



Minutes City of Tempe Transportation Commission November 13, 2012

Minutes of the City of Tempe Transportation Commission held on Tuesday, November 13 2012, 7:30 a.m., at the Don Cassano Community Room, 200 E 5TH St., Tempe, Arizona.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Charles Huellmantel, German Piedrahita, Peter Schelstraete, Philip Luna, Pam Goronkin, Gary Roberts, Ben Goren, Sue Lofgren, Catherine Mayorga

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Steven Saiz, Marcellus Lisotta, David Strang

City Staff Present:

Eric Iwersen, Sue Taaffe, Shelly Seyler, Greg Jordan, Nancy Ryan, Tanya Chavez, Yvette Mesquita, Robert Yabes, Joe Clements

Guests Present:

Kathy Deboer (Westgroup Research), Mark Gaurens (Westgroup Research), Jim Wright (RPTA), John Farry (RPTA)

Commission Chair Charles Huellmantel called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

Charles Huellmantel, Commission Chair

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Meeting Minutes: September 11, 2012 and October 9, 2012.

Commissioner Huellmantel asked for a motion to approve.

Sue Lofgren made a motion to approve the September 11, 2012 and October 9, 2012 Transportation Commission meeting minutes. Pam Goronkin seconded the motion. All approved except Saiz, Lisotta, and Strang who were not present for the approval.

The following minutes were approved:

- Transportation Commission Meeting Minutes – September 11, 2012
- Transportation Commission Meeting Minutes – October 9, 2012

Agenda Item 3 – September 2012 Tempe Transit Telephone Survey

Presented by Sue Taaffe, Community Relations and Kathy Deboer, West Group Research.

Kathy Deboer of Westgroup Research provided the key findings from the September 2012 Tempe Transit Telephone survey.

Random calls of Tempe residents were made from WestGroup's interviewing center in Phoenix, Arizona during the month of September 2012.

The survey was completed with 400 Tempe residents.

WestGroup Research was commissioned by the City of Tempe to complete a telephone survey of Tempe residents in an effort to gain insights into perceptions about public transit, among both riders and non-riders.

A quota was set to achieve equal representation of men and women as well as a representative distribution of the sample by age.

The margin of error for this sample size is approximately +/-5.0%.

Rider Characteristics and Opinions

- 62% of Tempe residents have used Tempe's transit service in the past year.
- 18% of Tempe residents are using Tempe's transit service on weekly bases.
- 60% of Tempe residents are using Tempe's transit system for recreational purposes.
- 60% of Tempe residents are using Tempe's transit service for convenience.
- Several reasons for Tempe Transit use include both convenience and recreation.

Common growing destinations associated with Tempe's transit system are associated with Recreation. Popular destinations include: Downtown Phoenix and Downtown Tempe.

Recreational activity was the top destination of transit riders (mentioned by 34%). Phoenix/Downtown Phoenix increased from 15% in 2010 to 26% in 2012. Downtown Tempe as a destination also increased (13%, up from 7%).

Work as a stated destination continued to drop, and stands now at only 13%.

Approximately 80% of residents with an opinion indicated that they were highly satisfied with the Tempe transit system.

Driver courtesy and professionalism and comfort on the bus received the highest satisfaction ratings from Tempe bus riders

Security at bus stops and bus service during major events received the lowest percentages of ratings.

Overall Transit service satisfaction from users rose from 29% to 30%.

30% of users provided a satisfaction four rating increase from 66% to 69% percent.

Tempe in Motion (TIM) is an organization primarily used for marketing; TIM is a source of awareness and advertising.

Approximately 52% of those who reported hearing about TIM in the newspaper, online, by direct mail, or street banners indicated that they feel the advertising had not effect on their perceptions, while 42% indicated that they feel the advertising made them think more positively about transportation options in Tempe.

Of those residents who indicated that the advertising had a positive or neutral impact, approximately 28% answered "yes" when asked whether the advertising messages persuaded them to try public transit in Tempe.

Approximately 62% of residents indicated that they have access to a bicycle.

Among those who reported having access to a bike, most two thirds (65%) report they ride their bike at least once a month, which is statistically similar compared to 2010.

Approximately 61% of those who indicate they ride their bikes at least once a month report that they ride for exercise.

60% of residents indicate they are satisfied with the quality of the walking and biking paths in Tempe.

Residents were most likely to indicate that adding more bike and pedestrian paths should be the top priority (62%) along with more shade along paths (46% vs. 54%) and path security (56 vs. 70%).

