



Minutes City of Tempe Transportation Commission April 8, 2014

Minutes of the Tempe Transportation Commission held on Tuesday, April 8, 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
Aaron Golub
Nikki Gusz
Charles Huellmantel
Sue Lofgren

Kevin Olson
German Piedrahita
Gary Roberts
Peter Schelstraete
Cyndi Streid
Philip Luna
Jeremy Browning

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Ben Goren
Charles Redman

City Staff Present:

Shelly Seyler, Deputy Public Works Director Transportation
Eric Iwersen, Principal Planner
Sue Taaffe, Public Works Supervisor
Mike Nevarez, Transit Manager
Joe Clements, Transportation Financial Analyst
Maja Aurora, Arts Coordinator
Lorenzo Mastino, Community Services Intern

Travis Mullen, Administrative Assistant
Bonnie Richardson, Principal Planner
Julian Dresang, Traffic Engineer
Robert Yabes, Principal Planner
Yvette Mesquita, Senior Management Assistant
Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Program Manager

Guests Present:

Mike Kies, ADOT
Carlos Lopez, ADOT
Matthew Taunton, HDR Inc.

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

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None

Agenda Item 2 – Meeting Minutes

Commission Chair Goronkin introduced the minutes of the March 11, 2014 meeting and asked for a motion.

Motion: Commissioner Charles Huellmantel

Second: Commissioner Don Cassano

Abstained: Commissioner German Piedrahita

Decision: Approved

Agenda Item 3 – Passenger Rail Study (Tucson to Phoenix)

Eric Iwersen, Principal Planner, introduced Mike Kies from Arizona Department of Transportation who presented information on the Passenger Rail Study.

On March 20, 2014, Staff and ADOT presented the project to the Tempe City Council. The Council advised of careful consideration, protection and no negative impact to downtown Tempe neighborhoods and historic/older homes. The first State Rail Plan was completed 2011 and set a Passenger Rail Division for the state.

Mike Kies said that the purpose of the concept of passenger rail between Phoenix and Tucson is to alleviate the growing traffic volumes from the I-10 corridor and traffic to other adjacent metropolitan areas such as southern California. On the map that is included in the packet, the orange area indicates an intercity rail while the red area indicates a commuter rail, and the green arrows are connections to the adjacent metropolitan areas.

The three major projects of the passenger rail study include:

- The alternative analysis contains a process to screen out alternative routes using public involvement and agency input, ultimately to reach a locally preferred alternative for a corridor between Phoenix to Tucson.
- The Environmental Impact Study (EIS) will conduct a tier one analysis to review impacts on local businesses and residences.
- Service Development Plan will examine current transportation corridors in order to implement pieces to the system to reach ultimate service levels.

The study will be completed near the end of 2014.

Starting with seven original corridors, three final alternatives were chosen. Handing out surveys at the State Fair and Tempe Arts Festival produced over 7,000 surveys regarding this project. A major criteria used to narrow down the alternatives was the ridership potential. Over three quarters of the people responded that from Phoenix to Tucson, they would prefer to take a train over all other modes of transportation.

A blended service passenger rail system was chosen as the best economical option to run express and local service on the same corridor tracks. These three final alternatives share a common corridor from Tucson until deviating just north of Pima County where the routes intersect at downtown Phoenix and resume a common corridor to Surprise and Buckeye. The three alternatives include:

- Green Alternative, which would mostly run along Interstate 10 between the two metropolitan areas, and share a portion of the north south Union Pacific Railroad right-of-way as it enters Chandler and Tempe.
- Yellow Alternative, which would utilize Interstate 10 north from Tucson, then Highway 287 connecting to the Southeast Valley cities of Queen Creek, Gilbert, and Chandler before linking to Tempe. This alignment would use both ADOT road systems and the Union Pacific Railroad.
- Orange Alternative, which would also utilize Interstate 10 north from Tucson, then Highway 87 connecting to Mesa Gateway Airport and ultimately to the ADOT system along US60 and the State Routes 101 and 202.

The Orange Alternative shows a station location at the 202 and Scottsdale Road in Tempe. The Yellow and Green Alternatives show station locations in downtown Tempe at 3rd Street & Mill Avenue.

Public comment will be taken until the end of May. The draft of the EIS will be available this fall for public comment to choose the locally preferred alternative. The final EIS, also known as the decision document, will recommend the preferred alternative corridor from Tucson to Phoenix this winter. By the end of this calendar year, the Passenger Rail Study will be completed.

