



MINUTES

**Ecosystem Connectivity Mitigation
Advisory Committee (EMAC)
Regular Meeting
Monday, September 23, 2019
10:00 AM**

**Yavapai County Development Services
Training Room
1120 Commerce Drive
Prescott, AZ 86305**

CYMPO Ecosystem Connectivity Mitigation Advisory Committee

Chair	Tammy DeWitt, City of Prescott
Vice-Chair	Elizabeth Johnston, Arizona Game and Fish
Member	Chuck Budinger, ADOT Northwest District
Member	Francisco Anaya, Prescott National Forest
Member	Ron James, Private Citizen
Member	J. D. Greenberg, Private Citizen
Member	Deb Pastor, Private Citizen

- 1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**
Members James, Greenberg, Pastor absent.
- 2. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND UPDATES**
- 3. APPROVAL OF THE AUGUST 26, 2019 REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**

MOTION

Member Anaya motioned to approve the August 26, 2019 EMAC Regular Meeting Minutes. Vice-Chair Johnston seconded the motion.

VOTE

The vote on the motion was unanimous.

- 4. REVIEW OF EXECUTIVE BOARD DISCUSSION REGARDING WILDLIFE CONNECTIVITY AND COLLISION MITIGATION FOR HWY 69 WIDENING PROJECT**
Mr. Bridges noted Madam Chair DeWitt presented summary of EMAC discussions regarding the Highway 69 Widening Project to the CYMPO TAC and Executive Board. Explained that the Executive Board recognized the current lack of funding for expansion of the existing culvert, but noted the possibility for such a project in the future.

Mr. Bridges noted that Executive Board gave general direction to look into using the remaining CYMPO construction dollars programmed for the SR69 Safety and Capacity Improvement Project in FY21 to potentially make improvements to the conditions of the culvert to better facilitate drainage and pedestrian use. Also noted it took roughly 5 years in order to get \$10 million programmed for the expansion of this project.

Member Budinger requested clarification on what was presented to the Executive Board. Mr. Bridges explained that based on discussions held at the August EMAC meeting, the committee felt that signage and fencing are not effective mitigation options, and that the expansion of the existing culvert beneath SR69 is what was presented to the TAC and Executive Board. Vice-Chair Johnston noted that mule deer will find a way to get through fencing.

Member Budinger inquired if it would be beneficial to reach out to FHWA and submit something official from the EMAC to request funding opportunities. Mr. Bridges explained that would be a possibility for future projects.

Madam Chair-DeWitt explained that greater potential to influence the design of the project would have been possible if the EMAC existed and had been involved in the project five years ago.

Vice-Chair Johnston explained Jeff Gagnon, with AZ Game & Fish, has submitted a Habitat Partnership Committee proposal for funding in the amount of \$250,000, which much go through ranking process within Game & Fish. Mr. Bridges inquired about the possibility for such funding to be used to conduct studies to look at wildlife connectivity along the entire SR69 corridor. Vice-Chair Johnston explained yes, it is a potential.

Madam Chair DeWitt clarified that CYMPO would be responsible to submitting grants on behalf of EMAC, depending on the grant requirements and eligibility.

Member Budinger reiterated that FHWA should be involved in EMAC plans. Mr. Bridges noted that CYMPO staff will reach out to notify FHWA of future EMAC plans.

Member of the public, Valarie Isly, explained it appears that a delay of the project would be wise to allow for more time for collection of funding for wildlife underpass. Noted anticipated public outcry if this project is postponed.

Mr. Bridges explained that because of lack of funding on a state level, all transportation funding is now being assigned to pavement preservation. Explained that the SR69 widening project will be the last expansion project in the state without an increase in gas tax to fund transportation. Noted that a delay in this project could put the entire project at risk. Madam Chair DeWitt explained that if the SR69 project is delayed, the State Transportation Board could potentially pull the funding and place it on a different project within the state.

Member Budinger proposed implementing a corridor study for the entire SR69 corridor to look at ways for implementing wildlife connectivity. Mr. Bridges suggested creating at a scope for such a study to then look at potentially including in the CYMPO Metropolitan Transportation Improvement Program (MTIP) in FY21.

Madam Chair DeWitt explained costs estimates of \$4 million were provided by ADOT. Mr. Bridges explained that the project location and amount of fill movement add significantly to the project cost. Also noted that due to the traffic volume of SR69, additional highway would have to be constructed while the culvert is being expanded in order to allow traffic to continue moving.

Vice-Chair Johnston clarified that deer cross from the north side to the south side of SR69 and gather in a pocket, which is not where they necessarily want to go. Johnston also explained that when there is a high human presence in the culvert, deer are less likely to gather in that area, and therefore are more likely to cross over SR69.

Madam Chair DeWitt also noted existing land on either side of SR69 is State Trust Land which could be sold and developed at any time. Vice-Chair Johnston noted that an agreement could be potentially set into place to dedicate land on either side as a wildlife easement.

Member of public, Vanessa Louis, inquired about what entity is collecting road kill data. Mr. Bridges explained it currently is unclear if any entities are collecting this data.

5. REVIEW AND DISCUSSION OF THE 2045 REGIONAL TRANSPORTATION PLAN

Mr. Bridges explained that due to funding changes made at the state level, the goals of CYMPO's 2045 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) have shifted from previous RTPs to focus more on recommended investment choices. Mr. Bridges explained a goal for the 2045 RTP is for wildlife corridor implementation guidelines and suggestions to be included in the plan.

Mr. Bridges invited members of public to attend 2045 RTP meetings. Bridges also noted 600 to 700 out of 1,300 comments made to the 2045 RTP were wildlife-related comments.

Vice-Chair Johnston suggested the 2045 RTP TAC review the Wildlife Linkages Report, posted on the ADOT website. Member Budinger suggested the Game & Fish guidelines also be reviewed by the 2045 RTP TAC.

Vice-Chair Johnston noted she will meet with Jeff Gagnon and Scott Sprague with Game & Fish for information on current wildlife collision data.

6. ADJOURNMENT 11:00 AM

CYMPO endeavors to make all public meetings accessible to persons in need of foreign language assistance or with disabilities. Please call (928) 442-5730 or e-mail Allison.McCarthy@yavapai.us, 72 hours prior to the meeting to request a reasonable accommodation to participate in this meeting.