Approximately 45% of residents indicate they have heard of the Tempe Youth Free Transit Pass, which represents an increase from 38% recorded in 2010.

Conclusions

- More than three in five Tempe residents indicate they have used some form of public transit in Tempe in the past year. Overall satisfaction with the transit service in the city has increased slightly from 2010.
- The light rail system plays a central role in transportation among Tempe residents.
- The percentage of "new" riders (those who have been using the transit system for less than a year) is at the lowest level recorded compared to past years.
- More riders indicated this year that they use public transit to get to and from recreational events.
- Among residents who have not ridden a bus in the past year, and increase was observed in the percentage of those who perceived the arguments reduces congestion and improves air quality to persuade public transit usage as not very effective or not at all effective.
- Street banners are the source of where residents learned about TTIM increased to their highest levels yet.
- Street banners and bus signs are still the most effective awareness agents.
- Advertising has a direct impact on transit usage.
- Fewer residents this year placed a high priority on making bike/pedestrian paths safer, adding more shade along bike/pedestrian paths, whereas prioritization for more amenities along the paths and adding more paths in general remained similar compared to 2010 figures.

A recommendation regarding a survey to separate by rider versus non-rider was made by Commissioner Huellmantel. As a follow up, Commissioner Goren suggested a future survey of non-riders to understand why they choose not to use the transit system.

Kathy Deboer provided general reasons why non-riders do not prefer transit

Commissioner Goren stated that there should be an opportunity to improve the program as there are a vast majority of individuals whom transit would benefit but are not taking advantage of the Transit system. It is important to determine why non-riders are not using transit alternatives.

Sue Taaffe added several reasons groups may elect not to use transit.

Commissioner Huellmantel suggested that there should be other factors to consider, such as the differences in age among those under 18 years of age and those over 18 years of age.

Kathy Deboer explained the details of the report are available and information can be provided by age or riders verses non-riders.

Commissioner Huellmantel raised concerns regarding safety and asked what was being done to follow up on the safety question. Greg Jordan provided information regarding the development of a bus security program. Staff is currently working with the Police Department on a possible bus security program that includes random ride-a-long rides. Moving forward with this program depends on a program wide evaluation of priorities and FY 2013-14 budget capacity.

Commissioner Huellmantel asked a question in regards to potential numbers to support claims made by residents concerned with safety. Kathy Deboer informed the Commissioners that there is a follow-up possibility to ask additional questions on behalf of the City of Tempe.

Commissioner Huellmantel asked if there was a possibility to ask interviewees what particular issues they meant in regards to safety in order to narrow down the problem of safety.

Several Commissioners offered information relating to stolen bikes, homeless people on light rail and the park & ride issues that may help with safety concerns

Kathy Deboer agreed on a follow up survey effort to address issues of safety.

Greg Jordan provided information concerning light rail and safety. The data suggest light rail may be less safe than the bus system, but the higher incident numbers may be due to presence of security and the ability to deal with more incidents as they arise. Issues of park-and-ride safety have been addressed through adequate lighting and constant evaluation.

Commissioner Piedrahita addressed the possibility that as more riders are riding Transit, it may be perceived as unsafe.

Kathy Deboer suggested that the frequency of usage among riders and non-riders be evaluated to better understand the reasoning of dissatisfaction among users.

Commissioner Huellmantel stated that information shouldn't be indicative of a problem; if there is a problem staff should first investigate.

It was stated by Commissioner Goren that safety is a broad topic and can differ according to each user therefore it's important to understand and address specific concerns.

Greg Jordan indicated perception may be driven by service reduction and increase in ridership over the past few years.

Commissioner Lofgren asked if there was a difference between regular bus and orbit service relating to safety and expressed interest of the results

Kathy Deboer only inquired about bus service and asked the commissioners if they rode the Orbit transit system.

Robert Yabes suggested that the report be analyzed by route to best understand where discomfort among users lies.

Agenda Item 4 – Tempe-RPTA Bus Operations Unification

Presented by Greg Jordan, Public Works Department

Greg Jordan provided some background information regarding the Bus Operations Unification. Tempe currently operates about 25% of the bus service in regional and RPTA operates about 25% as well.

There are three major bus operations in the Valley. RPTA, Tempe, Phoenix, Scottsdale, and Glendale each operate very small local services.

Current issues that staff has been dealing with is the combination of the RPTA and Tempe piece as a method to reduce cost and improve operations.

There are misconceptions that Tempe only operates locally but Tempe is actually a regional provider.