Commissioner Piedrahita asked if the yellow alternative has the best access to the airports and if there will be freight section over-crossing used. Mike responded that both the yellow and orange alternatives would give some type of access to all three airports, although when coordinating with Gateway International Airport, staff does not envision direct access to the airport. The station location would be about half-mile to one mile away using a bus connection. Union Pacific is motivated by two factors; getting additional infrastructure built, and increasing safety by changing at-grade crossings to grade separations and in some locations which have a separate rail 50-feet away from the main freight lines.

Commissioner Huellmantel asked at what location the at-grade crossings would be converted to grade separations in Tempe. He also asked if the corridors can share the track with the streetcar and if the sound pollution would be minimal with our current technology. Mike responded that the only key at-grade crossing that would change is at Rural Road due to the locations high traffic volumes. Sharing with the streetcar and light rail would pose problems due to speed restraints and frequency. The noise would remain minimal because the passenger rail will not use the horn when at crossings similar to the freight trains. Mike added that the sound will be comparable to the existing light rail and will operate around the same time as the light rail. Technology is not considered with this study, and cost estimates will assume diesel technology, but no limitations to technology as of yet.

Commissioner Huellmantel said the map shows the yellow and green alternatives have a stop in downtown Tempe while the orange line does not. Mike responded that the yellow and green corridors are within walking distance to the light rail and the streetcar. The idea with the orange alternative was to promote economic development opportunities north of the Town Lake.

Commissioner Huellmantel asked how a station would be linked with Sky Harbor International Airport. Mike responded that all of the alternatives will have a station at the airport and will be able to reach the 44th Street light rail connection and the Sky Train. However, no station locations are final.

Commission Chair Goronkin asked if there is an economic development opportunity north of the lake and the county island. Eric responded yes, however, the project is at a higher concept level and unfortunately, we don't have all the details.

Mike said that no funding has been identified and once the study is finished, funding will need to be addressed. One way that funding could be obtained is by creating a starter commuter system. A low volume of trains can begin in east valley and end at a potential station stop creating very basic service. Another example could be to start with a commuter system in Tucson and create a low volume corridor to Marana.

Commissioner Jeremy Browning asked what for the projected ridership from Tempe to Tucson. Mike responded that when the whole system is completed from Surprise and Buckeye to Tucson International Airport (TIA), it would move about 3 to 5 million people per year. This projection considers that every person and trip will use the system and follow the corridor without the option of other transportation alternatives. The green alternative is projected to have the lowest ridership volume while the yellow alternative has the highest projected ridership.

Commissioner Browning asked if the EIS will take into account how new construction would impact the houses along the yellow line and the businesses along the orange line. Mike responded that the environmental impact statement

will disclose the issue of property impacts. Commissioner Browning asked if the impacts related to dust will be considered. Mike responded that this is a tier 1 EIS so there will be no specific models of dust or pollution until a later study.

Commissioner Phillip Luna asked if there is a particular area where these trains will be running close to homes. Mike responded that the research for the locations will require funding. The top frequency is projected to be 36 trains a day running the same time as light rail when the system is matured.

Commission Chair Goronkin asked if there are any estimates of the cost for each of these alternatives. Mike responded that estimates range from the low end of \$3 billion to the high end of \$10 billion. The orange alternative is the most expensive while the yellow alternative is the least expensive. This information can also be found on the ADOT website.

Commissioner Nikki Gusz asked how the passengers would travel from the passenger rail to the airport terminals. Mike responded that Sky Harbor would have a direct link to the 44th Street station and the Sky Train. At Gateway the yellow alternative will follow the existing freight rail line along Rittenhouse Road which is a few miles away from the terminal so there will have to be a connection created. The Gateway Airport staff said that the orange alternative was not compatible with the new airport construction plans on the east side of the airport. Mesa has a high density area planned close by named East Mark with mixed use development making that location more practical. There will be a bus connection to and from the airport if that location is chosen. Along Nogales Highway, Tucson International Airport has a preferred location for a station. Airport staff would like to use a people mover for transport from a location centered on Raytheon and other high employee volume businesses to the airport.

Commissioner Aaron Golub said there are concerns that sharing a track with freight could be a disaster. Attempting to balance frequencies and volumes, passenger rail sharing a track with a freight rail produces extremely long wait times in California. He stated that the survey does not ask about costs, does not include proven ridership, and better door to door service could be provided by bus. Mike responded that the bus connection is a perfect way to begin implementation and improve ridership. ADOT has done continuous studies with the I-10 connection between Phoenix and Tucson. All of the studies show that the corridor cannot be widened far enough to meet the future demand of traffic. The motivation is to provide an alternative to I-10 by relieving the congestion on the freeway and promoting passenger train ridership.

