



Minutes Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group January 24, 2011

Meeting of the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group was held on January 24, 2011, 5:05 PM at the Don Cassano Community Room of the Tempe Transportation Center, 117 E 5th St., Tempe, Arizona.

Members Present:

Shana Ellis, Chair
Mark Yslas
Mike Wasko
Manjula Vaz
David Strang
Janie Shelton
Bob Gasser
Paul Kent
Sam Wheeler
Steve Tyree
Rebecka Johnson
Cheryl Hornyman
Nancy Hormann
Karyn Gitlis
Lisa Roach
Charles Lee
Charles Huellmantel
Mike DiDomenico

Members Absent:

MaryAnn Miller
Frank Granillo
Stephanie Nowack

Guests Present:

Chuck Newkirk
Dale Larson

METRO Staff & Consultants Present:

Marc Soronson
Steve Banta
Wulf Grote
Ben Limmer
Carla Kahn
Harvey Estrada
Lisa Procknow
Stephanie Shipp
Howard Steere
Hillary Foose
Rick Nannenga
Gabe Grijalva
Tad Savinar
Angela Dye
Joe Racosky
Saroja Devarakonda
Rick Nannenga

City Staff Present:

Jyme Sue McLaren
Nancy Ryan
Eric Iwersen
Robert Yabes
Shauna Warner
Charlie Meyer

Shana Ellis called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

Chairperson Ellis welcomed the members to the first meeting of the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group (CWG). She asked CWG to introduce themselves and identify their affiliations within the community.

Agenda Item 2 – Public Appearances

There were no public appearances.

Agenda Item 3 – Presentation on the Committee Process

Chairperson Ellis turned the presentation over to Nancy Ryan.

- 1) Nancy identified the 4th Monday each month as meeting schedule, the regular email or mail delivery of the CWG agenda packet on the 3rd Thursday before the meeting. Nancy reviewed the building elevator and restroom access, as well as arrangements for parking.
- 2) Nancy shared the restrictions and requirements of the CWG in complying with Open Meeting Law. She emphasized the importance of a quorum for each meeting and thanked the members for their responses that ensured a quorum for tonight's meeting.
- 3) Nancy reviewed the handout materials in the packet for each CWG member.

Agenda Item 4 – Goals and Objectives of the Community Working Group

Marc Soronson welcomed the members to the first meeting of the CWG.

Marc said that METRO has developed a conceptual alignment to get to this point, but is asking for assistance from the CWG to make refinements to the station location, track location, traffic, and details to include what works best for the community. The CWG should find what works best in concert with goals like serving activity centers, economic development, special events (ASU & downtown). This is a collective effort and extensive resources are available for this project and many of the staff resources were present at the meeting. To show the extent of support available to this process Marc initiated self-introduction of METRO staff, the Consultant Team and additional City of Tempe staff.

Marc initiated description of the CWG mission. A conceptual design of the alignment of the streetcar was placed on the wall. He said that many small issues will have an impact on the project and it is the job of the CWG to work through those issues. This project needs to work for the long term benefit of Tempe, downtown business and the community. This is the first streetcar project that METRO has undertaken and it is quite different than light rail.

Marc said the committee's work including the CWG mission is to address issues of: track location; stop locations; traffic lane configuration; off-street parking; bike/pedestrian configuration; power substations, and urban design guidelines.

Tad Savinar explained the development of the urban design guidelines, which is a parallel process. The urban design guidelines will be brought to the CWG as a draft in May 2011 and then as a final document in a subsequent meeting. The design guidelines steer the designers of

the project in the design and engineering phase. It will address how the streetcar will operate differently along different portions of the alignment. The guidelines are for the Tempe streetcar, but could have some replication for any future expansions of streetcar into other communities.

Marc stated that the CWG will not address issues including the alignment which was approved by the Tempe City Council; the choice of technology; public art (will come later in the process) and utility location or relocation. The streetcar project is not here to redesign or implement improvements along Mill Ave. This includes the sidewalks leading to the stops. An additional factor that will not be considered by the CWG is the location of the maintenance facility. METRO has determined to use the LRT maintenance facility for the Tempe Streetcar project.

