
Minutes
Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group
June 27, 2011

Meeting of the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group was held on June 27, 2011, 5:00 PM at the Don Cassano Community Room of the Tempe Transportation Center, 200 E 5th St., Tempe, Arizona.

Members Present:

Shana Ellis, Chair
Mike Wasko
Janie Shelton
Rebecka Johnson
Cheryl Hornyan
Nancy Hormann
Karyn Gitlis
Lisa Roach
Charles Lee
Charles Huellmantel
Mary Ann Miller
Michael DiDomenico
Bob Gasser
Manjula Vaz

Members Absent:

Mark Yslas
Sam Wheeler
David Strang
Paul Kent
Steve Tyree
Margaret Hunnicutt
Frank Granillo
Chuck Newkirk
Stephanie Nowack
Dale Larson

METRO Staff & Consultants Present:

Marc Soronson
Ben Limmer
Carla Kahn
Howard Steere
Tad Savinar
Angela Dye
Deron Lozano
Lisa Procknow
Wulf Grote
Joe Racosky
MB Finnerty
Alec More

City Staff Present:

Jyme Sue McLaren
Nancy Ryan
Shelly Seyler
Cathy Hollow
Bonnie Richardson
Greg Jordan
Maja Aurora
Tara Costella
Shauna Warner
Lisa Collins
Gregg Kent

Chairperson Ellis called the meeting to order at 5:14 PM.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

Chairperson Ellis welcomed the members to the meeting and asked that the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group (CWG) members, staff and audience members to introduce themselves. Chairperson Ellis announced that Dale Larson is no longer with Tempe St Luke's Hospital and would not be returning to the CWG.

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Minutes from May 23, 2011

Chairperson Ellis called for the review and approval of CWG minutes from May 23, 2011. A correction was made by Karen Gitlis. Nancy Hormann made the motion to approve the minutes with the corrections noted and Lisa Roach seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances

There were no requests to speak during the public appearances.

Agenda Item 4 – Track Configuration and Stop Location Recommendations

Chairperson Ellis turned the discussion over to Marc Soronson.

Marc Soronson said that tonight they would go through the staff recommendations, and hope to reach some agreement. Marc presented a diagram that was to provide an understanding of what could happen with the shared through lane operation of the streetcar and how it could allow the expansion of the sidewalk area in the future. The diagram showed on-street parking with a future expansion of the curb in a dashed line to how the sidewalk could expand. Marc said it could allow an additional eight to ten feet without any change to the location of the track (of the shared through lane option).

Marc Soronson noted that at the last meeting there was a discussion about whether the CWG was able to make written comments about track location and stops especially for those that did not speak out. Marc said that later in the meeting METRO will provide a questionnaire for the CWG members to fill out after the presentation is complete. He said that METRO will collect the survey and share the results at the Wrap Up portion of the meeting.

Marc Soronson described the staff's recommendations for right lane running track location from Southern to 13th Street on Mill Ave. He said that it would be the same as the traffic operates on Mill Avenue (with busses), and stops would be curbside, with stops to move out to meet the streetcar and the bicycle lane routed behind the stop. Marc continued noting aspects of this were:

- Easy passenger access.
- Consistency with the curb lane operation of busses on Mill.
- Sidewalk reconstruction needed, but less compared to the downtown area and no matter where the tracks are placed in this segment of Mill there will be some utility conflicts.

Marc Soronson noted that the left lane operation was not recommended. He asked if there were any questions on the recommendation. No questions were asked.

Marc Soronson said that the segment between 13th Street and University is showing the general track location but the project team needs to continue to work through the location as it will be technical choices on how the track will work because of all the utilities in this area. METRO does want the CWG to make recommendations on the stops in this area.