Commissioner Gusz asked what the people who commute around Tempe had to say about this project. Carlos Lopez, Arizona Department of Transportation, responded that while the surveys were being taken at the recent Arts Festival, a lot of interest was on the passenger rail system being incorporated into the east and west valley. When these surveys are taken in Tucson the interest was over airport access and downtown Phoenix. Overall there is strong support for the passenger system.

Commission Chair Goronkin thanked the staff for the information and said that she would like to know more as the project continues.

Commissioner Huellmantel said that the green and yellow alternatives are more advantageous because they provide access to downtown Tempe. Commission Chair Goronkin said that she also supports a station location in downtown Tempe because of its economic advantages.

Eric recommended that when ADOT looks further into the environmental impacts they can they provide the Commission with more detailed information about the alignments to aid with decision making.

Commissioner Huellmantel asked if there was anything the Commission can do to support a station in downtown Tempe now. Mike responded that on the ADOT website, there is a public outreach section about the passenger rail where the survey can be taken.

Agenda Item 4 – Transportation Master Plan

Robert Yabes, Principal Planner, introduced Matthew Taunton from HDR Inc. who provided an update and requested input from the Commission on the Transportation Master Plan (TMP).

Matthew said the last Transportation Master Plan was updated in 2008. Many travel patterns have been affected by the impact of the light rail and have changed how people are accessing Tempe. The goal of the Transportation Master Plan is to focus on connections between activity centers and emphasizing priority corridors between these activity centers. Traditionally, the plan looked at each mode of transportation individually. A new approach will look at the roadway network plan, transit network plan, bicycle and pedestrian plan and how they all work together.

The goals and policies that were developed in the Tempe General Plan 2040 will guide the TMP. The proposed land use in the General Plan 2040 will be the basis in preparing the future travel demand in the TMP.

The first step in developing the TMP is to prepare an existing condition analysis. The analysis will document Tempe's current demographics, traffic, transit, and bicycle and pedestrian conditions.

- Existing demographics in Tempe were documented using 2010 Census data. The demographic information is shown based on density as opposed to aggregate numbers. This allows for a better identification of travel markets. Demographic information that was documented includes population, employment, minority households, zero car households, low income, persons with disabilities, populations under 18, and populations over 65. These categories will be used to measure potential travel markets.
- Existing traffic conditions in Tempe will be documented using existing data provided by the city of Tempe, MAG, and ADOT. Traffic volumes, crash data and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) data will be used to locate existing gaps in the system and eventually create an overlay using the street classification map.
- Existing transit ridership in Tempe will be documented using existing data provided by the City of Tempe and Valley Metro. In particular, it will document changes in transit ridership since the last TMP with the implementation of light rail.
- Bicycle and pedestrian information will be the hardest area to collect data for the existing condition analysis. However, MAG is completing a regional bicycle count study and Tempe has better bicycle data than any city in the region because of the counts conducted by Tempe Action Bicycle Group.

After the existing condition analysis has been completed, a gap analysis will then be conducted to search for missing links in the system to determine how well it is functioning. Once identified, the gaps will be compared and correlated to the improvement of corridors. The last part of the analysis will be the creation of two transportation scenarios. The short term scenario will correlate to the year 2020 and will have costs associated with projects, while the long term scenario correlates to the year 2040 and represents the completed project list excluding cost details.

All of these modes of transportation will be looked at together. An overlay of each transportation mode on the map will provide a pattern of important nodes. The goal of this plan is to identify projects that maximize investment where the key modes of travel intersect.

This is the first of three meetings to present the TMP to the Commission. In May, the existing condition report will be submitted and a series of public meetings will take place on May 29 and May 31 with another round of public

meetings in August. After those meetings, the Commission will have some items with possible actions to consider. The city of Tempe will also post information on the website including the survey beginning May 1 that will correlate to the items that were discussed today. In October, the plan will be completed and taken to the City Council for approval.

Commissioner Sue Lofgren asked if the demographic identification overlay showed a particular area that stands out from the rest. Matthew responded that by overlaying the demographics there are some key nodes such as downtown Tempe and along the light rail corridor showed high concentration of population, low income, and zero car households.

Commissioner Huellmantel asked during the next meeting a video could be shown about how Boulder, Colorado made bike highways. He stated that we may not be able to begin those types of highways now, but we will never get there in the long term unless we start to include changes now. Matthew responded that there will be a focus on bicycle boulevards, which is a network of bicycle connections with low volume traffic street and be able to connect to different activities.

