
Minutes Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group August 22, 2011

Meeting of the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group was held on August 22, 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
Bob Gasser
Karyn Gitlis
Cheryl Hornyan
Nancy Hormann
Charles Huellmantel
Margaret Hunnicutt
Rebecka Johnson
Paul Kent
Charles Lee
Mary Ann Miller
Lisa Roach
Janie Shelton
David Strang
Steve Tyree
Mike Wasko
Sam Wheeler
Mark Yslas

Members Absent:

Michael DiDomenico
Frank Granillo
Chuck Newkirk
Stephanie Nowack
Manjula Vaz

METRO Staff & Consultants Present:

Steve Banta
Ben Limmer
Marc Soronson
Carla Kahn
Howard Steere
Tad Savinar
Deron Lozano
Wulf Grote
Lisa Procknow
Alec More
Stephanie Shipp
Harvey Estrada

City Staff Present:

Jyme Sue McLaren
Nancy Ryan
Shelly Seyler
Cathy Hollow
Shauna Warner
Greg Jordan
Charlie Meyer

Chairperson Ellis called the meeting to order at 5:00 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.

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Minutes from June 25, 2011

Chairperson Ellis called for the review and approval of CWG minutes from June 27, 2011. A correction was made by Charles Huellmantel. Charles Huellmantel made the motion to approve the minutes with the correction noted and Charles Lee 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 – Review Community Working Group Recommendations

Chairperson Ellis turned the discussion over to Marc Soronson.

Marc noted that this is the last meeting for the CWG and stated the process over the last eight months has gone well and METRO appreciated the comments received and work accomplished by the CWG. Marc explained that based upon significant discussions by the CWG, the following recommendations are being advanced for consideration by the Tempe City Council:

- Alignment of the streetcar track from 13th Street to Southern Avenue is located in the curb lane. In the Downtown area along Mill Avenue, the track is located in the through lane and along Ash Avenue the track is in an exclusive lane against the curb.
- Streetcar stop locations and track alignment were adjusted to address concerns from the CWG; although members may not be 100% happy on where the stops are, we know the final locations will adequately serve activity centers and are spaced well.
- The traffic lane configuration considered access for bikes, pedestrians and parking in the downtown area along Ash and Mill Avenues. The placement of traction power substations will require further refinement to determine appropriate siting, and further analysis is expected to evaluate engineering requirements and power loads of the streetcar vehicles in order to advance recommendations.

Marc stated that Tad Savinar will continue his work on the Urban Design Guidelines, which will be forwarded to the CWG when completed.

Marc asked if there were any questions before moving to the next agenda item.

Karyn Gitlis noted that although the work of the CWG has finalized recommendations for the alignment along most of Mill, no consideration has been given to the section between 13th Street and University Drive. Karyn stated that she has heard that there has been discussion (by others) about straightening out the Apache curve. She stated concerns with the removal of the curve and its potential impact to the historic Gammage auditorium. Karyn requested additional

information about any plans to modify the street. She expressed concern about signing off on a project that has a key design element in her neighborhood unresolved.

Chairperson Ellis explained that the exploration to realign Apache Boulevard into Mill Avenue relates to the placement of the streetcar tracks to follow the (T intersection) alignment instead of the curve to better utilize the Birchett park area. She added that the track curving to meet with Apache Boulevard is expensive and that keeping the track on a straight north-south alignment is more cost effective. Councilmember Ellis said that the city receives frequent complaints about individuals staying in the park and the inability use the park because it is surrounded on three sides by public streets. She clarified that although the park is significant to Tempe, it's not designated a historic park.

Chairperson Ellis stated that it is just an idea with no funding; the City has spoken with Arizona State University about such a concept and the feasibility of the idea has been discussed. She added that the goal is for the park to be utilized and a usable park along the streetcar route is beneficial. She noted that there is not a streetcar stop at that location because the CWG recommended stops at 11th and 9th streets. Chairperson Ellis stated that one of the first steps is to understand what the cost might be so the city can understand if the project is achievable. She stated that it was not a done deal and expected to work with the neighborhood(s), should such a proposal be advanced for further consideration.

Karyn Gitlis asked at what point the alignment of the streetcar at Mill and Apache (Mill and 13th Street) will have to be determined. Marc Soronson responded that that the current design criteria shows the track following the curve of the street pattern. Marc said METRO has looked at how to maintain that design but not preclude a change in the future as METRO does not have a street realignment in their budget. Marc confirmed that the design configuration in the Environmental Assessment, which evaluates the potential environmental impacts to the community along the corridor, is the exact alignment the group has seen (following the curve of the street).

Chairperson Ellis noted that changing the alignment of the street is a totally separate discussion, has significant engineering involved and the City would involve the neighborhood in the decision. Marc said the design you see today includes the ability to make some refinements in areas further north where there are utilities and geometry issues to solve. Marc noted that the streetcar tracks transition from the eastside of the street to the center in order to go through the intersection of University Drive and continue up Mill Avenue.

Bob Gasser noted that any taking of park land is subject to Federal Transportation Act 4F impacts and requires you to go through a 4F process and if there was demolition of historic structures, Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act would require discussion and consideration during the environmental process. Marc responded that changing the Apache Boulevard alignment is nothing more than an idea, and the streetcar project as proposed would follow the current street alignment.

