



Minutes City of Tempe Transportation Commission August 13, 2013

Minutes of the Tempe Transportation Commission held on Tuesday, August 13, 2013, 7:30 a.m., at the Tempe Transportation Center, Don Cassano Community Room, 200 E 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Charles Huellmantel (Chair)
Pam Goronkin
Sue Lofgren
Kevin Olson
Gary Roberts

Don Cassano
Ben Goren
Nikki Gusz
Philip Luna
German Piedrahita
Peter Schelstraete

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Aaron Golub
Benjamin Sanchez
Charles Redman

City Staff Present:

Shelly Seyler, Deputy Public Works Director
Transportation
Eric Iwersen, Acting Transportation Planning Manager
Sue Taaffe, Public Information Officer
Maja Aurora, Public Arts Coordinator

Joe Clements, Transportation Financial Analyst
Yvette Mesquita, Sr. Management Assistant
Don Bessler, Public Works Director
Shana Ellis, Councilmember

Guests Present:

John Kane, Architekton

Chris Kelly, Architekton

Commission Chair Charles Huellmantel called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None

Agenda Item 2 – Meeting Minutes

Commission Chair Charles Huellmantel introduced the minutes of the July 9, 2013 meeting and asked for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Roberts

Second: Commissioner Lofgren

Decision: Approved with modification

The Transportation Commission Meeting Minutes for the June 12, 2012 was presented for approval by the commissioners who attended the meeting.

Motion: Commissioner Goronkin

Second: Commissioner Roberts

Decision: Approved

The Action Taken at the Tempe Transportation Commission Transportation Master Plan Workshop Meeting held on August 4, 2012 was presented for approval by the commissioners who attended the workshop.

Motion: Commissioner Goronkin

Second: Commissioner Lofgren

Decision: Approved

The Tempe Transportation Commission Transportation Master Plan Workshop Meeting Summary dated August 23, 2012 relating to the Transportation Master Plan Workshop Meeting held on August 4, 2012 was presented as meeting minutes for approval by the commissioners who attended the workshop.

Motion: Commissioner Goronkin

Second: Commissioner Lofgren

Decision: Not Approved

Agenda Item 3 – Maricopa Association of Governments Planning Grants

Eric Iwersen, Acting Transportation Planning Manager, presented an update on two grant submittals made in June to Maricopa Association of Governments for pedestrian and bicycle projects in Tempe.

Eric provided the update on the MAG Pedestrian Design Assistance Grants application process; distributed a handout including two project maps; and gave an update on the two grant submittals.

Eric reviewed the grants received for the North South Rail Spur Path and the Highline Canal Path and explained that both projects are funded. Each project was allocated \$65,000 for the design which represents approximately 40% of the regional funding awarded. The next step in the process is to work with MAG to get a design team in the next 4-6 weeks and to have a design concept in 8-12 months for use in applying for the federal construction funds.

Commission Chair Charles Huellmantel thanked Eric and staff for the time and energy spent on coming up with a regional solution. Commissioner Pam Goronkin acknowledged that MAG is rewarding those communities that are doing an outstanding job with respect to transportation.

Eric thanked the staff members who helped compile the information within the deadline and a special mention to Robert Yabes for his help.

Commissioner Philip Luna asked about the procurement process with MAG pertaining to whom the designers are going to be and if it adds additional cost. Eric explained the selection process stating MAG utilizes about 15 "on-call" firms to select design teams which we will use to procure the designers using the grant funds awarded. Tempe has used these firms before so they are familiar with Tempe's innovations and community projects.

Agenda Item 4 – University Drive and Hardy Drive Streetscape Public Art

Eric Iwersen, Acting Transportation Planning Manager provided an overview of the proposed public art elements for the University and Hardy Streetscape projects.

Before introducing Maja Aurora, Eric provided a short introduction on the Streetscape projects and noted these locations are characterized as strong bicycle and pedestrian corridors.

Maja Aurora, Public Arts Coordinator, presented an update on the artists, the fiscal impact of the Streetscape projects, and passed out handouts as she discussed the project for each artist.

Maja referred to the handout on the Hardy Drive Streetscape Public Art project and provided the background on artist Melissa Martinez emphasizing Melissa currently resides in the neighborhood of this project. Melissa focused on incorporating the Palo Verde tree as a sculpture to the median on Hardy Drive, closest to University Drive. The yellow pin wheels that will be on the sculpture will also be incorporated into the design of the seven bus shelters in the area.

