



Minutes City of Tempe Transportation Commission March 12, 2013

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

(MEMBERS) Present:

Pam Goronkin
Don Cassano
Sue Lofgren
Kevin Olson
Gary Roberts

Nikki Gusz
Philip Luna
German Piedrahita
Peter Schelstraete

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Aaron Golub
Ben Goren
Charles Huellmantel (Chair)
Charles Redman
Benjamin Sanchez

City Staff Present:

Tanya Chavez
Lisa Collins
Greg Jordan
Yvette Mesquita

Joe Clements
Eric Iwersen
Jon King

Guests Present:

Ben Limmer
Wulf Grote
Lisa Procknow

Commissioner Goronkin called the meeting to order at 7:35 a.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Meeting Minutes

February 12, 2013 meeting minutes were approved with the amendment to include Commissioner Lofgren Second the motion to approve the January 15, 2013 Transportation Commission meeting minutes as amended.

Motion: Commissioner Lofgren

Second: Commissioner Olson

Decision: Approved as amended

Agenda Item 3 – Commemoration for Commission Member David Strang

Commission Member Goronkin introduced the proposal to designate a memorial for recently deceased Commission Member David Strang.

Greg presented staff's recommendation to move forward with a living tree memorial which has been used by the City in the park areas. The commission reviewed an image indicating where the new tree would be located. A memorial plaque in memory of David Strang's service to the community would be embedded in the tree or installed at a close location, at minimal cost. Honoring Mr. Strang in this fashion fits within current program guidelines and will not be affected by the Council's current review of naming policies.

Commissioner Roberts asked if the Commission had any input in regards to the size or species of the tree to be planted. Greg replied yes and certain types of trees that survive well in the area have been recommended.

Eric referred to two illustrations of species included in the packet. The landscape character of the area is keeping with the Sonoran desert palette and staff's recommendation is to make a selection within that genre.

Commissioner Goronkin asked Commissioner Roberts if there was a specific tree he would like to be considered. Commissioner Roberts replied yes and no; he preferred the Palo Verde or the Mesquite tree – which are both indigenous to the southwest, specifically a nice multi-trunk tree to go in this area, in location number one, which ten years from now is going to be a beautiful tree and would be a fitting tribute to David. Eric concurred and Commissioner Lofgren added that it would also provide nice shade.

Commissioner Roberts reiterated that the tree would grow up, umbrella out and shade most, if not all of the area in location one.

Commissioner Goronkin confirmed that a formal motion was not required and asked for comments from the commissioners.

Commissioner Peter Schelstraete suggested that the Commission could pitch in to pay for the plaque.

Commissioner Goronkin stated that the cost of the plaque itself was somewhere around \$100. Commissioner Cassano confirmed that the fee for the plaque would be \$100.

Greg suggested that contributions made by the commissioners could be coordinated through Yvette.

Commissioner Goronkin suggested that the minutes could reflect that, for the members or commissioners who care to contribute

Agenda Item 4 – Tempe Streetcar

Commissioner Goronkin introduced the proposal for the Tempe Streetcar

Greg introduced Valley Metro staff Wulf Grote and Ben Limmer. Wulf informed the Commission of several changes that had occurred since their last presentation in December. They have met with the City Council to discuss possible changes in direction for the project. The Commission was presented the same presentation made to Council last week.

In 2010 there was a locally preferred alternative that resulted from an alternative analysis that included that a streetcar project running down Mill Ave 2.6 miles coming from Southern Avenue from the south, going north to Rio Salado Parkway with a loop between Mill and Ash and the downtown area utilizing University and Rio Salado Parkway as well as part of that loop going northbound on Mill and southbound on Ash. The project was taken to Council in 2010 and we continued to develop the project including stations, stop locations, street designations, bike lanes, etc.

At the end of 2011, the project went back to City Council to adopt more definition for the project and continued to work with the Federal Transportation Administration (FTA) to ensure we were developing a project that would compete favorably for federal funding. The overall cost for the capital project is \$129M, of which \$73M has been secured; part of that is from the regional sales tax and part of that is from Federal funds that are formula funds to this region or Congestion Mitigation Air Quality (CMAQ) funds. The remaining gap is \$57M. TIGER grant opportunities are Federal Transportation grants that we have applied for twice but did not receive; there was a lot of competition nationwide.

