



Minutes City of Tempe Transportation Commission November 12, 2013

Minutes of the Tempe Transportation Commission held on Tuesday, November 12, 2013, 7:30 a.m., at the Tempe Transportation Center, Don Cassano Community Room, 200 E 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Pam Goronkin (Vice-Chair)	Don Cassano
Aaron Golub	Ben Goren
Sue Lofgren	Nikki Gusz
Kevin Olson	Philip Luna
Peter Schelstraete	Charles Redman

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Charles Huellmantel (Chair)	German Piedrahita
Gary Roberts	Benjamin Sanchez

City Staff Present:

Shelly Seyler, Deputy Public Works Director Transportation	Joe Clements, Transportation Financial Analyst
Eric Iwersen, Acting Transportation Planning Manager	Yvette Mesquita, Sr. Management Assistant
Sue Taaffe, Public Information Officer	Travis Mullen, Administrative Assistant
Tanya Chavez, Neighborhood Services Specialist	Chris Boris, Transit Intern
Bonnie Richardson,	Robert Yabes, Principal Planner
Mike Nevarez, Interim Transit Manager	

Guests Present:

Deron Lozano, Valley Metro	Craig Coronato, Logan Simpson Design
John Romero, Bicycle Cellar	

Commission Vice-Chair Pam Goronkin called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None

Agenda Item 2 – Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Goronkin introduced the minutes of the September 10, 2013 meeting and asked for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Don Cassano

Second: Commissioner Kevin Olson

Decision: Approved

Agenda Item 3 – Transit Video Concept

Sue Taaffe, Public Information Officer, presented a video concept to promote ridership for the bus and light rail to be shown on Tempe 11 and via social media.

Sue referred to the handouts and explained the additional funds, if available in the media budget for FY 2014/15, would cover the cost for the video to run on Cox Communications East Valley cable TV. The video shoot will be on Monday, November 18, 2013 and finished by early February. If funds are not available the video will run on YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, and other social media.

Sue presented the last video that promoted ridership for the bus and light rail, explaining that the cost of directing and the talent was around \$80,000 to produce. Tempe 11 will produce the video using Mr. Taaffe along with other free talent and simple props from Halloween decorations reduce the cost significantly.

Commissioner Aaron Golub expressed concerns whether the theme paints transit users in the right light. Sue responded that we are very cognizant of potential concerns and are trying to emphasize how easy it is to ride the bus/rail. The topic is something that was reviewed while pushing the envelope to jump on a hot topic like zombies.

Commissioner Goronkin asked if other people would be in the video shoot such as passengers. Sue responded that the passengers would be staff and other people willing to be involved for free.

Commissioner Nikki Gusz asked how the last ad performed on viewership and the possible difference with this ad. Sue explained that the last ad was run before social media became popular and was only viewed on East Valley Cable TV.

Commissioner Golub asked why this was not submitted on the same channel. Sue explained that a TV spot had a one-year buyout, which expired in 2008. The spot is about \$3,000 for one year. It can only run on social media, but cannot go on East Valley Cable at this price.

Agenda Item 4 – Broadway Road Streetscape Project Update

Eric Iwersen, Acting Transportation Planning Manager distributed handouts including maps, and provided an update on the status and next steps for the Broadway Road project.

Eric gave a briefing of the packet information regarding the traffic data compiled from the simulation of the road closures that happened over a two week period in September. Traffic Engineering conducted the test using rubber tube counters on the roadway in 25 locations on Broadway and adjacent streets. Staff was present in the area on six different days to observe traffic as well. The test results provided a volume count on Broadway Road and adjacent neighborhood streets as well as Apache Road and Southern Avenue.

The summary of the simulation data showed for all the tested areas that the traffic volume did not exceed a ten percent increase on any given day, which is within the acceptable limits.

Commissioner Goronkin mentioned that Alameda Drive came close to the ten percent traffic volume increase during the test. Eric said that Alameda, at 9 percent during the last week of the simulation, was watched closely because it has been identified in previous years for a traffic-calming project.

There was one change since the concept was taken to Council in May, the signalized crosswalk on Sierra Vista Road and Broadway Road had a split public response. The signalized crosswalk on the concept on Broadway Road has been shifted east, between Sierra Vista and Ventura, and modified to be a pedestrian actuated signal only, connecting it to transit services on the north and south side of the street. Shelly Seyler mentioned that a more favorable support for this location was received.

Commissioner Ben Goren asked where this new signal would be located. Eric reiterated that it is a little bit east of Sierra Vista near the bus shelter. Commissioner Goronkin said it makes more sense to put the pedestrian signal closest to the transit stops.

Eric informed the commissioners that there are ongoing discussions with the property owners on the north and south side of the street to modify the size of the medians on Broadway Road on the north side. There are also ongoing discussions to finalize the type of pavement materials for the project.

The June and October public meetings had good support for the streetscape project. The final design concept will be taken to Council on November 21, 2013 for their support to move into the construction document development phase for federal funding approvals. The earliest construction could break ground would be this time next year with the heaviest of the construction during the summer of 2015.