Commissioner Ben Goren asked how the sculpture was made. Maja explained the sculpture is composed of multiple layers of metal mesh with the pin wheels attached, and the base of the sculpture is substantial enough to withstand high wind gusts.

Maja referred to the handout on the University Drive Streetscape Public Art project and provided the background on artist Chris Trumble. Chris focused on the design of the walkways by adding footprints of people doing multiple movements including strutting, jogging, skipping, galloping as well as animal tracks. These patterns will be on the sidewalk of both sides of the street from Priest Drive to Ash Avenue.

Commissioner Goren asked if the patterns are going to be imbedded in the side walk. Maja answered that they are not imbedded but rather sprayed on using a stencil.

Agenda Item 5 – Mary O'Connor Memorial Transit Shelter

Sue Taaffe, Public Information Officer, presented a recommendation to name a bus shelter in front of Tempe City Hall after former Tempe Transit Manager, Mary O'Connor. Sue distributed a handout with a design concept and shared Mary O'Connor's contributions to the City's transportation system during her career. Sue has gotten permission from Mary's family to name the shelter after her and the family has seen the design concept.

Chris Kelly with Architekton discussed the previous bus shelter specifications and the desire to create a design that kept costs down by used the existing frame. The design includes using the current steel frame of the bus shelter with an added weave design which was noted as a very special and unique concept.

Commissioner Don Cassano asked about the integrity of the material being used. Chris answered that the material is used in playgrounds and will consist of durable, recyclable, Champaign colored plastic with UV protection.

Commissioner Goren asked if there was any chance that this design could serve as a model for other bus shelters in Tempe. Chris was not certain how this shelter would influence future installations.

Commissioner Gary Roberts asked about the foundation specifications for the original installation. Eric Iwersen explained they have a modified version of the original. Commissioner Roberts provided contact information.

Commissioner Goronkin shared that she first met Mary O'Connor in 1996 as part of the City of Tempe Transit Tax Initiative and that Mary's visions inspired her love of all things urban, especially transit.

Councilmember Shana Ellis was introduced and referred to the Council policy included in the packet sharing the next step is to present to Council in January; the shelter will be of no cost to City; and on November 2nd a fundraiser will be held. It was added that John Kane and his team from Architekton planned aspects that are not in the current

design including redoing the trash can, adding planters and other items if there are additional funds availability from the fundraiser.

Councilmember Ellis noted that when Mary O'Connor was working for the City of Tempe she rode the bus every morning and waited for the bus at this particular stop at the end of the day. For this reason the bus shelter was identified important to friends and family who agreed the location was a good place to honor her.

Councilmember Ellis stated she appreciates the comment about using this concept as a standard for other bus shelters given the design and materials used. Everyone would be very proud to have this bus shelter named after Mary O'Connor to be the new model in Tempe.

Councilmember Ellis indicated she has electronic files to share; has talked to Mary's friends; and has sent out many notifications about the fundraiser. Updates about the process will continue over the next few months.

Motion: Commissioner Goronkin

Second: Commissioner Cassano and Commissioner Olson

Decision: Approved

Agenda Item 6 – Fifth Street Discussion

Shelly Seyler, Deputy Public Works Director Transportation, presented an update on the character of Fifth Street between Farmer Avenue and College Avenue.

Shelly reviewed the characteristics of Fifth Street describing that it has 3 lanes, parking on each side. Shelly discussed that the plans for the Transportation Center include speed tables at two intersections but those were removed during the design process. It was noted that this project is not a current projects listed in the Comprehensive Plan; however it is included as a future project to be added to the Transportation Master Plan, and once approved we will ultimately be able to apply for grants.

Commission Chair Huellmantel commented that he would rather see a narrower street than speed tables and noted that the character of Fifth Street has changed several times over the last 30 years. Angle parking, landscaping, and shade is recommended.

Commissioner Goronkin agreed with Chairman Huellmantel and added that there should be more places for pedestrian seating; it should be effective and attractive with landscaping, water features, and something that highlights the Charles Trumbull statue.

Commissioner Roberts echoed the previous comments and added lane reduction, median, landscape, and public art as important indicating this would make it pedestrian friendly in the City Hall, police station, Tempe Transit Center, and Sun Devils stadium areas.

Commissioner Cassano commented on the high amount of bus traffic and safety issues related to maintaining Fifth Street as a green street.

Commissioner Kevin Olson recommended closing the street to private automobile traffic from Mill Avenue to College Avenue as an option to explore.