A suggestion to Council was to apply for funds through the Federal Small Start process, a discretionary, highly competitive program that wasn't designed for funding street car projects; it was designed for funding longer regional systems. Portland is the only project in the whole country that received funding from Small Starts.

Last October we informally received a rating from the Federal Transit Administration on the project and discovered that it did not meet the threshold evaluation criteria for the Small Starts program. In December, we learned of new transportation legislation now in place under MAP 21. The MAP 21 program has changed the qualifying criteria but the formal rules have not yet been published.

Commissioner Olson asked if dollars are affected by the sequester. Wulf explained that the new program is affected and speculated there could be less money and more competition at the federal level. Ben Limmer added that current projects not in their last year of funding got a small reduction. The Mesa light rail project is in its last year of funding, so that project was not touched. The larger new starts projects that are going through several years of construction; got a small reduction in funds.

In December, FTA staff advised that the proposal route would have to be adapted to the new MAP 21 program to better position the project for funding. . Under the new MAP 21 rules, it could be kept in project development as the City Metro move forward. The FTA typically produces an annual "new starts report" which lists all the cities, what kind of funding is available and eligibility status. The city and Metro expected to be listed in for the Tempe Streetcar and moved into project development. However, that document was not generated yet and a publish date has not been announced. Once the list is published, we expect to receive a letter from the FTA stating that Streetcar project has been moved to project.

City Council's direction was to pursue this new direction and determine what changes are necessary to secure federal funding. There has been a lot of interest recently on the Rio Salado Parkway; particularly from downtown

going out east through the eastern part of Tempe along Rio Salado, potentially as far east as the new Cubs facility in Mesa. We also talked with the City Council to get direction regarding this topic as well.

Ben mentioned the MAP 21 process puts alternative analysis at a local level and explained the process. The two major milestones is moving the project into project development and doing the environmental analysis before we can get a rating and the funding becomes available. Once the funds are available we will receive an expedited grant agreement (EGA).

Wulf added it would take some time to establish an EGA.

MAP 21 evaluates six different criteria for projects. Under one category, land use, which pertains to existing use, not future, the criteria was the same and was the area where Metro fought the hardest with the FTA (over the last few months) to get over the "medium" threshold. The City was rated medium low in this category, given the existing land use along the current alignment. The project received a medium high rating in economic development, particularly because of the downtown area and the downtown loop.

Greg stated the operating funding of the current 2.6 mile alignment is approximately \$3.1M, The Transit Fund budget sustainable with the annual streetcar cost.

Metro presented new variations of the project as it was originally proposed.

The first two options would keep the loop downtown, travel Easton Apache and east on Rio Salado because of the more significant land uses. One option travels further east on Apache to Dorsey, while the other option travels only to Rural Road, but extends further east on Rio Salado.

The third option abandoned everything south of downtown, given some of the interest in the Rio Salado area, and turned the whole project on to Rio Salado and as far as roughly McClintock.

They also looked at putting both tracks on Ash as opposed to the earlier program that was looked at putting both on Mill or doing the loop. We did an evaluation and returned back to City Council with our recommendation to keep the loop.

There are several reasons to do the loop; it assures access to Mill Avenue properties by expanding to include Ash and Mill which helps to define the downtown area. It splits utility impact. This loop option had the lowest capital cost, it gave us flexibility for expansion and opportunities. It also provided flexibility for special events. This helped the with FTA rating by expanding the outreach of the downtown area.

An Ash double track had some pros and cons and we put them on the table for the Council. The one positive is that we are closer to the west side neighborhoods west of the railroad tracks and the downtown area. In this case we retain all of the street and the parking on Mill Ave with no impact on Mill Ave or downtown. We also do not have to deal with construction impacts or rerouting the street car during special events.

There would be a connection between the streetcar and the light rail track' physical connection to get vehicles back to Tempe at 48th and Washington. If we do this connection on Ash, we would probably have significant impact on the Macayo's property. On Mill, we are able to make it work much more easily within the intersection at 3rd and Mill.