Agenda Item 5 – Tempe BIKEiT – Wayfinding Public Art Project

Maja Aurora, Arts Coordinator, presented the public art concepts for the citywide bicycle system Wayfinding and branding project.

Maja explained that Cultural Services hired an artist through a selection process to design the signage of the Wayfinding project. The concept is to start with four bike boulevards and potentially expand the system. The concept is to use the most identifiable parts on a bike to identify the system and create a map of the bike boulevards. The designs are still in the preliminary stage and will be finalized at a later date. This project will be incorporated this into the Transportation Master Plan and will also be seen by the Tempe Municipal Arts Commission.

Commissioner Cassano asked if a whole picture of a bicycle was considered as a way of identifying the boulevards. Maja responded that the Wayfinding concept requires multiple labels to identify the routes, which in this case are bicycle parts. If particular types of bicycles were implemented, some styles could be perceived as preferred routes. Sue Taaffe added that staff talked about different types of bikes, but they are more limited in number compared to bike parts.

Commissioner Browning asked if the name of the route would be added to the signage. Sue responded, yes that it would be called the name of the part with the image. The long term goal would have the part name of the connecting route, how many miles, and where that route ends on the signs.

Commissioner Piedrahita asked if there are other themes suggested besides bike parts. Maja responded that those were the only two themes considered for this project.

Commissioner Gary Roberts suggested that directional signs be implemented in the future for routes that may veer off. Staff explained that would be part of Phase II.

Agenda Item 6 – El Paso Gasline Multi-Use Path Public Art

Maja Aurora, Arts Coordinator, provided an update of the public art concepts for the El Paso Gasline Multiuse Path project.

Maja said that Chris Trumbel had originally been commissioned to create the public art for the University Drive Streetscape project. However, based on his design concept, staff in conjunction with the Tempe Municipal Arts

Commission and the original selection panel, moved his design concepts from the University Drive project to the El Paso project near Kiwanis Park by Aguilar Elementary School, which connects to Rural Road. His design includes pedestrian tracings of footprints doing a variety of activities that lead the pedestrian down the sidewalk. New concrete will be installed as part of this project. The designs will be sandblasted into the sidewalk making it a permanent feature.

Eric said that the public art will be installed as part of the construction of the project which will start near the end of 2014 or early 2015 and will be installed by the summer of 2015.

Agenda Item 7 – University Drive Streetscape Public Art

Maja Aurora, Arts Coordinator, provided an update of the public art concepts for the University Drive streetscape project.

Maja said that the original artist selection panel had chosen Jason Griffiths as the alternate artist for the Streetscape projects. Jason Griffiths, a professor at ASU, has a concept that is inspired by the change of the environment and the modifications in homes and concentration of density. Two sculptures will form a home as a complete set. One half will be located east of Priest Drive and the other will be between Farmer and Wilson.

Commissioner Piedrahita commented that the sculptures look fun to climb and asked if there is any way to prevent that. Maja responded that the sculpture will be as high as possible, located in the median of the road, and prickly pear cacti and agave plants will be at the base of the structure.

Commissioner Golub asked if people manage to climb it anyway, will the structure be able to support the weight. Eric responded that it is structurally engineered to handle wind gusts with a solid structure.

Commissioner Browning asked if the \$24,000 was coming from the Municipal Arts Fund to create this project. Maja responded that it was.

Agenda Item 8 – Downtown Parking Strategic Plan report back

Commissioner Charles Huellmantel and Commissioner Cyndi Streid provided an update of the Downtown Parking Strategic Plan meeting.

Commissioner Huellmantel said that the meeting was about compiling information from the community regarding vehicle and bicycle parking. Commissioner Gusz added that some business owners attended to express ideas and concerns. The questions that were asked related to the parking changes that could impact their customers and employees on a daily basis. Commissioner Cyndi Streid said that skateboard parking was included in the meeting.

Eric said that this topic will be presented to the Commission when there is a draft plan along with a draft of the 5th Street Streetscape project.

Commissioner Piedrahita asked if the goal of the meeting was to add more or less parking. Commissioner Huellmantel responded that the meeting was analyzing what the long term need for parking is and what are creative ways to adjust for the increase as demand increases.

Agenda Item 9 – Department and Regional Transportation Updates

None

Agenda Item 10 – Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Browning asked if the long range forecast of the HURF funds was available. Shelly responded that most of the HURF fund goes to operational costs. However, she will update the Commission at the May meeting.

The Commission's next meeting is scheduled for May 13, 2014.

Meeting adjourned at 8:50 a.m.

Prepared by: Travis Mullen

Reviewed by: Sue Taaffe