Marc explained that the intent of the CWG is to try to achieve consensus by giving as much information as possible including the pros and cons of issues. Also, it is recognized that there may be a difference of opinion between the staff and the CWG. Ultimately the community and technical issues will be going to City Council for approval.

Marc invited Steve Banta, CEO of METRO to say a few words to the CWG. Steve thanked the CWG members for volunteering to work on this project. He noted that the Tempe streetcar is a regional asset, but with a local flavor. He reiterated the intent of the CWG is to get comments and concerns before the design and construction of the streetcar. Marc then emphasized the need for passionate discussion of the issues.

There were no questions about the Goals and Objectives.

Agenda Item 5 – Overview of Tempe Streetcar

Marc said that the information in the overview is intended to bring all the members to a level playing field for the current work to date on the project. Marc then showed the 57-mile network of high capacity transit that METRO is charged to build, operate and maintain. The Tempe streetcar is part of this network and is scheduled to be completed in 2016. The Tempe South area includes two projects approved by the METRO Regional Council and the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) Directors. The first is the 2.6-mile modern streetcar project, and the second is the unfunded, but approved Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) corridor that would operate along Rural Road. The focus of the CWG is to help advance the modern streetcar project.

Marc posed the question – What is a modern streetcar? Only three streetcars are in operation in the US in Tacoma, WA, Portland, OR and Seattle, WA, with an additional 30 projects in a planning stage similar to Tempe around the country. Vehicle options are currently limited, with Oregon Ironworks being the only North American company to manufacture a streetcar. Other international manufacturers are currently assessing entering the US market. Buy America provisions requiring agencies or project sponsors to purchase American made vehicles and project components, is a large issue for the FTA. Right now the only vehicle that meets Buy America is the one from Oregon Ironworks. Marc described the vehicle specification and noted that streetcars are designed for shorter trips, rather than longer trips like light rail.

Marc explained that there are differences between the stops for LRT and streetcars. Streetcar stops are more like bus stops; shorter in length and with fewer amenities. Tracks are placed in the general purpose traffic lane or turn lane. Marc noted that counts for cars, pedestrians and

bicyclists are scheduled to be taken January 25 – 27th. Streetcar projects are also different from light rail because, track construction will not tear up the whole street, but focus only where the track needs to be placed. We are looking closely at the location and potential for displacement of utilities in order to minimize disruption during track construction.

Marc Soronson called on CWG member Mike Wasko

- Mike Wasko asked if they selected a battery powered vehicle, would overhead wires be needed?
Marc answered that the proposed Kinkisharyo vehicle would operate on battery power for about one mile and then recharges when it reaches the overhead wires. However, that vehicle is not operating anywhere in revenue service. Steve Banta added that Kinkisharyo has to prove their streetcar in the marketplace and that has not been done. Mike Wasko stated that he heard that Charlotte is looking at the Kawasaki streetcar and that it is battery powered. Steve Banta replied that the Kinkisharyo car which he recently viewed is supposed to be able to run 2 to 3 miles by battery. Steve said he was not aware of the Kawasaki vehicle. Marc said that METRO is considering a roundtable to invite all the streetcar manufacturers to share their information with METRO. Each vehicle is a little different, and can make a difference in the design of the stop. The technology is advancing rapidly with those vehicles. Any information gained by METRO staff will be passed to the CWG.
- Mike asked how many power stations are needed?
Marc replied three, with one at each end and one somewhere in the middle.
- Mike asked could the LRT power substation at First and Ash be used?
Marc responded that it cannot be used but we are exploring the possibility of one next to it for the streetcar if there is enough room.

Marc said that there is parking on Mill Avenue now and the concept shown on the wall places the track in the parking lane on the east side of Mill Avenue. Marc said bike treatments are something we want to carefully evaluate. There is no one design that works better than others, but there many designs to interface the bike lanes with the track and sidewalks. Crosswalks could be signalized in areas, depending on the environment. Marc continued by stating that there has been lots of emphasis with streetcars as an economic development tool. The idea of the streetcar as an economic development tool was a consideration when choosing the Mill/Ash loop alignment.