Commissioner Goren asked if Broadway Road would be down to one lane during construction. Eric responded it is unknown but our goal is to keep as many lanes open as possible to minimize the impact on traffic. Shelly added median construction tends to result in more lanes being closed during periods.

Agenda Item 5 – El Paso Gasline Pathway Project Update

Eric Iwersen, Acting Transportation Planning Manager distributed project maps and provided an update of the El Paso Gasline Path Project.

The half-mile abandoned Gasline in the alley that connects Rural Road to Kiwanis Park is the third part of an existing pathway, and bike route project that extends from Price Road to Rural Road.

The purpose of the public meeting held on September 26, 2013 was to inform the neighborhood and Aguilar Elementary school of the upcoming changes in the alley way. Tempe is partnering with Solid Waste with regard to the relocation of the trash collection from alley to curbside collection. Sesame Street currently has curbside collection on the south side which will help with the north side transition.

Commissioner Goren asked if the homeowner's property line extends to the middle of the alley and if there are any right-of-way challenges. Eric responded that we will have to provide back yard access for pedestrians or homes with a RV gate. The doublewide alley offers opportunities for access to the 60 properties connected to the alley

Eric introduced Craig Coronado the Landscape Architect with Logan Simpson Design. Craig indicated the biggest challenge is the right-of-way and RV access for the homeowners. Fortunately the alley is a doublewide trail for multi-use. The alley has a dedicated 15 foot easement for trash collection which will not be needed.

Craig mentioned this section of improved trail will be connected to a larger system. The Kiwanis Park already has a trail system which can easily integrate the El Paso Gasline project. The details of the federally funded project were provided.

The narrow alley section along Aguilar Elementary school has a chain link fence. This section of the alley is only 16 feet wide between the 4 residences and the school. The alley continues and extends across Forest Avenue and two local street crossings and ends at Rural Road. The portion from Forest Avenue to College Avenue has a wider alley of 50 feet while the north side has a 15 foot easement for trash. College Avenue to Rural Road has a serpentine trail that is intended to mimic east of McClintock Road. A 10 foot wide concrete path will need to be reinforced around a small section for RV access points and for the, soon discontinued, trash collection access points.

On the crosswalk across Forest Avenue, pedestrians and the school will see warnings in the form of stop signs and striping to caution of the upcoming intersection for the trail. There will be desert theme plantings along the trail.

Commissioner Cassano asked if complaints are expected from the neighborhood about the gates leading to the alley and if Tempe would fix them. Eric responded that Tempe will not touch private property, but the improvements will promote good traffic and decrease graffiti as well as criminal activity. Craig added that the fence along the school is in pretty good condition and even though there will be more people traveling along the trail, they will be the right kind of eyes. Eric explained that the extension of path to Kiwanis Park will encourage a shift in people who would normally turn their backs to the alley.

Commissioner Lofgren asked if it was possible to have solar lighting. Craig responded that this is not an option but there is the option for solar irrigation control. Eric added that LED is more efficient now as we are not quite there with solar.

Commissioner Schelstraete asked if the alley was actually owned by the City. Eric indicated the alley is a utility easement for the abandon Gasline. Tempe has rights due to an agreement with El Paso Gas and Tempe will continue to maintain the alley.

Commissioner Redman asked about the long term vision for crossing Rural Road. Eric answered that the signal at Southshore Road is a couple hundred feet north that allows for crossing Rural Road. It is not an ideal crossing today, but if funding permits there could be some type of crossing for direct access in the future.

Craig explained to maintain vehicular access some sections will not be paved. The use of a stabilized stone surface for RV access will be used. The narrower sections will be limited and will have to share the path while the narrowest would only be available for maintenance vehicles.

Craig mentioned there are two different street crossing alternatives. The first option being a stripped crossing, with curb cuts, additional approaching striping and no parking zones around the crossing. The second is the raised table type of crossing which is safe for pedestrian and bikers, but has draining problems and busses turning into the school.

The next public meeting is November 20, 2013.

Commissioner Goronkin thanked Eric, Craig and staff stating that the improved alley will be a great alternative for kids to get to school and people to get to the park.

Agenda Item 6 – Regional Bike Share

Eric Iwersen, Acting Transportation Planning Manager, provided an update on the regional effort to implement a bike share program in multiple cities, and provided information relating regional governance, system branding, corporate sponsorship and the implementation timeline.

Last spring the City of Phoenix contacted with Cycle Hop to launch a bike share program in the region. Phoenix is looking at a December soft launch of 5-10 bikes in their downtown area. Tempe and Mesa will have a Spring launch with Tempe launching 250 bikes.

The amount of \$100,000 is being used for the Tempe Capital Improvement Project. Tempe is working with Cycle Hop to determine how the startup funds will be used. The amount of \$750,000 from federal funding will be available October 1, 2014 which will go towards expanding the program. Tempe is working with Phoenix and Mesa as well as ASU. Cycle Hop has brought on board some local team members including John Romero with the Bicycle Cellar to help design the bike for Cycle Hop and get the bike share started. John helped develop the logo and materials to sell the concept and company.

