northern Arizona Transit Authority) has taken in the Sedona bus system, as well as CAT (Cottonwood). He said that they accept some county money, but they have people in nursing homes and also the colleges that support the system. He said that the system runs from the Verde Valley to Sedona because the employees can't afford to live in Sedona.

Mr. Maurer added that Flagstaff started their system very small with a bus at each stop once an hour, but now it has increased.

Melinda Schudey, 118 S. Willow, said that she is very interested in a bus system as she has a disability. She said that she usually rides a bike, but is limited with that use. She said that the current bus system doesn't go everywhere she needs to go, and they don't run on the weekends, when a lot of people need it. She said that her husband has doctors in Prescott Valley and he can't always get a ride, and it is expensive to take a cab. She would vote for Alternate #4. She said that the bus now is privately-owned and isn't reliable as to set schedules and stops.

Councilman Luzius noted that there are groups available that can provide transportation to and from doctors; Mercy Care is one of them.

Lindsay Bell, 368 Dogwood Lane, thanked the Council for discussing this topic. She said that it comes back to the three original questions: what would be provided, who would run it and how would they pay for it. She said that the Council should give a strong message back to CYMPO regarding those questions. She would favor Alternate #3 as an interim step to Alternate #4, but modify #3 slightly to include Chino Valley. She said that a regional transit system needs to take care of intercommunity travel; the mobility of workforce important.

Councilman Roecker asked why Chino Valley was excluded from Alternate #3. Ms. Rooney said that they were looking at levels of service and they thought they would show what could be done, starting in Prescott and Prescott Valley.

Ms. Bell said that a regional system needs a regional board to oversee it; CYMPO could be that entity when designated. They should establish a regional transit authority to have some taxing authority, and there could be private/public partners.

Ms. Bell said that Alternate #3 could be started with existing funding (LTAF funds for voucher system), and general fund money. As the system grows and they have more demands, they could find a dedicated funding stream; probably sales tax. Citizens will want to know what they are getting into before taxing them for a transit system. Start small, then grow the system and find dedicated funding mechanism. Send a message to CYMPO board that it needs to be regional, preferences of service, preferences of auspices, how paid for initially, and how paid for in future. Need input from all CYMPO member entities.

Mayor Simmons said that he appreciated Ms. Bell's work on this issue for many years. Councilwoman Suttles asked for clarification on the existing funding. Ms. Bell said that they have LTAF II funding for another year or two, with 5307 funds banked and they can use those for start-up and buses. She said that CYMPO is already established and a regional transit authority would have similar representatives. It could first be formed by the County and other entities would sign on. They need representation from all groups and citizens. She said that the administering entity could subcontract for employees and operations. The oversight group may own the equipment, but subcontract operations.

Lisa Barnes, Prescott Alternative Transportation, 1513 Linwood Avenue, told the Council they want PAT in the discussions. She said that their members walk to stores; they want transit available. She asked if the merchants know they would have more business if they had bus system. She agrees with Lindsay. To be successful it must be regional and have regional authority, be a fixed route, be convenient. She said that in lieu of parking fees could go to transit instead of parking spaces they don't have. She said that other communities with similar geography have systems that work. They need to put this in place before the population boom. She said that they also need to consider how people get to bus stops; they need sidewalks, bike racks, intersections, etc.

Jack Wilson, 1514 Eagle Ridge Road, said that an inventory of vehicles used by social services shows that there are a lot of underutilized vehicles because of a lack of drivers. He is hearing a consensus for Alternate #3. He said that the problem is that entities are going off in different directions. The Regional Association of Local Governments needs to be involved; they need a reasonable system and they all need to get on the same page.

Steve Silvernale, Prescott Transit, apologized to the lady for the problem she had with his driver. He asked her to call him, or come by 820 E. Sheldon. He said that he agrees with the Mayor; he's concerned with another layer of bureaucracy. He said that the voucher system doesn't cover administration costs. He said that the City's willing to pay \$300,000 for two miles of trails, but people can't walk everywhere.

He said that he's worked in public transit for 26 years. They tried a bus system back in the 50's, but buses don't make money. He said that he spent time with Carol Springer this morning, and she thinks they should spend money on this, and go with Alternate #4. He said that there are a lot of things they can do with public transit. He said that if they want service to Prescott Valley and Chino Valley, they can have it in short order; just give him \$100,000--\$60,000 for equipment (5 buses) and \$40,000 for operating. He's applied for Section 5316, which calls for 5 buses. The operating would provide Option 3 on a limited basis; in essence it provides transportation to Prescott, Prescott Valley and Chino Valley, three times a day. This serves the working population in the morning and at night, as well as a noon run for those needing to get in and out of the doctors. It's very limited. He wanted to show there are not just four options to go with. Whatever they decide to do, they can do. They need to get back to the three questions mentioned by Ms. Bell. They need to send a strong message to CYMPO of what they want to do.