Marc referred to the map on the wall to describe the potential locations of track along the entire route. METRO expects that only in a limited section there could be a need for right-of-way. This right of way would be to accommodate bike lanes behind the streetcar stop. The “Y” in the intersection of Mill and University could allow streetcars to be diverted east and northbound on Ash during some special events. This “Y” also enables the potential for future operations along Rio Salado Parkway to the east and connection to the Tempe Center for the Arts to the west.

Marc stated that the estimated ridership is 1100 to 1600 riders per day. This alternative assumes a reconfigured bus network to optimize the operational cost of bus services in the streetcar corridor. The current program capital cost is estimated at \$160 million in year of expenditure dollars and will be funded by Tempe’s portion of the Prop 400 funds from the regional sales tax as well as Federal Small Starts funds. For operating costs, METRO is

working with Tempe to develop the budget for an affordable project. Operation funds are the responsibility of the City of Tempe.

As far as the project milestones, Marc said, the Alternatives Analysis has been completed with the next step being to submit an application to enter Project Development to FTA. In addition, METRO will be preparing an Environmental Assessment (NEPA) to evaluate potential impacts from the streetcar project. The largest potential impact issues identified so far are: noise, vibration, and traffic. Once the planning and environmental work is complete, METRO will hire a design consultant to carry the project through engineering and into construction. Intent is to have the project open by early 2017.

FTA Small Starts program outlines the criteria a project must meet in order to be considered for federal funding. METRO will submit an application to enter Project Development in the spring of 2011 and will be seeking \$75 million in funds from the Small Starts program.

Marc called upon Sam Wheeler.

- Sam asked: how long did it take to get the Tucson project approved?
 - Marc replied that the Tucson project was funded as a New Starts Exempt project making it eligible to receive up to \$25 million of New Starts participation. City of Tucson was also awarded \$63 million from a TIGER (Economic Stimulus) grant through USDOT projects meeting a certain criteria. Portland is the only modern streetcar project that has been approved to enter the Small Starts program.

Marc said one of the two criteria to enter into FTA's Project Development process is project justification, which includes cost effectiveness, land use, and economic development and is 50% of the criteria weight. The other is Local Financial Commitment that is the other 50% of the project's overall rating. Regardless of how the project is rated for project justification, if the local financial commitment is missing the project will not advance. Time is being spent working with the City to make sure that there is a sound financial plan. The economic development and land use components have merit in Tempe.

Marc asked for any questions. None were offered.

Agenda Item 6 – Community Working Group Discussion

Marc said that this is the time to open up discussion for any topics that the working group may have about the presentation or project. Are there certain things people want to get out this?

Nancy Ryan suggested that the group help identify any issues that are important to individual members, their constituents, business or group. The following issues were identified:

- Mike DiDomenico asked why fixed track rather than rubber wheel as it relates to the bike crossing issues and what is the advantage?

Marc replied that the fixed track type system attracts new and different riders than a bus. An example is the increase in LRT use by ASU students through the U-Pass. Wulf noted that METRO'S survey shows that 40% to 50% of the light rail riders have never taken a bus. Mike Wasko said, so it's not a better technology but better image and user friendly. Marc added that it's a more attractive product for someone to consider transit. The permanence of tracks in

the ground will produce development commitment where a bus system will not. Marc said that some of the goals of this project are to build ridership, connect the dots with service, and preserve Tempe neighborhoods, providing community development opportunities, reinforcing the downtown, serving students at Tempe High or ASU. Shana Ellis added the initial cost may be more for streetcar but the streetcar vehicles last 30 years vs. busses are replaced ever 7 to 9 years. Steve Tyree added: "when family or friends come to visit I say let me show you our bus system, but we always say that you've got to go ride the light rail." Steve continued saying it's a tourist attraction. Marc added that the purchase of the office building at 3rd and Mill by Vulcan was strongly influenced by the light rail and potential for streetcar, and that real estate purchase was the company's first outside Seattle. Ted Savinar shared that the streetcar in Portland was a game changer because its speed and large windows share observation and a relationship with activities and people on the street. It's a social element to the environment. Ted said that he spoke with Mark Vinson from Tempe today and discussed how Mill Avenue could be energized with something that activates the street a little bit more.