Marc Soronson said that in the Mill Avenue downtown area, staff is recommending the shared through lane option. Marc said that it would include a landscape median in center, one shared through lane for traffic and streetcar, bicycle lane to the right of the tracks and then parking against the curb. He continued noting aspects of this were:

- On-street parking would be reduced at locations of stops, but less than the curb lane operation.
- Consistency with the operation of busses on Mill.
- Preservation of the sidewalks and future flexibility to expand the sidewalks because the track can remain in the same street location.
- Results in a minor traffic impact and through this stretch, with slight reduction in streetcar travel time for this small distance.
- Less flexibility with special events (on Mill).

Marc Soronson shared some photographs from Portland and Seattle of streetcar in the shared through lane and curb lane locations, shared use of a platform with a bus, streetcar platform extended from the sidewalk, streetcar platform altering the sidewalk, bike lane routing around the platform, and grade change for ADA access to streetcar. Marc noted that the curb lane operation was not recommended. He asked if there were any questions on the recommendation.

Mike Wasko asked if there would have to be rails where the bike lane goes behind the platform. Marc Soronson responded that it depends how you do it, and continued saying that it is more of a design detail, and he would not like to get hung up on whether the bike lane remains at grade or as separate ramp up.

Marc Soronson said Ash Avenue was originally thought to be an easier area to design than Mill, but as more details were known it's required more analysis including the issue of parking and bike lanes. Marc said the location of the track was important to determine the parking and bike lane and that one desire was flexibility to operate (the streetcar) in the north and southbound direction during events. Marc noted that the recommendation for Ash Avenue was to have a curb lane operation, because there are not many locations that require a right turn on Ash, it is expected to work. Marc continued to say that because of the right turns, METRO suggests to leave the bike lane location flexible as METRO works with the Tempe staff to understand where the bike lane goes. He emphasized that what matters is whether the streetcar is in the right lane or the shared through lane.

Marc Soronson said along Ash Avenue, staff recommends the curb lane location. He continued noting aspects of this were:

- Curb lane platforms will have access from the sidewalk.
- Able to replace parking spaces on the east side of Ash Avenue, while maintaining the curb where it is.

Marc noted that the staff was not recommending the shared through lane operation on Ash.

Mary Ann Miller asked why it's recommended for a shared lane operation everywhere else but along Ash Avenue. Marc noted it would be shared for right turn only but not through. Mary Ann asked if people can drive behind the streetcar every place else but on Ash would that be confusing. Marc said it could be a through lane, but it does not have as much traffic and with low traffic volumes it is not needed as a through lane, but could operate as a shared through and right turn lane (for vehicles). Mary Ann emphasized that to keep it simpler for people the better.

Marc opened up the discussion about streetcar stop locations highlighting the original and revised stop location ideas taken from the CWG. He noted the recommendation for Southern to 13th Street was a hybrid of comments taken from the CWG especially in the area of Del Rio Drive, for neighborhood, Parkway Place for hospital access, and at Broadmor for the disabled access from the nearby housing complex. Marc added that the recommended stop location map included a defined stop location at the Broadway intersection

Marc Soronson directed the discussion to the area between 13th Street and Rio Salado Parkway for Mill Avenue and the Ash Avenue loop. Marc highlighted recommended stop locations at:

- Parkway Place/Mill for access to Tempe St. Luke's Hospital
- 11th Street/Mill for access to the ASU Gammage and the Art Gallery
- 9th Street/Mill for access to classrooms and other areas near ASU
- 6th Street/Mill (north of 6th) for downtown and in a location that retained the most parking
- 3rd Street/Mill (north of 3rd) for a transition to reduce need for extra signal phase at Rio Salado Parkway.
- Rio Salado Parkway for access to the neighborhoods from west and east. An earlier comment suggested moving the 3rd street stop closer to Hayden Ferry Lakeside, but the current recommendation tries to accommodate concerns for both neighborhoods and places the stop midday between Mill and Ash on Rio Salado Parkway. The stop can fit between two left turn bays.
- 3rd Street/Ash for another connection close to the light rail station
- 5th Street/Ash for access to downtown right by the Marriott Courtyard
- Ash and University (north of University)

Marc Soronson said that the same number of stops are maintained to keep the cost estimate the same, stop spacing was adjusted to provide maximum access to the activity centers, the locations preserve as much parking as possible, locations are consistent with traffic operations, and stop locations that maximize development opportunities throughout the 2.6 miles. Marc noted the focus areas that require additional design consideration are Ash Avenue bicycle configuration and the 13th Street to University Drive transition of track.

