



Minutes City of Tempe Transportation Commission June 10, 2014

Minutes of the Tempe Transportation Commission held on Tuesday, June 10, 2014, 7:30 a.m., at the Tempe Transportation Center, Don Cassano Community Room, 200 E 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Pam Goronkin (Chair)
Don Cassano
Ben Goren
Charles Huellmantel
Philip Luna
German Piedrahita
Gary Roberts
Cyndi Streid

Jeremy Browning
Nikki Gusz
Sue Lofgren
Kevin Olson
Charles Redman
Peter Schelstraete

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Aaron Golub

City Staff Present:

Joe Clements, Transportation Financial Analyst
Julian Dresang, Traffic Engineer
Kolby Granville, Councilmember
David Humble, PD Commander
Eric Iwersen, Principal Planner
Mike Nevarez, Transit Manager

Bonnie Richardson, Principal Planner
Shelly Seyler, Deputy Public Works Director-
Trans/Traffic
Sue Taaffe, Public Works Supervisor
Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Program Manager
Kathy Wittenburg, Administrative Assistant
Robert Yabes, Principal Planner

Guests Present:

Donna Lewandowski, ASU
Wulf Grote, Valley Metro
Ben Limmer, Valley Metro
Lisa Saldin, Valley Metro
JC Porter, ASU
Shawn Monk, ASU
Glenn Iwata, President, Chief Research Officer at WestGroup Research

Commissioner Pam Goronkin called the meeting to order at 7:32 a.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None

Agenda Item 2 – Minutes

Commission Chair Goronkin introduced the minutes of the May 13, 2014 meeting and asked for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Huellmantel

Second: Commissioner Cassano

Decision: Approved

Abstained: Commissioners Piedrahita, Gusz and Lofgren

Agenda Item 3 – Maricopa Association of Governments Pedestrian Design Assistance Grant

Eric Iwersen provided a brief history of previous grant winners and the unprecedented honor the City of Tempe received last year by earning grants for two projects. Four possible project submittals for Commission consideration this year included:

- Upstream Dam Pedestrian Bridge over Town Lake
- Underpass at Southbank Rio Salado Path & McClintock Drive
- Underpass/Crossing at Western Canal and Baseline Road
- Alameda Drive Bicycle & Pedestrian Enhancements (I-10 east– Rural Road, including crossing of Union Pacific Railroad)

Eric explained that the funding source would be for design assistance of bicycle/pedestrian projects and staff speculated most competitive project candidates will exemplify innovation, good connectivity to neighboring cities and the largest community benefit. Staff felt that the Alameda Project has the strongest possibility to win the grant funds.

Commissioner Piedrahita asked Eric to expand on the wide range in costs. Eric explained that several projects have multiple options and the final option has not been determined, so the range addresses all of the options.

Commissioner Huellmantel asked how the projects would be funded in the future if they were not submitted now. Eric responded that most projects are included in the CIP budget, but the projects that move forward are based on the priorities of Council and recommendations from the Commission.

Robert commented that project number one presented was very expensive and being awarded a grant would reduce the burden on City funds. Commissioner Huellmantel preferred project number one but acknowledged that number four was the most competitive.

Commissioner Luna asked which project would result in the most use. Eric replied that all four projects have their benefits and acknowledged staff provided four good candidates and the Commission has a difficult decision to make.

Commissioner Huellmantel motioned to recommend project number four for consideration.

Motion: Commissioner Huellmantel

Second: Commissioner Cassano

Decision: Approved

Agenda Item 4 – Streetcar

Eric Iwersen provided a brief update on the Tempe Streetcar project and introduced Ben Limmer of Valley Metro to present the Streetcar update.

Ben provided an overview of the total transit network which focused on all four modes of transit currently available as well as assessing how it works and relates to surrounding regions as a total transit network service.

Valley Metro recognized that Tempe is a good candidate for a streetcar system and stated it takes an investment to build a viable system. A lot of effort was put into putting the initial system plan together in 2010, but the project plan did not meet federal criteria (rider and population density) and the Federal government Valley Metro to build a new plan that fit better into the federal criteria for rail projects. Valley Metro submitted the new plan that the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) recommended move forward, with a few modifications. The FTA modified their transit criteria and the plan was revised to meet those guidelines. Two route options were developed.