- Karyn Gitlis noted that her neighborhood is by the corner of Mill and University, and that the issues of most concern are impact from traffic and how it could be diverted through the (sic. Maple/Ash) residential neighborhood and impact to historic homes (and potential historic homes) along Mill Avenue?

Marc said the Environmental Assessment process will have to address historic properties, eligible historic properties and coordinate that information collection and documentation effort with the State Historic Preservation officer and the City's Historic Preservation Officer. It was noted that visual impacts will be studied by METRO, and if you have specific concerns about properties, it is possible to make this an agenda item for a future meeting. Traffic is also a concern. The City has made extensive efforts at traffic calming in the Maple-Ash neighborhood to discourage cut-through. It is a goal of the City to ensure that the neighborhoods can use the system too. Karyn added that there are three historic or potential historic homes along Mill Ave adjacent to the alignment. Marc noted that individual historic homes and historic neighborhoods would be evaluated for impacts.

- Nancy Hormann asked that when the Pros and Cons of the project are identified, that it should include taking or not taking away the parking lanes. Nancy cited the comment made by staff that Mill Avenue parking can be relocated to 5th Street. However, she noted there is not a lack of parking in downtown. She went on to say there is a parking perception problem in Downtown and by taking away the parking spaces it adds to that perception. If leaving parking is not doable, then it is important to give those answers to the property owners.

Marc responded that it relates to where the track should be located, and the specifics of track location are not set. The track is conceptually shown on the east edge because it avoids some of the major utility lines that run along Mill Avenue. Additionally, for special events it maximizes the event area on Mill. Nancy Hormann questioned that if there is an event the streetcar is not running? Marc replied that it may or may not run on Mill during an event. Information will be provided on those issues at later meetings in order to help reach a consensus

on those details. If the track is in the northbound lane, you would have to have a curb bulb come out at the stops which may result in lost parking. These options will be laid out graphically so CWG members may see how that works. COT staff understands that DTC has a big stake in that issue.

- Steve Tyree said that another issue will be for property owners that have business parking lots along Mill, where they are not usually where masses of people will park. But when there is a big event it will make it easy for those parking lots to be full. Shana Ellis added that parking impacts on the adjacent neighborhoods are another aspect of that.
- David Strang commented that he would like more detailed economic development information presented when available. Where Portland is identified as a model for economic development because of the streetcar, share what is happening there and any residential development that has occurred. David noted that he thought in Portland there are developers that will not develop more than two blocks away from the streetcar. Marc noted that the Seattle experience is different from Portland, whereas Portland is more residential and Seattle has Amazon offices developing along the streetcar.
- Sam Wheeler shared with the group that now we have the light rail experience and can learn a lot from the data we have. ASU has not had to build a lot of (parking) structures because developers have built apartments along Apache and save us from having to do more parking. We have a community that is starting to embrace the system.
- Mark Yslas explained that the High School sees the streetcar project as a great way to recruit students – athletes and "A" students using transit to get to high school. Mark added that he anticipates that he will be working with someone on the details and timeline of implementation during construction (in front of the school).

Wulf explained the process after project definition and into the final design phase. The Community will participate with comments during that design at 30%, 60%, and 90% design and at the 100% you will be able to see details of what we are actually going to build. If you have an interest in the design, METRO encourages engagement. Project staff will make every effort to keep the community actively engaged by having one-on-one meetings with those interested along the alignment as the project moves forward. It is important to City staff to maintain communication and be good neighbors during this entire project. Howard Steere added that during the construction phase, METRO assembles members to be part of the conversation during the actual construction. There is a coordination effort that occurs with the construction contractor and the community to make information available on when activities will occur. Besides the efforts of this CWG, there is a lengthy process to insure the community, residents and business remain involved and aware of any potential impacts.
- Shana Ellis highlighted that the contact information for Nancy Ryan is at the top of the roster and for the next few weeks feel free to email or call with issues so they can make sure the agendas are addressing your issues.

Agenda Item 7 – Future Meeting Date

Nancy Ryan noted that the next meeting will be on February 28th, 5pm to 7pm here at the Don Cassano Community Room.

Meeting adjourned at 6:55 PM

Prepared by: Nancy Ryan

Reviewed by: Jyme Sue McLaren

Nancy Ryan
Community Development