Currently there is an interest to combine RPTA and Tempe efforts into one service.

One of the biggest opportunities for savings stems from allocating buses most efficiently between Tempe and RPTA operating facilities. . The purpose is to be more efficient, reduce costs, and pave the way toward a more integrated approach.

Several strengths, weaknesses and risks were identified by the RPTA productivity team and the City of Tempe staff.

Major strengths include: improved efficiency and cost reduction.

Challenges include: labor actions, volunteer efforts, and competitions of contracts

Staff has estimated the potential savings association with unification as between \$800,000 to 1 million dollars with Tempe's local savings about half this amount. One-time infrastructure costs could be between \$300,000-\$500,000 and potential supported by regional or grant funds. There is also a potential cost avoidance of \$10 million in upgrades to the RPTA facility which would not be needed if unification proceeds.

Tempe and RPTA partnered on a procurement to have the market tell us whether stand-alone operations or a unified operation is most efficient. The results indicate that unification is more cost effective.

The highest score firm from a technical standpoint was also the lowest cost firm which is the best case scenario.

The new contract will take effect in July summer of 2013.

Once the unification process begins, Tempe will maintain a three year ownership period to ensure that performance is where it needs to be. Quarterly and annual reports to Council will be addressed to track performance. After two years of evaluation, staff will provide a performance report to Council and the Transportation Commission.

Staff cannot yet provide details of procurement as the information is confidential. Staff will however, present details to the City Council during E-Session in order to discuss the material and obtain Council guidance. After information is provided, staff will again present material to the City Council Issue Review Session and communicate findings to the Transportation Committee.

Commissioner Roberts asked where the funding was coming from in regards to the infrastructure costs upgrades. Greg Jordan indicated funding for one-time infrastructure costs will be provided by the local, including partner cities, and regional funds and possibly grant funds.

Commissioner Goren mentioned that the one-time fuel infrastructure will be a one-time cost that will result in future savings. Greg Jordan responded in agreement.

Commissioner Goren addressed that the overall unification will be extremely costly during the first year, however after the first year the unification will prove profitable.

Commissioner Goren made a motion to approve the recommendation; Commissioner Moyorga seconded the motion. All approved with Commissioners Saiz, Lisotta, and Strang absent.

Agenda Item 5 – Broadway Road Project

Presented by Eric Iwersen, Community Development Department

The project has been in the process for several years. Federal funding was received in 2006 and 2007. The process began three years ago to work with the community in order to design roadway enhancements on Broadway between Rural and Mill Avenue.

Concepts of the project have been taken to the community and have gone through boards and commissions for review.

The last meeting presented a preferred concept that was embraced by the community however once the process began staff encountered two major obstacles. One was the purchase ride-of-way and the second was inequity among the neighborhoods.

Staff has deferred the Broadway Road Project for another two years. The extended time line is for fall 2014; designs will be completed by July/August 2014. The design will be reworked to include bike lane and sidewalk enhancements; design should be finalized in 2013.

Lane numbers and configuration should remain constant. There is an exploration of the idea of eliminating one lane of traffic on the South side road in the East bound direction. Staff is exploring the option due to the reduction of vehicle miles traveled.

Commissioner Huellmantel suggested an additional discussion on the topic of lane elimination addressed concerns regarding the lanes on Broadway.

Commissioner Roberts asked if an additional lane would terminate on the eastbound direction of Broadway Road, Mill Avenue, and Rural Road.

Shelly Seyler mentioned that the eastbound configuration between McClintock and Rural is a right lane turn. When traveling Eastbound, the lane drops and will only be available for busses. Therefore the lane would terminate in the eastbound direction and will force all vehicles to turn right at the Curb lane.

Commissioner Huellmantel suggested that staff reevaluate direction and direction density.

Eric provided an account that Broadway road is the lightest volume segment and that options are currently being explored.

Commissioner Huellmantel suggested discussing the issue globally to determine if it is a good idea to consider for the improvement of pedestrian and bike amenities.

Shelly Seyler addressed concerns regarding the potential impacts that will be the potential congestion west of Mill Avenue on Priest.

Commissioner Goren addressed the possibility that the option would move vehicles onto the Freeway thus resulting in less traffic on the streets. Yet, most commissioners addressed the possibility that congestion may offset positive results for pedestrians while providing an improved living environment. The priority should remain on residents and not those who are traveling through Tempe.

Commissioner Roberts mentioned that congestion already exists and should not be a detriment.