The “C” Option (Marina Heights to McAllister) presented in the new plan supports major economic activities, on Rio Salado Parkway, Apache Boulevard and connects downtown Tempe and ASU with the lakefront, offers long-term ridership growth potential. The “L” Option represented a Loop in downtown which extends south on Mill Avenue and east on Apache Boulevard to Dorsey and connects residential areas along Apache to ASU and downtown Tempe.

The reconfigured route recommendation is to combine both the “L” and the “C” to create a three mile project for that will be recommended by Valley Metro to Council on Thursday June 12. The recommendation is based on the potential for highest short- and long-term ridership potential, the connection to residential, retail and commercial areas, economic development and the ability to be competitive in the FTA Small Starts process.

Preliminary costs for the new recommended streetcar route (called the Locally Preferred Alternative) are projected at \$175-\$190 Million and would come from the Regional Transportation Fund (Proposition 400), Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality Funds, and FTA Small Starts discretionary funds or other funds. Annual operating costs are projected to be \$3 to \$4 Million which will be funded by the City of Tempe and farebox collections. The project, if approved, would start in 2014 with environmental clearance in the fall of 2015 followed by facilitating engineering from 2015 through 2016 and opening in 2018.

This information will be presented by Valley Metro to the public with the recommendation to advance the Locally Preferred Alternative (3 mile route), advance preliminary assessments for FTA discussions, and initiate environmental actions.

Commissioner Goronkin recognized Councilmember Kolby Granville in attendance.

Commissioner Cassano asked if the criteria necessary to satisfy FTA requirements had been defined. Ben responded that the criteria have been updated and Valley Metro has a good sense of the direction, but it is not complete.

Commissioner Browning asked if the environmental impact study was required in order to complete the grant process and wondered if those resources could be reserved until the grant was awarded. Ben replied that the environmental documents are required to benefit from the funding and will be a part of the process.

Commissioner Gusz commented that this is an exciting project and asked what the consumer’s experience would be like. Ben replied that they expect to provide integrated transit service between streetcar, light rail and bus systems. The integration would provide streamlined accessibility to street car/light rail ticket process so both methods of transit

would be integrated in a way that would accommodate a wide a variety of passengers from children to seniors, pedestrians, strollers and cyclists.

Commissioner Goren asked for the latest information on the rail gage. Ben replied that the new streetcar vehicles would be able to interline with the current light rail system, and would be maintained at the Valley Metro maintenance facility.

Commissioner Schelstraete asked for more detail about utilizing a one-way loop. Ben explained how a one-way loop allows operational flexibility and maintains cost effectiveness. Commissioner Goronkin added that the loop accommodates more economic development and larger populations in the neighborhood west of Mill Avenue and through to Ash, to serve a large population of residents.

Commissioner Cassano asked for clarification on what occurs when a combination of funds are used. Ben explained that \$100 Million and more in project funds are currently needed and up to \$73 is now identified for the project. Valley Metro and Tempe could also participate in a public/private partnership to help fund the project,

Commissioner Goren asked how a public/private partnership would work. Ben explained that there are many variables, but in general, the private groups will financially and physically construct and operate the project upfront and the agencies (Tempe and Metro) would be responsible for back the cost over a period of time.

Commissioner Huellmantel commented that competitive cities (Austin, Portland and Seattle) have built similar projects by committing to a federal funding match ahead of time with a letter of no prejudice from the department and asked if this would be a feasible strategy for the project along for portions like Rio Salado and Apache. Larger employers in Tempe have stressed that streetcar is vital. Ben responded that the City of Mesa secured a grant with federal funds that allowed them to conduct/build special track and work on longer lead items utilizing a letter of no prejudice, that then did not penalize the remainder of the project and the projects overall rating integrity. In regards to building the one mile loop in the same fashion or starting on the project portions that are funded now, Ben suggested submitting the entire three mile project as a whole to maximize the competitive edge and overall statistics and consider a letter of no prejudice as a later option. Commissioner Huellmantel stated that he would like to look into that option further and consider a letter of no prejudice as a later option.

Commissioner Schelstraete disclosed a potential conflict as he has clients who own or lease property in downtown Tempe.

Commissioner Huellmantel motioned to approve the recommended Locally Preferred Alternative and requested that staff investigate a no prejudice option for the \$73 Million.

Motion: Commissioner Huellmantel

Second: Commissioner Streid

Decision: Approved

Abstained: Commissioner Olson

Agenda Item 5 – Peer City Bicycle Theft

Discussion was rescheduled for another meeting due to time constraints.