The Apache and Rio Salado options both meet the FTA threshold. The Rio Salado option, which doesn't have a lot of land use today, does not do very well. The initial project has taken us close, but we couldn't quite get there. The one down side is that the FTA threshold for employment is very high.

Commissioner Olson commented that there isn't anywhere in Metro Phoenix that will ever come close to 125,000 jobs and the FTA threshold. Wulf concurred.

Commissioner Goronkin asked if any analysis was performed about how the new proposed alignments might affect our medium to high economic development rating. Wulf replied there was an analysis, but believes that most of the rating is due to the loop being downtown, and that the economic development rating really isn't going to be affected; it may improve the rating little.

Commissioner Goronkin said it appears that the FTA focuses more at existing economic development than potential economic development. Wulf replied that there are two measures which do include an evaluation of future development but the land use element focuses on what has occurred today. The land use evaluation looks at existing and the economic development evaluation looks at what the policies are for the future which includes, what is happening, proposals that are on the street, new developments that are occurring and plans for the future.

Commission Roberts asked if there was economic development for the future along the Rio Salado track and if it was known if ASU has plans to build a sports park.

Wulf shared from the economic development perspective, the Rio Salado alignment is a good one, but we already have a good rating on the economic development side. Where we don't have a good rating is on the land use side

In summary, the two options meet the threshold for population density, none meet employment thresholds. We believe based on what FTA has told us in the past that these options will give us the medium rating. The slide regarding overall ridership gives some idea of the ridership potential with both the Apache and the Rio Salado options. The Apache and Rio Salado options have the highest ridership potential. The data is based on opening year forecast.

Commissioner Piedrahita asked how the ridership data was determined and questioned why a rider just wouldn't take the light rail. Wulf explained the whole idea is stopping very frequently in this area and you're serving all the businesses and residences along Mill as well as Apache. By just going station to station along the light rail, the service is not captured. The numbers come from a MAG forecasting model. MAG uses a travel forecasting model to calculate travel demand that looks at land use throughout the region, travel patterns and a whole host of other formulas. It is a federal requirement to have a forecasting model based on the regionally approved models that the FTA reviews and approves to make sure that it is compliant and consistent. In actuality, we think the numbers are higher, but we need to officially use the MAG model.

Commissioner Piedrahita commented that the model used for the light rail indicated significantly lower ridership than reality because the model under-predicts these alternative modes of transportation because we don't have them yet. Wulf concurred, emphasizing that when we did our first 20 mile line, we had forecasted 44,000 riders per day; today we are getting 46,000 riders per day. In the first year ridership was in the mid-30s.

Commissioner Olson asked what makes a consumer ride the rail instead of just walking two blocks.

Wulf responded that street cars systems are economic development tools as much in cities like Portland and Seattle, even though they don't move real fast and they stop pretty frequently, they do get pretty good ridership; and serve their purpose.

Commissioner Olson commented the whole south edge of the ASU campus has a dense population because of the student population and that people often want to go and catch that to the light rail to go on to where they want to go. These alternatives make a lot more sense.

Eric added that the existing light rail is not connecting to our historic downtown neighborhoods and that density at ASU has been building on the south side of campus, in some cases, there is a half a mile between stops. It's always been intended that this would connect to a regional service, so pulling from that campus, pulling from those neighborhoods to get you to that regional light rail.

Commissioner Olson asked if this process would improve the mobility rating. Wulf replied that the FTA is currently defining mobility is a factor of ridership, but it gives weight to minority and low income populations. The threshold established is based on an absolute number that is high – like the employment number, the threshold number is really unattainable unless building a 20 mile project and living in New York City.

Greg emphasized that the opportunities with the Apache/Rio Salado option route is very similar to the current FLASH system that runs around downtown and around campus. One of the opportunities could be reconfiguring that and save some dollars in the process. The FLASH is very successful.

Commissioner Gusz asked about where future expansion opportunities could be. Wulf replied that in discussions with Council we have outlined alternatives and need to perform an in depth analysis providing examples of areas to understand that would require a revision.

Wulf replied that if we are going to be reconfiguring the project, we need to spend some time in the community, provide updates and explain why changes are needed. We need to brief the community working group, and spend time in working with state callers and groups such as the Commission to make sure that everybody understands what we are doing through public meetings, surveys, etc.

