



## Minutes

### Tempe South Corridor Study – Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee

#### June 23, 2010

Minutes of the Tempe South Corridor Study – Ad-Hoc Advisory Committee held on Wednesday, June 23, 2010 at 4:00 p.m. at the City of Tempe Community Development Orchid 2 Conference room, 21 East Sixth Street, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Tempe, Arizona.

**Members Present:** Charles Huellmantel, Chair; Karyn Gitlis, Maple Ash; Nancy Hormann, Downtown Tempe Community); Charles Lee, resident; Lisa Roach, Clark Park

**Members Absent:** Paul Kent, University Park

**Guests:** Vice Mayor Shana Ellis, Tempe; Wulf Grote, METRO; Carla Kahn, METRO; Howard Steere, METRO

**City Staff Present:** Dawn M. Coomer, Greg Jordan, Jyme Sue McLaren, Amanda Nelson, Decima Sever, Shauna Warner

***Chair Huellmantel called the meeting to order at 4:07 p.m.***

#### **Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and introductions**

Committee members and other meeting attendees introduced themselves.

#### **Agenda Item 3 – Project overview and schedule**

This agenda item was taken out of order. Wulf Grote presented information on the Tempe South Corridor Study. METRO will be implementing a 57-mile high capacity transit (HCT) system over the next 20 years. A primary revenue source in the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) is the Proposition 400 half-cent sales tax approved by voters in 2004. When the Tempe South Corridor Study was initiated, a decision was made to include two RTP projects: a BRT corridor on Rural Road and a HCT extension. Due to declining revenues, funding for BRT has been postponed to beyond 2026.

There are different travel characteristics in the project study area. Due to these differences in the study area, multiple transportation solutions are required. Further study of commuter rail is recommended in coordination with MAG and Arizona Department of Transportation. BRT on Rural is unfunded but recommended for advancement as funding becomes available.

Chair Huellmantel asked if Chandler had BRT chosen to have their BRT investment further east, and Mr. Grote responded that BRT is scheduled for implementation along Arizona Avenue next year and will connect to the light rail line.

Ms. Hormann asked why BRT funding was postponed. Mr. Grote responded that there were extensive regional discussions over the last year on how to address the Proposition 400 funding shortfall. Cities determined that super grid service was deemed a higher priority; BRT was an overlay and was deferred by the Valley Metro Board of Directors.

Continuing on, Mr. Grote stated that phase 1 of modern streetcar along Mill Avenue from Rio Salado Parkway to Southern is the current focus and has capital funding in the RTP. Future extensions to the system are possible. Mr. Grote described the characteristics of modern streetcar and an option that could be studied in the downtown area along Ash Avenue between University and Rio Salado Parkway. Portland is an example of a successful modern streetcar system. More information on modern streetcar systems can be shared at future meetings, and Chair

Huellmantel noted that this committee should discuss what other cities have done and the benefits of modern streetcars.

With regard to the potential Ash alignment, Mr. Grote stated that future council direction will be sought. A variety of opinions have been provided but no analysis conducted. Chair Huellmantel noted that facts, benefits and drawbacks of the options should be discussed by this committee. This committee will want to make informed decisions related to the project.

Mr. Grote responded that this analysis was just beginning and it could potentially be shared at the committee's next meeting, depending on the meeting date. Mr. Grote showed possible cross-sections of the modern streetcar on Mill Avenue, noting that additional analysis is needed. Ms. Hormann asked if there would be any analysis of removing the median. Mr. Grote responded that could be examined, and Chair Huellmantel stated that this committee will want to ask questions for METRO to consider. These issues can be discussed at future meetings.

Mr. Grote showed a ridership projection of 1,100 to 1,600 which compares to 800 current riders in the corridor. These numbers do not include special events or land use changes so ridership is expected to increase. The team has also analyzed land use and economic development in the corridor. The federal government is emphasizing these factors in funding projects. The benefit-cost analysis shows a positive return on public investment of 1.3.

Chair Huellmantel noted that this committee will also discuss community benefits as well as economic benefits. Mr. Grote continued by showing a map of approved redevelopments and redevelopment opportunities. Mr. Grote noted that the federal government has shifted its recent focus from cost-effectiveness to also include community benefits in evaluating transportation projects. Cost-effectiveness is considered one-third of the evaluation, with land use and economic development as the remaining two-thirds. Approximately \$75 million will be sought from the federal government from the Small Starts program. Ms. Hormann asked about the timing of the Small Starts funds, and Mr. Grote responded that these amounts are reauthorized annually. Chair Huellmantel noted it would be helpful to have information on reauthorization and funding as these items progress at the federal level.

Mr. Grote continued by describing the capital and operations funding for the project and summarized key reasons to advance a modern streetcar project and noted that approximately 40 percent of LRT users have never used transit before. Additional information on the project schedule was deferred to later in the meeting.

#### **Agenda Item 2 – Overview of the committee roles, responsibilities and mission**

Chair Huellmantel invited Vice Mayor Ellis to address the committee. She explained that Council supports the modern streetcar project and distributed a copy of resolution 2010.59 to committee members. With a better understanding of changes to costs and funding, the Council wanted to reaffirm their support for the project. The resolution was passed unanimously. Vice Mayor Ellis voiced her appreciation for those serving on the committee.

Chair Huellmantel noted that many downtown neighborhoods and the Transportation Commission were represented on this committee. The committee will meet on Wednesdays in the City Council Chambers. The committee will examine primarily streetcar issues and provide thoughtful recommendations to council.

#### **Agenda Item 4 – Provide schedule of initial meetings and hearings**

Mr. Grote explained the federal process and key approval points for Small Starts funding. Over the next few months, presenting results of technical analysis will continue. Study recommendations will be presented in late September. Potentially the city council would act in October. Then, a recommendation and vote would be required by regional bodies (Maricopa Association of Governments and METRO) before the project is submitted to the FTA.

Chair Huellmantel noted that the project schedule handout can be discussed at future meetings and opened the meeting to committee comments. Committee members shared their thoughts and expressed enthusiasm for the upcoming work of the committee, the success of the LRT system and anticipated benefits of the modern streetcar.

Chair Huellmantel noted that Ms. Coomer will provide information on the next meeting date to committee members. Ms. Coomer stated that the Council Chambers have been reserved for July 14 from 4:00 to 5:30 for the next meeting, and future dates are still being scheduled.

**Agenda Item 5 – Public comment**

There were no public appearances.

The meeting adjourned at 5:00 p.m.

Prepared by: Dawn M. Coomer

Reviewed by: Jyme Sue McLaren