Commissioner Peter Schelstraete supported the suggested idea of pedestrian only lanes to the Fifth Street mall, police department, and added that the impact on local businesses should be considered.

Commissioner Sue Lofgren supports anything that makes Fifth Street Pedestrian friendly, particularly shade and seating.

Commissioner Goren recommended getting rid of the bike lane and adding mix use traffic lanes of about 15 miles per hour for pedestrian, bike, and automobile similar to the area near the rabbit/waterfall feature around 7th Street & Maple Avenue.

Commissioner Cassano suggested that the area be more attractive by adding gathering places for all types of interests for everyone.

Commissioner Nikki Gusz added that Fifth Street should be made attractive and as transit friendly as possible, and recommended a more neighborhood feeling. Commission Chair Huellmantel commented on tying the neighborhoods together by creating a user friendly City Hall formal entrance, stating currently there is no obvious front for most people.

Commissioner Goren recommended remote parking to City hall or other buildings with a free circulator bus.

Agenda Item 7 – General Plan 2040

Eric Iwersen, Acting Transportation Planning Manager, presented an update on the General Plan 2040.

Eric referred to the memo that was distributed and provided the following updates.

- The Circulation Chapter, as part of the General Plan 2040, is advancing towards Council action and public vote next spring
- The draft of the Circulation Chapter is now available online
- Modifications from the previous discussions regarding Elliot Rd were included
- Public meetings held at the Historical Museum on August 3rd, and August 8th received great comments

Eric handed out the official comment cards for the Circulation Chapter and explained that the cards have provided valuable feedback from the public meetings for the purpose of modifying the Circulation Chapter.

The next steps include sharing the Circulation Chapter to Boards & Commissions in the fall; presenting to Council for approval in December; and submitting for public vote in May. The Circulation Chapter will be used as a template for the Transportation Master Plan process.

Agenda Item 8 – Department and Regional Transportation Updates

Don Bessler, Public Works Director, presented an update on the recent four day bus strike.

During course of the four day strike there was news articles in the paper to keep the public informed, however, some of the information presented was factually unclear including reports relating to the minimum service clause. On important takeaway for the City is to make the language clearer and to add language to address the continuity of service. During the previous strike Tempe maintained a 49% service level with more liberal contract language and at the same time the Phoenix contract with a specific minimum service clause only provided a 29% service level. This demonstrates the language itself may be less important than having a proactive approach to making sure we have a well-defined and shared strategy going forward.

A formal report will be sent to the Council covering takeaways, hindsight, and what could have been done better especially given the scout program and the regionalization efforts and substantive changes to our role. If the City Council desires then Tempe will need to take responsibility to create and provide funding for a life line service for the community.

Commission Chair Huellmantel questioned how the minimum service clause would work referencing the City of Phoenix strike and paying for services and not received. Don responded Tempe would not pay for services not received and was not familiar with the exact details of the Phoenix contract to comment.

Commissioner Roberts asked how much pushback the unions had on the minimum service aspect when they were in negotiations. Don replied that we are not a part of the negotiation process but the union does recognize transit is a critical element to the movement of people in the valley.

Commissioner Goronkin commented that Tempe relies heavily on transit to move people which makes our community more vulnerable to the impact of strikes and supports exploring ways to minimize the impact of strikes to the community. Commissioner Cassano added that the strike helped reinforced the importance of transit in the community/valley and sends a message to those who think transit should not be funded and demonstrated the impacts to non-transit users.

Commission Chair Huellmantel commented on the positives which were not communicated during the strike referencing many millions in savings by regionalizing and combining services. Commissioner Olson added that the minimum service headline created enormous pressure to come to an agreement on both sides quickly so there were advantages and disadvantages to what was communicated.

Don concluded the discussion by stating we want to have the commission engaged and their input, particularly on this issue, is valued and welcomed.

Don shared with the commission that Greg Jordan has left the City of Tempe and Jason Hartong is moving to the Regional Public Transportation Agency (RPTA). The Transit Division and Traffic Engineering and Operations Division will be combined into one structure with Shelly Seyler taking the role of Deputy Director of Transportation and Michael Nevarez will acquire the interim role of Transit Manager until a permanent structure is put in place..

Agenda Item 9 – Future Agenda Items

None

The Commission's next meeting is scheduled for September 10, 2013.

Meeting adjourned at 8:35 a.m.

Prepared by: Travis Mullen
Reviewed by: Yvette Mesquita