John informed the Commission that the 5 to 10 bikes are to be introduced as a beta test for the Mayor and City Hall staff to try in Phoenix. They wanted to see these prototypes on the ground and are expecting as many as 500 bikes to be launched by the end of February. This will be going to Council in January.

Commissioner Schelstraete asked when we will have a pathway connection with Phoenix available. Eric shared there is currently a 60 percent construction completion plans for a project to connect Tempe to Rigleyville West.

Commissioner Goren asked if there was an update on information to put the bikes on the bus. Eric responded that online polls would eventually help choose the location of the bikes. He emphasized that they are smart bikes, not smart stations. Even though we want a central location, we would like them to be on public bike racks to be easily located by cell phone or computer. We want the bikes to be available in the public bike racks of the light rail stops, Mill Avenue, and University Drive.

Commissioner Lofgren asked if they will be located near hotels for visitors. John responded by stating that historically bike shares get heavy use from visitors.

Eric shared the Tempe has a link to Gridbikes.com which will be accepting founding members that goes live on black Friday even though the bikes will not be available till February of next year. Eric informed the commission that they will be kept informed. A prototype Cycle Hop bike was presented to viewing and riding.

Agenda Item 7 – Bus Service Changes at Arizona Mills Mall

Mike Nevarez, Interim Transit Manager, provided an update on a longstanding effort by mall management to eliminate transit service within the Arizona Mills Mall.

Mike indicated Tempe may have outlived its welcome at Arizona Mills Mall located on Baseline Road and Priest Road. Bus services have been offered at this site since the late 90s. Currently there are three routes into the mall at a half hour frequency until 10 p.m.. The bus stop has an artist designed shelter; 80 feet of dedicated curb line; and infrastructure for transit. The mall management request is to remove the bus stop.

These routes are well used; however mall management does not believe that a significant number of passengers are mall patrons. Mall employees use the bus to get there and the mall opens up earlier to the public before business hours.

Mall management contacted Regional Public Transportation Agency (RPTA) and the city of Tempe and asked to move the bus stop locations to the ring road or outside of the area. Tempe informed mall management we will take under advisement and work closely with RPTA. RPTA will collect more data on passenger boardings and plans to go to the mall to determine how the routes are benefiting the passengers and the mall.

Commissioner Goronkin asked if the original development agreement between Tempe and Arizona Mills had addressed this issue and if there was a different property owner. Mike responded that there has been a mall operator change and we will be researching the easement on the mall property.

Commissioner Goronkin asked what the Arizona Mills received in consideration. Mike answered that there was a tax break and indicated he is still reviewing the documentation.

Commissioner Goronkin asked if the mall operator is suggesting that we are delivering bad passengers to the bus stops. Mike answered that they indicated the bus stops are just not a benefit to the mall and they are trying to change their image.

Commissioner Goronkin thanked Mike for taking a conservative approach and added the request is part of a greater community and since we have given them some consideration in the development process we have an easement to consider. Mike stated we are going to provide data in an attempt to justify the mall bus stops is in everyone's best interest.

Commissioner Goronkin asked if the busses are interfering with the flow of traffic. Mike responded they were not, but shared the busses are fairly heavy and are causing some wear and tear as are all the many cars that go through the mall. RPTA is going to gather ridership information to take a look at how other malls nationally handle this type of problem. Another issue to consider is that Title VI, governed by the federal government prohibits against disparity, basically a civil rights issue for minorities and low income individuals.

Mike continued that RPTA plans to prepare the ridership report before next October. Commissioner Goronkin added that this is an unintended consequence of a partnership because we are not the principle decision maker. She offered her support in any way that Tempe needs. Commissioner Olson cautioned that we should carefully move forward in make changes and check where our rights extend.

Commissioner Golub added that in 2007-2008 there was a debate whether to move the bus stop to Priest Road, closer to Baseline Road, but the current location was determined to be the best location. Mike said the mall offered to help pay for some of the infrastructure changes for curb cuts and striping for safety for the major arterials into the mall. Commissioner Golub recalled the Arizona Mills originally asked for a regional transit based out of the mall, like a hub, to expand park and ride.

Commissioner Schelstraete asked if the mall was doing okay. Commissioner Goronkin responded that they are doing better than they had in the past. Mike added that he knows a lot of kids like to visit the mall, all malls have that challenge. The stop is located in front of the aquarium. Hopefully we can co-exist and both benefit.

Olson shared that a lot of benefits were given during the developmental stage. Commissioner Goronkin added that this was during the time of our competition with Chandler.

Commissioner Goronkin thanked Mike again and asked he keep the commission informed and let them know how they can support. Mike responded as soon as we get the data back from RPTA an update will be provided.

Agenda Item 8 – Department and Regional Transportation Updates

Sue Taaffe reminded the commissioners David Strang's remembrance event is on December 3rd at 10 a.m.

Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda Items

None

The Commission's next scheduled meeting is on December 10, 2013.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40 a.m.

Prepared by: Travis Mullen
Reviewed by: Yvette Mesquita