Commissioner Goronkin stated that the original philosophy of the project was to deter traffic while improving Tempe for the local residents—she supports the project.

Commissioner Schelstraete had no comment.

Commissioner Luna is in favor of improving the quality of life for Tempe residents.

Shelly Seyler mentioned that planning level analysis will still need to be run.

Eric Iwersen discussed the potential of back up traffic associated lane change for east bound traffic and requested direction from the Commission.

Commissioner Piedrahita explained that Tempe leads the movement for higher speeds and lanes and was in favor of less congestion and a higher pedestrian priority. The majority would like to consider a design that would move the lane of traffic for pedestrian amenities.

Commissioner Mayorga and Schelstraete held no opposition.

Commissioner Lofgren expressed her support in improving the quality of life.

Commissioner Roberts suggested that congestion is relative to each person.

Commissioner Roberts asked how much right-of-way is proposed to be taken away from the South side of Broadway in the present design. Eric responded that there has been opposition regarding the issue, but the proposed area is 10 feet.

Commissioner Roberts mentioned that houses are often heavily landscaped therefore 10 feet would make a significant break and asked if there was purchase of right-of-way in the present design.

Eric Iwersen mentioned that solutions are being evaluated in order to stay away from right-of-way purchase.

Commissioner Mayorga stated that the general plan (2030/2040) should outline the repurposing of the Broadway Road arterial lane.

Eric Iwersen indicated there is already zoning for home office use.

Eric Iwersen stated that staff is currently working with design team and is anticipating a design concept which demonstrates two lane and three lane options. The project is expected to go public in January or February of 2013.

Agenda Item 6 – Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) – Planning Grants

Presented by Eric Iwersen, Community Development Department.

The purpose of the agenda item is to make staff aware of the planning monies that have been utilized over the course of several years for Transportation projects. Federal money has been set aside by MAG that is intended to be used specifically for bike and pedestrian projects.

The program began in 1996 and provides an opportunity to begin useful projects by providing federal money for design and construction.

The first proposed project was the 5th street traffic light project which was the first streetscape project.

The second project was the Midblock Crossing study which evaluated how pedestrians get across arterials of the canal system before canal pathways were built. The project resulted in federal funding and has been a recommendation for Hawke Crossings.

Other projects that received funding were for design concepts for the Rio Salado pathway which were two portions that were connected to Phoenix. Staff received funding to design from Priest to 24th Street. Staff also partnered with Mesa to conduct a study to analyze how a pathway would function from McClintock to Dobson. Projects are receiving federal funding to build a pathway connection from the Phoenix connection from Priest to the Hohokam freeway.

One portion that is funded is an extension to the freeway ramp at 101 and 2012 located in front of Tempe Marketplace.

Commissioner Goren asked how to get across Priest from the bridge located underneath the Tempe Marketplace.

Underpass has been federally funded and the design was funded through design grants. A package was submitted in August and September as one project submittal. The project is in a position to get funding as the project has been accepted by Committees and the MAG scoring system.

Several projects have been discussed to Council; there could be new project candidates for Pedestrian design assistance funding that will begin in March or April of 2013.

The Commission encouraged the action of projects that improve the quality of life. There was also an interest in focusing on grant funding to conduct transit studies that overall improve the community.

Commissioner Goronkin made a comparison to the Railway system and mentioned that there should be a focus to create useful amenities; placed priority on the Downtown Alley Design.

Commissioner Lofgren placed priority on the underpass at McClintock at Tempe Marketplace. Eric Iwersen stated that staff will return to the committee with two or three project proposals.

Commissioner Goren thanked staff for great work efforts.

Greg Jordan discussed operation & maintenance and mentioned that these costs must be included in financial forecasts to understand their impact before the projects approved to move forward.

Agenda Item 7 – Department and Regional Transportation Updates

None.

Sue Taaffe announced Transportation Master Plan Public Meeting on November 28th at 6 p.m. at the Tempe Transportation Center and one December 1st at 9::30 at the Tempe History Museum.

Agenda Item 8 – Future Agenda Items

- Update MAG CMAQ applications
- Transportation Master Plan Update
- Broadway Update
- ITS Tours
- Public awareness in advancing transit in the valley
- AZTA Presentation
- Service Development/Transit Performance
- Broadway Concept Design

Meeting adjourned at 8:52 a.m.

The Commission's next meeting will be held Tuesday, December 11, 2012 at 7:30 a.m. Don Cassano Community Room at the Tempe Transportation Center, 200 E. 5th St, Tempe, Arizona.