Mayor Simmons asked if there was anyone against this.

Lori Henry, 120 S. Willow, said that she came with her friend, Melinda. She said that she is overwhelmed with what her friend deals with. She, too, has disabilities. She said that they need to simply and be timely. They need to be timely for folks and simplify the money. She said that they need to have communities that can move people from here to there. She said that she still drives; she doesn't want to lose her license. Some people can't afford a car, but need to get to work. They need to have a bus system. She asked why it is taking so long. They need to step up and get the people a transit system.

Mayor Simmons said that "simplify" is a good word. He said that this has been studied for years; the intent and will is here to act. In the past, things may not have been in place like they do now. He thinks they will see action and they are dedicated to that.

Marian Tope, 1201 Demerse, said that she still drives. She lives north of the high school and has looked at their block and sees need for transportation, with the Samaritan Villas and Towers, high school, Las Fuentes; half mile to hospital, YMCA, Shuttle U. They could use a bus system to get to those places. She said that the voucher system looks good; Alternate #3 looks best; alternate #4 would require taxing. She said that they need vouchers, and they need to get it going by 2009.

Terry Drew, Director of NACOG, said that they support a fixed route system. She noted that the voucher system is very different from a transit system. A public transit system would serve different groups. Vouchers are for people who can't get to where they are going by bus.

Councilman Roecker said that the voucher program should not be replaced and must be funded regardless of option chosen.

Mr. Silvernale said that they have to have ADA accessibility under any program. If people can't get to a fixed route system, they must have something else in place.

Councilman Roecker asked Mr. Silvernale if there were any profitable bus systems. Mr. Silvernale said that he didn't know of any.

Councilman Lamerson noted that they are not talking about discontinuing the voucher system.

Councilman Bell said that he is the City's representative to the CYMPO board. They need to walk before they run. He said that Lindsay knows what she is talking about. He agrees that they need to include Chino Valley in Alt #3. He thinks that Prescott Valley and Chino Valley are waiting for Prescott to take the lead; it is time to move ahead.

Councilman Luzius said that the CAT system in Cottonwood has been in the black for years. They need to talk to them and find out how they do it.

Councilwoman Suttles agreed they should start small with Alternate #3 and move up to #4 in the future.

Charlene Craig said that they are focusing on profit. She asked what the cost is if they don't have a bus system, with expenditures for increased roads, more parking garages, quality of life issues, pollution. Not everyone has a car; 20% of population doesn't drive. A bus system has much potential; decreased traffic on roads. Some small towns have bus systems; businesses contribute to the system and they end up with more customers. They need to start now to get something going to become a part of their existence or they will have major traffic issues.

Councilman Blair said that they need to lobby for a bus system between both communities, Prescott Valley and Chino Valley, combining Alternates #3 and #4 with two buses, twice a day.

Mayor Simmons said that they need to take a leadership role. Mr. Silvernale said that the interest in a bus system is high.

IV. Council Discussion/Direction for Providing City of Prescott Transit Service, Management, and Funding Preferences to CYMPO Executive Board

Mr. McConnell said that they could continue discussion and reach consensus on the three questions; reflect on input and have the item on next week.

Mayor Simmons asked the Council if they were ready to move ahead now. Councilman Bell said that he was in favor of moving ahead with Alternate #3, to include Chino Valley; CYMPO should be the administrator and manager; start with existing funds.

Councilman Luzius said that they should go with either Alternate #3 or #4; they need to get started. They need an authority to oversee a regional system; if CYMPO could do that, they need to do it now.

Councilman Roecker said that he was okay with Alternate #3, and then identify a transparent funding source to move toward #4 in the future.

Councilwoman Suttles agreed with Alternate #3. She asked if they would contract with a private contract. Councilman Bell said that CYMPO would have to hire someone to administer it; additional staff is needed. Councilman Roecker said that he agreed that CYMPO should do it.

Councilman Blair said that he would like Alternate #3 with the modification to add Chino Valley, with an authority to run it, and find a funding source to move toward Alternate #4.

Councilman Lamerson said that he supported Alternate #3, with a public/private partnership, using available funds to start, with Chino Valley in the mix. He said that this is a public health and safety issue.

Mayor Simmons said that he agreed; they need a funding source for #4 in the future. He said that they need to be committed to this and go all the way. Councilman Blair asked if #3 would include Chino Valley. Mayor Simmons said that if Chino Valley doesn't want to be a part of it, they can't make them.

Councilwoman Suttles asked the Mayor if he wanted to use the existing funding for now and in three years look for other funding. Mayor Simmons clarified that they need to start immediately looking for additional funding.

Mr. McConnell suggested that he draft a letter to CYMPO for the City Manager signature, with the Council's comments and recommendations.

V. Adjournment

The Workshop was adjourned at 3:06 P.M.

ROWLE P. SIMMONS, Mayor

ATTEST:

ELIZABETH A. BURKE, City Clerk