Agenda Item 6 – Orbit Saturn Update

Shelly Seyler provided a brief update of the South Tempe Orbit Service Planning telephone and web survey results and shared the history:

- 1994 Tempe implemented the FLASH system around ASU campus
- 1996 voters approved a .5 sales tax
- 2001 implemented the Neighborhood Flash around the multi-generation facilities
- 2007-08 implemented current Orbit route

Mike Nevarez provided background information about the program and shared the ridership in 2013 was very impressive and is meeting the needs of the citizens. Mike explained the Town of Guadalupe is very interested in service in South Tempe and presented information on the telephone survey. The survey results showed that of the riders who responded within the 85283 zip code, 70% were aware of the Orbit service and 27% had used it.

Glenn Iwata provided details and statistics about the 8 minute telephone survey WestGoup produced and executed of 403 residents in zip code 85283. Overall, the results indicated an impressive number of survey participants would use the system with no remarkable unsupportive comments.

Mike explained, upon Council approval and direction, the next steps would be to seek input from the public and the Town of Guadalupe, obtain route approval in December, secure funding sources and purchase equipment.

Commissioner Goronkin asked if the survey would be more productive if facilitated through the internet and if there is a way to collect feedback from employees currently using the services.

Glenn responded that the survey participants were given the opportunity to respond online but historically, telephone survey is the most accurate method to track responses.

Commissioner Olson motioned support for moving forward with the next stage in the process.

Motion: Commissioner Olson

Second: Commissioner Goren

Decision: Approved

Agenda Item 7 Bike Boulevards

Eric Iwersen provided a brief description of the Bike Boulevard program. Recent census data indicated Tempe has 4.2% bicycle commuters, which is approximately 4% higher than the national average. Since the Transit Tax passed over 15 years ago, Tempe has built a solid infrastructure supporting bike commuters. Projects like bike paths and streetscape projects have included enhanced bikeways, which has encouraged cycling and increased the bike riding population.

Bike Boulevards, the nation-wide concept that was introduced to Council through the Committee Of the Whole last March, utilizes new technology and improvements to improve bike ridership and safety. Staff proposed working with this concept to integrate with upcoming projects and determine where Bike Boulevards would be the most beneficial to the city.

Julian Dresang explained that making minor changes to traffic signals, signage, bike lane construction, symbols (such as “sharrow” a share and arrow symbol currently used at Southern and Hardy), designated bike lanes, green bike lanes (as employed at University and Hardy projects) and buffered bike lanes would improve bike safety, commuter experience and community aesthetics.

Commissioner Schelstraete asked if the brick surface of a buffered bike lane alerts the driver that they are too close to the bike lane. Staff explained that the example shown in the presentation was more a visual marker.

Julian presented a few examples of bike-driven improvements, including protected bike lanes, cycle tracks, bike boxes at intersections, specified bike parking, private development bike parking (Bike Cellar) and bike valet at large events. Eric added that staff wants to incorporate the improvements into the Transportation Master Plan and include as part of the 2015/2016 budget. This item will be presented to Council on Thursday.

Commissioner Huellmantel stated his support for all of the concepts and noted that the physical structures (trees and planters) used in bike paths enhance the community as a whole and pointed out that although the cycle tracks may have limited opportunities for implementation, they would be an asset. Commissioner Huellmantel suggested that directing some of the public art funding towards decorating bike racks could make them more aesthetic and add to the eclectic atmosphere Tempe enjoys.

Commissioner Goren asked if there is a more durable bike path material that would hold the original color. Eric commented that staff will experiment with using a durable thermoplastic on the University Drive project.

Councilmember Granville commented the process is long, but valuable.

Commissioner Goren motioned to support the recommendation to move forward with the Bike Boulevard effort.

Motion: Commissioner Goren

Second: Cyndi Streid

Decision: Approved

Agenda Item 8 – Department and Regional Transportation Updates

- Sue Taaffe reported that the dedication ceremony for the Mary O’Connor memorial bus shelter is currently scheduled for November 8, 2014.

Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda Items

- Item #5 Peer City Bicycle Theft rescheduled from June Meeting
- Arts and Bike Racks
- Transit Security Update

The Commission’s next meeting is scheduled for July 8, 2014.

Meeting adjourned at 9:07

Prepared by: Kathy Wittenburg

Reviewed by: Yvette Mesquita