There's been a lot of interest in Rio Salado Parkway going all the way to the Cubs facility in Mesa and there have been discussions already between Mesa, Tempe, ASU and our organization about the potential for something to happen along that line. In particular, as it may relate to a public/private partnership and maybe bringing in a development partner. We are just now examining the opportunity for potential growth of a public/private partnership; we will need funding. We need to spend time over the next few months really better understanding the feasibility of the partnership, understanding at least the basic parameters of the project and understanding what the project is so there is some idea of cost and magnitude of project so that a private entity will know what we are looking at. Also there will have to be a community outreach but we are right now working with the City and others to try to figure out how we can fund the initial planning effort to make this happen. Based on conversations with the Council there seems to be support to keep moving in this direction. We would like to continue with the Mill/Ash loop in downtown, not the two tracks on Ash, and continue with the Apache/Rio Salado option and include the Mill section south of Apache in the program as a long term opportunity, but it would be an unfunded phase.

Motion: Commissioner Lofgren
Second: Commissioner Cassano
Decision: Approved

Agenda Item 5 – Transit Fund and Proposed FY 2013-14 Program Enhancements and Capital Projects

Presented by Greg Jordan, Deputy Public Works Director – Transit, Public Works and Eric Iwersen, Interim Transportation Planning Manager, Community Development

Greg referred to the handouts in the packet and Robert passed out updated items. A broad overview of the proposed Transit Fund budget and financial status was provided. The primary focus was on the proposed program changes and capital projects for FY 2013-14 as well as the forecast moving forward for improving the program, services and renewing capital projects.

The Transit Fund was in a \$15M structural deficit before the recession and we have transformed the deficit to a \$4.4M surplus going forward. Many of the commissioners were part the process to reduce /restructure services; pull back programs; find new revenues; and identify new ways to be efficient. Greg commended the commissioners as well as Council and City leaders who helped turn the picture around.

The chart presented identified an average 10 year annual surplus of \$4.4M through 2023 in the Transit Program which can be used to enhance Transit programs/services. The proposal presented identified 4 categories in which to use a portion of the surplus for: Service Improvements; Marketing/Outreach; Infrastructure Maintenance; and System Expansion.

Staff's recommendation is to invest more in infrastructure maintenance and asset management as Commission and Council prefer a higher priority be placed on taking care of what we have before we assume new items. Specifically, we are seeking to increase the budget for bus stops and Transit Center cleaning. The request reflects the substantial increase of Transit ridership over last 10 years and internal staffing capacity to handle which was decreased due to attrition 3 years ago. Recently, we have changed our business model and have contracted out the lower skilled bus stop cleaning task so that we could use our higher skilled staff to assist with asset management/maintenance functions across the City. The change was for the best interest of the City financially, but it will also enhance how areas are cleaned and maintained and the public use of facilities.

The proposal includes a modest increase for system expansion, such as new pathways and streetscape projects. This reflects the fact we own a lot of properties and have had a lot of streetscape that was transferred to Transit over the past couple of year previously taken care by other areas of City areas (Park/Transportation Maintenance). The maintenance transfer was due to budget reductions/reorganizational efforts and because the areas were Transit funded at construction.

The Asset Maintenance portion includes taking care of building; bus stop infrastructure and pathways. This is a big dollar amount but reflects the capital asset estimated for the rehab and replacement needs for the capital budget.

Commissioner Roberts asked if there was money in the budget for bus stop improvements for shade. Greg responded by stating there was money under the system expansion category and shared since the beginning of the program we have had many of the shade areas incorporated in the program. The bus pull-outs are about \$120K which results in 1-2 improvements per year. Whereas bus stops are about ten (10) improvements to a site per year which can vary in scope from new sign and bench to a completely new installation; all of which are a part of the program.

Eric has talked a lot about the pathways and streetscape projects over the past couple of meetings. Eric explained the capital cost on the proposal related to projects that already had federal funds attached like El Paso Gas bike path and the 8th Street project and are the cost relating to the match that comes out of the Transit tax. He referred to the

detailed list included in the packet showing ten (10) or so projects. Greg clarified the list only reflect projects that we are requesting new or additional appropriations not the carry forward of old projects.