Marc Soronson asked for questions before the next item to fill out the survey. Mike Wasko asked if the track on Rio Salado Parkway could also be operated in reverse directions for events. Marc said no and added that they expect the end of the line station (on Ash) for special events would end at 3rd Street. He added that the primary reason was concern about controlling pedestrian access points coming to and leaving Tempe Beach Park. If people are taking light rail to the park, there are anchors on both ends of 3rd Street and it would not be too far to walk (except in extreme heat). Mike clarified that it would be an operational decision rather than a technical one. Marc noted it could possibly be done when Rio Salado is closed to vehicle traffic.

Bob Gasser asked about the stop at Del Rio, and noted riders who might want to access the credit union and Riazzi's restaurant at Alameda. Marc responded that the CWG had raised the issue to have the stop further south to serve the neighborhood. He said the suggestion was made to move further south, but agreed the stops should be in the right place based on the issue of access from the neighborhoods. Having a station at Del Rio and at Alameda is probably too many. Marc added that it's the pleasure of the group to help locate these stops. Nancy Ryan added that the walk from the recommended stop would be only one or two blocks to Riazzi's. Charles Huellmantel noted that the southbound stop looked like it might be near the credit union.

Mike DiDomenico asked what is the benefit for businesses or residents east of Mill Avenue (in Hayden Ferry Lakeside) to use the stop on Rio Salado Parkway rather than walk down Mill Avenue. Marc Soronson responded that it was some a delicate balance to provide a station location for the residents to the west (along 1st Street) and east (at Hayden Ferry Lakeside). Marc noted at some point in the future there could an extension that could go east on Rio Salado Parkway which could solve that problem. Marc suggested that to go south on the streetcar to Gammage or ASU they might walk to that stop; otherwise they would not have a specific reason to use the streetcar vs. walk to access Mill Avenue. Mike said that he did not have a solution, but noted that it is one of the densest areas for development in the district, and will continue to get more developed. Marc noted that the only thing he could suggest would be to move the station at 3rd as far north as possible but keep it from causing a separate signal phase at Rio Salado Parkway. Marc said that location had a lot of discussion, but we tried to split the difference in order to serve both areas. Cheryl Hornyman added that living in Hayden Ferry Lakeside she does not see the residents using it. Cheryl said that for using Gammage they walk to Mill for dinner and then walk to Gammage, but might use it coming back. Marc asked if there was development on Ash whether you would use it to go to Ash. Cheryl replied no not where that stop is; the real benefit for us would be during the heat but not at that location unless we were going to Riazzi's. Mike DiDomenico added as the rest of Rio Salado gets developed there will be a need to add a spur along Rio Salado Parkway. Marc noted that ASU has big plans for the land along Rio Salado Parkway. Cheryl asked if the way the track is located on Rio Salado Parkway, would it allow the streetcar to expand. Jyme Sue McLaren said yes and explained how the streetcar could be extended north on Mill or east on Rio Salado Parkway and both options would connect to the stop between Mill and Ash to finish the loop back to downtown. Jyme Sue noted in that circumstance someone who wanted to go south could not use the stop on Mill, or otherwise one might ride the streetcar to Tempe Marketplace before it returns to head south on Ash.