The last item in the capital budget relates to an upgrade of the Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) capacity at the East Valley Bus Operation & Maintenance (EVBOM) site. This request is being driven in part by the unification of the bus operations between RPTA and Tempe with more CNG buses being based at the site and the need for extra capacity. Another driving factor is that we approved moving our Orbit fleet from gasoline to CNG. We are also pursuing grant funding of about half a million dollar to help with the cost next year.

Commissioner Goronkin asked if there would be any other jurisdictional contributors toward these cost. Greg responded that if we received \$250K in grant funds, the remaining \$250k would be split amongst all the City's that have a service based out of the facility. Tempe's fair share is about 40%.

The Service Improvement portions of the proposal include two modest changes to Route 108, Elliot Road Corridor which was talked about in January. The Map handed out by Robert reflects Route 108 as an underperforming route. Tempe has been waiting for City of Chandler to make a plan change to increase services to match ours which they are doing in July. We believe this change will increase boardings. The Map also reflects a partnership with the Cities of Phoenix and Chandler to replace the current route that goes into Ahwatukee which is Route 56 with Route 108— basically extending Route 108. The Maps also provide employment and population density. The proposal reflects Tempe's portion of the cost of \$140K for the Priest Dr. route 56 extension which would be from Elliot Road to Ray Rd. to the Tempe border (Ray Road and Priest Drive). We believe improvement will optimize bus service and benefit our riders.

Based on past discussions with the Commission regarding bus security, the recent TIM telephone survey, and work with our Police department riders have indicated a desire for enhanced security on the bus system and better lighting at bus stops. Sgt. Jon King of our Police Department (PD) I assist Transit as execute the proposed 1 year security pilot program if it is approved by Council. In general, the program outlines the use of 40 person hours a week of off duty PD staff or Private security to respond to incidents, support presence in the bus and bus stops and perform hot spot analysis. An example report was provided to the commissioners showing the PD reporting possibilities and trends analysis. The program would be a one year pilot project which will be evaluated in one year. Since the next bi-annual survey will not be until 2015 way may want to do some specific surveying with our riders to see if their perception of safety changed.

Commissioner Lofren inquired how hot spots, such as University and Mill would be handled under the proposal. Sgt. King responded by stating PD uses crime analysis to identify hot spots. What we envision with the program is to do the crime analysis to chart the hot spots to look at the times and days that are busiest. The analysis would be based on calls for service to determine busy times for Transit. Goal would be to identify problem locations which could be based on boarding by a presence on the bus with pain cloth detail by surveillance that could result in enforcement if needed. The Transit K-9 officer has showed success with violations relating alcohol and trespassing.

Commissioner Schelstraete shared some police departments are using software that uses log rhythms to predict where crimes may occur and asked if Tempe has the software and if Tempe has applied. Sgt. King replied the data Tempe uses is historical and is able to perform predictive analysis. A lot has to do with Crime trends based on numbers and percentages to predict an area which have been successful; however, we have not done in Transit. We have had about 8,700,000 million boarding last year and the crimes are about 1.25 per 100,000 when combining Part I and II crimes so the system is relatively safe. Perception is almost as important as crime when it comes to safety.

Commissioner Gusz asked if the proposal also includes the Orbit system. Greg responded it would include all the bus system; local buses and the Orbit buses. The light rail has its own security detail and would not be included.

We also evaluated the use of private security; however, we're likely to see better outcomes if we use off-duty PD staff. This proposal will be presented to Council Committee and to the full Council for opinion and approval in the near future.

The proposal for the Marketing and Outreach includes increases driven by the regional fare increase that went into effect this month and to expand our marketing program over the next 10 years. We have scaled back the budget by about \$200K. The Commission has supported our Marketing program and we believe Marketing works as demonstrated by a recent survey response that showed 28% of those asked had a positive perception of the Marketing program that they were exposed as it relates to Transit.

A \$1.2M surplus in the Transit Program will exist if all the proposals were approved by Council. The final document provides concepts for discussion and future considerations on the surplus as it relates to its use or if we want to save it to pay off additional debt. There is no timeframe for these options; they are provided as future concepts to expand the Transit Program and could include additional streetscapes or bike-pedestrian projects, expanding the Orbit system, adding new LINK service on Scottsdale Road, and/or funding extensions of the streetcar system.

Commissioner Roberts expressed the Commission can have a more of a direct impact on streetscape projects and multiuse pathways and would not be opposed to an increase in these areas.

Commissioner Lofgren commented on the expansion using a surplus and potentially having to pull back on a major project like an expansion in the Orbit system. Greg replied by stating that we want to manage the fund conservatively and would never want to put out a project that would put us in a deficit. We will always look out 5 to 10 years making sure we have best assumptions and forecast to avoid getting back into a deficit; definitely not our intention.

Commissioner Schelstraete commented on the historical budget and staff cuts and the positive direction we are headed.

Another option presented was a financial strategy to improve the surplus further by banking a portion of the surplus for at least the next 6 years and then combine with a portion of the fund balance to pay off one of the two remaining bond issues. By doing so, we would increase the surplus at 2020 to \$3.5M. Such a strategy would help the city fund extensions of the streetcar system or other projects.

Commissioner Lofgren stated she agreed with Commissioner Roberts comment to spend more on multiuse path streetscapes.

Commissioner Goronkin asked if there were plans to conduct a survey or analysis of the potential usage of an Orbit service to South Tempe. Greg responded that there has not been a specific survey, but we have heard from the results we received from various public meetings and through the general plan process that the Orbit South Tempe is a priority for some of our residents. However, it is unknown how significant that it is relative to the population.

Commissioner Goronkin also expressed agreement that pathways and streetscapes should be funded to the fullest possible level.

In terms of next steps for FY 2013-14, this information will go to the Council committee next week and to the full Council on March 21st. The final budget workshop will be April 18th when they will tentatively approve the operating and Capital budgets.

Commissioner Goronkin concluded the discussion by stating the presentation was very encouraging.

Agenda Item 6 – Hardy Dr. and University Dr. Streetscape Project

Presented by Eric Iwersen, Interim Transportation Planning Manager, Community Development

Eric referred to the memo and latest project drawings included in the Commission packet. A detail update of the project was provided to the Commission in January. Since then another public meeting was held; we coordinated efforts with business and property owners along corridor; and had a separate meeting with business owners and some Council members. Although there was some opposition, we have worked through them and feel we have a strong project that has a good balance between interest groups, users of the streets, neighbors, individuals who own and operate businesses along corridor. The drawings included in the packet labeled “Preferred Concept” is the final design concept. We anticipate minor changes to this concept and will be moving into construction documents in order to meet the timeline for the federal government grant. Also included in the packet was a memo provided to Council on Friday that gives the background of the project; what we have been working on; what will happen to the street; and the public feedback received. We feel the public feedback shows support/consensus for the project concepts. New drawings will be finished by the end of the month that will be presented to the Commission in April/May. We anticipate the federal funding agreement will be completed by October or November of this year with construction commencing spring of next year.

Commissioner Goronkin inquired about the Broadway Road project. Eric shared there was a good public meeting last Monday night and have some modified drawings presented to the public that were well received.

Robert provided an update regarding the Hardy Drive project. The environmental clearance should be approved by mid-April and we should be able to obligate in June/July with construction in September/October. Eric added that there have been inquiries regarding the construction schedule because these projects do connect, but this information is unknown at this point. In general, we tend to inform the community there may be some lane closures or slight rerouting of street traffic during the construction period.

Commissioner Goronkin was encourage by the status and looked forward to the Broadway project update next month.

Commissioner Lofgren asked who objected to sidewalks improvements. Eric shared there was no real opposition and referred to the varying comments from the public.

Agenda Item 7 – Department and Regional Transportation Updates

Presented by Public Works, Community Development, and Community Relations Staff

Greg shared as part of Tempe-RPTA Bus Operations Unification; the Board of Directors approved the First Transit Contract from January which will start in July.

Agenda Item 8 – Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Goronkin asked if there were future agenda items.

None.

Meeting adjourned at 8:57 a.m.

The Commission's next meeting will be held Tuesday, April 9, 2013 at 7:30 a.m. Don Cassano Community Room at the Tempe Transportation Center, 200 E. 5th St., Tempe, Arizona.