Agenda Item 5 – Track Configuration and Stop Location Survey

Howard Steere described the survey form that the CWG was asked to complete. He noted that the first section was about the track location, showing the segments from Southern to 13th and then from University to Rio Salado Parkway; the CWG should check the box for their recommendation for track location and then add any comments. Howard explained that the second section was about the stop locations with three different maps showing the baseline, CWG comments, and the final staff recommendation for stops each denoted with a letter. He added that if they had a difference with the staff recommended location to note it below the maps and explain why. At the end of the meeting today the tallied results of the survey and the comments would be shared with this group and see if there are any significant concerns with the recommendation that Marc Soronson described.

Howard Steere directed them to start and noted that they could talk among themselves and ask any of the staff questions.

Agenda Item 6 – Electrical Substation Location Options

Marc Soronson introduced Joe Racosky. Joe explained that the Traction Power Substations provide the power to the streetcar with the overhead wire; for a streetcar they use a single wire not the double wire like light rail. Joe added that the power requirements are less than light rail because of smaller trains and less acceleration required. He said the substations are to be about one mile apart with four of them expected for this project, and the typical dimension is 10 feet by 20 feet by 12 feet high or the size of a parking space. He noted that they can be placed up to one block from the streetcar alignment.

Joe Racosky noted that the siting criteria include:

- Space and access around the substation unit
- Avoid environmentally sensitive, park, historic, or culturally significant sites
- Be visually unnoticeable
- Not limit future development opportunities

Joe Racosky explained that they have identified fifteen potential locations in four target areas between Southern and Rio Salado Parkway and we will be showing these to the CWG next month.

Agenda Item 7 – Urban Design Guidelines Update

Tad Savinar provided a schedule of the Urban Design Guidelines development and noted that the decisions tonight will help him take the guidelines to the next level. He noted that potentially the text could be circulated at the end of July, or if the group wanted to see the text with the graphics it would follow later in August/September. Tad explained the interviews and documents reviewed for background before starting the Urban Design Guidelines. Tad provided an example from the Central Phoenix/East Valley Urban Design Guidelines, and several examples of comments from the CWG that were integrated in the guidelines.

Tad Savinar reviewed the slides of the potential components for a streetcar stop. He talked about how there may be different components from a bench to a fully shaded stop as options for the stops. Tad said that in addition to the guidelines each stop location should be examined for its existing conditions, anticipated future development, not necessarily as part of the guidelines but as part of the future design process.

Tad Savinar noted that there was discussion about differences in segments along the alignment that will feel different by color, landscaping or art work as an opportunity to enhance the differences of these places. Tad showed how the paving could be the same, very different, or something in between as well as the how to treat a platform that adjacent or physically separated from the sidewalk. Tad said he inventoried where there were irrigation systems (either city or private) and how they could be utilized to provide irrigation for supplemental plantings by the stops. He noted that some of the medians have irrigation that would potentially allow for vegetation on a center platform.

Tad Savinar suggested that any poles for the catenary lines be painted the same color of the light poles in that area, such as the Tempe brown in downtown or grey where the street lights are metal grey along Mill south of downtown. He suggested that the color of the stops will not be defined but left to the design team. Tad added that in the guidelines lighting could be used to identify the stop that would have a different quality than typical commercial lighting. He said that rails will be used if there is a step difference from the sidewalk as he showed slides of other rails that were used and noted that art could be incorporated into railings. Tad showed a slide of how the rail could intersect the decorative paving at intersections.

He summarized that are the overarching goals of the guidelines were to be something Tempean but adaptable to other cities in the region, to have a timeless look that promotes the identity in a subtle way and provides the sun protection, and a design that becomes an amenity rather than imposing itself in the area.

Bob Gasser said that the acorn lamp shown in the slides is not supported by the State Historic Preservation Committee and is viewed as faux historic. Tad Savinar said that's very informative. Bob noted that metal used in the stop structure will get very hot in summer. Tad said that it would have to be painted with heat resistant paint and have enough air flowing through it to keep it from getting too hot.

Agenda Item 8 – Art Process Overview

MB Finnerty from METRO introduced Maja Aurora, Tempe Art Program Administrator, who will be working with METRO on the art process. MB said that METRO will work with the Tempe art program and will include review by Station Arts Review Committee, and selection and design review committees that are made up of stakeholders from the area. MB noted that the art program will closely follow the urban design guidelines to ensure the art supports the urban design guidelines. MB continued to say the stop location and number of stops will determine the art emphasis for each stop, integrated art work, art as way finding, or art as a stand-alone piece. MB said that by using federal money there will be a national call to artists, but will include local outreach to local artists and local input.

Mike Wasko asked would the scope of the art work include the cars themselves or electric power substations. MB Finnerty replied that art could be at the substations; the streetcar would be something that we could look into. Mike asked if the artwork could be used to clarify bike lanes in certain areas where you want visibility. MB noted that the art supports the urban design and architectural pieces so artists working with the architects frequently develop a design that integrates both.

Agenda Item 9 – Wrap-up and Closing

Marc Soronson shared the results of the survey (Agenda item 5).

- For the alignment on Mill Avenue from Southern to 13th Street, thirteen responses agreed with the right lane running option (of the streetcar) and no one supported the left lane running;
- For the alignment on Mill Avenue from University to Rio Salado Parkway, ten agreed with the shared through lane running option that was recommended by staff and three disagreed and supported the curb lane running.
- For Ash Avenue alignment from University to Rio Salado Parkway, thirteen agreed with the curb lane running option and no one supported the shared through lane.

Marc Soronson then read some of the comments that related to support of the Mill Avenue curb lane option from University to Rio Salado.

- Curb lane option treats bike lane better. Removal of parking makes Mill more pedestrian friendly (less cars). Platforms become part of the streetscape; they don't jut out as much. Shared through line platforms require more shading. Overhead catenary would be more obtrusive, hanging farther into street.
- For the constituency that I represent, people with disabilities which is approximately 20% of Tempe's population, the less distance they have to travel to access the streetcar, the better for them. Maneuvering is extremely difficult for many with disabilities.
- Parking on side streets is fine. Mill Avenue parking is my last resort due to birds pooping on cars. I think it's more important to have an extra lane for individuals who want to drive to downtown and be in the scene. The extra streetscaping for restaurants use of outdoor patio is a good idea, but there is already plenty of room. If you go to other large cities their sidewalks are even smaller.

Marc Soronson read comments that related to the streetcar stop locations.

- Need closer spacing between stops at 9th Street and 6th Street or add an additional stop at University.
- Rio Salado stop ridership to the east – will this stop serve it. Bookend the stops at the corners of Mill and Ash.

Marc Soronson said a majority of the comments agree with the staff recommendation for stops. Marc said there were a few dissensions which the project team will look at, such as the stop on Rio Salado to make it friendlier to those residents.

Marc Soronson called for questions and comments. Mike Wasko said that the survey form was very easy to understand and that he liked it. Marc thanked him and noted that there was a lot of thought put into how to do the survey.

Agenda Item 10 – Future Meeting Date

Chairperson Ellis noted that there will be a July meeting and asked if there will be anyone that cannot attend. Several CWG members raised their hands. Chairperson Ellis suggested that the members be surveyed for their availability to attend the July meeting and to make sure there will be a quorum. Marc Soronson noted it was important to keep the momentum going and have the July meeting. Marc noted the agenda items for July to include:

- Resolution on the Traction Power Substation locations
- Resolution for the bike lane on Ash
- Further definition for the urban design guidelines
- Streetcar vehicle overview on the types of vehicles available

Marc Soronson noted that if there needs to be a meeting in August there will be one, but he hoped to wrap-up the issues in July. Councilperson Ellis suggested to keep the meetings on the members calendars, and noted that they had not received public input on the recommendation but that outreach will start soon and if we receive a large amount of comments, we might like to bring it back to the CWG. Chairperson Ellis said to keep your dates through October on your calendar. Marc noted that there will be a public process and then a Council process.

Meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM

Prepared by: Nancy Ryan

Nancy Ryan
Community Development