Agenda Item 5 – Funding Update

Ben Limmer said that the capital costs associated with the Tempe Streetcar project are estimated to be \$130 million. Ben continued that the revenue sources do include both federal and local funds. He stated that the regional sales tax, known as Proposition 400 funds, are confirmed and programmed to the streetcar project as is Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality (CMAQ) program funds. He noted that CMAQ is formula funding that the region receives and the funds are specifically programmed for the streetcar project. These two funding sources compromise two thirds of the capital revenues to build the project. Ben added that the additional funds METRO is seeking are the TIGER III and the Small Starts programs. Ben noted that TIGER stands for Transportation Investments for Generating Economic Recovery; which is administered by the US Department of Transportation (DOT) to fund any surface transportation project and the program was funded through a continuing resolution. He added that the funds have made it through Congress and now they need to determine which projects should be funded. There is \$527,000,000 available nationwide in TIGER III. Projects that promote liveability and sustainability are high on DOT's priority list.

Mary Ann Miller asked if the continuing resolution was for the coming fiscal year. Ben responded that the resolution was passed in April and good to the end of the fiscal year (end of October 2012). Mary Ann asked if they don't spend it, will they take it back. Marc Soronson noted that the third sequence of the TIGER grant program has added strict criteria for project advancement as a result of some agencies that have not moved forward with their project. For example, some communities that were awarded grants have never done that kind of project before or communities that have not completed their environmental clearance to allow them to move forward. Marc noted Tempe's project is in good shape as METRO has a good track record of building projects and is submitting the environmental analysis to the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) at the end of this month. Mary Ann asked when application for TIGER III funding is made. Ben said that METRO will submit the grant application in October. Ben said that Tucson received \$63 million in funds for their streetcar project from the TIGER I program, and many streetcar projects nationwide have been funded through this program, and this type of technology fits well with the type of project they are funding.

Ben Limmer described the New Starts and Small Starts programs that fund the majority transit programs across the US. The light rail was funded through the New Starts program which is a sister program for projects of greater cost. Small Starts is administered through the FTA and funded through annual congressional appropriations with heavy oversight and scrutiny by the federal government; this program is highly competitive. Ben Limmer noted the Tempe Streetcar project also fits well with their criteria, as they look at financial capacity, land use and economic development. METRO has a track record of completing projects as a project sponsor.

Chairperson Ellis noted that the funding briefing was intended to make sure the CWG knows about the potential funding in place and Federal resources that will be sought. She said that if one of the funding sources does not come through, it will not mean that the project has died, because we will try whatever we can to get the remainder of this project funded.

Mary Ann Miller asked when Council would authorize operational funds. Chairperson Ellis responded that the specifics of the City operation and maintenance funding does not need to be decided for the TIGER grant application to be submitted and that the City budget does not go

out to 2016 yet, so there is some time that Council can deliberate the operation costs before the funds have to be in place. Jyme Sue McLaren added that a review of the recommendation for the streetcar stop and track location will go before Council on September 8 and two weeks later Council will be briefed on the potential funding sources for an operating plan for the streetcar prior to submitting for the TIGER grant. Chairperson Ellis noted that the September 22 briefing would produce a laundry list of sources for Council to consider and review and that will be discussed in an Issue Review Session (IRS).

Agenda Item 6 – Schedule Update

Ben Limmer identified the next steps to be:

- Completion of the Federal environmental document in the last week of September.
- Submission of the TIGER grant in October, anticipating the DOT will make announcements of the selected projects sometime around January 2012.
- Immediately after the TIGER submittal, METRO will start the Small Starts application.
- On September 6 there will be a Public Open House to present the streetcar stop and track locations results that you (CWG) helped to develop, from 6 to 8 PM at Tempe High School. The public can come in and browse the project information and ask any questions they see fit.
- On September 8 the recommendations will be shared with Tempe City Council at their IRS.

Agenda Item 7 – Public Outreach Update

Chairperson Ellis introduced Carla Kahn of METRO to provide the public outreach update.

Carla Kahn noted the public open house on Tuesday, September 6 will allow the public to provide comment as well as review on the Streetcar stop and track locations. She noted the meeting will be an open house, with no formal presentation, to allow for flexibility for folks to come and have their questions answered directly. Carla said there will be stations with specific information such as:

- What is Modern Streetcar
- Stop Locations
- Track Configuration
- Process and Funding
- Map of the recommended route

Carla continued to say the public will be notified by a door hanger distributed to residents and businesses adjacent to the alignment and within a quarter mile on either side of the alignment, and that next week postcards will be hand delivered as METRO canvasses fronting along Mill Avenue. Carla shared copies for the CWG to take back to distribute to your neighborhood or their interested groups. She said that the meeting notification will be at the Tempe Library, Tempe Transportation Center, Tempe and METRO websites, Twitter and Facebook as a way to get the word out about the meeting. She said you may have noticed the meeting announcement in the August water bill. Carla said at the meeting the public can take away a project update, streetcar fact sheet and an update of the frequently asked questions (FAQ), as

well as a comment and survey form similar to the one used with CWG. She noted that it can be filled out at the meeting to be taken to return later. Carla asked that the CWG help to get the word out about the meeting and she extended a special invitation for the CWG to attend to be a resource, because of the time devoted during the past eight months learning about the project. Carla noted that their participation was greatly appreciated.

Carla reminded the CWG that the Kinkyshario streetcar vehicle will be on public display on September 18 and there will be a VIP showing on September 13, for which the CWG will receive an invitation.

Bob Gasser asked isn't it odd to finish the environmental document before you have the public meeting. Marc Soronson noted that there are a couple things going on, first the public meeting in September is for the work of the CWG with the design recommendations for stops and track location and second, the draft environmental assessment (EA) document that will go to the FTA for comment and there will be several reiterations on that document related to legal sufficiency. Marc said that the EA does not go public until it is signed off and released as an FTA document. Marc said that once that occurs there will be another round of meetings to present the information within the Environmental Assessment. Marc explained that the work now is solidifying the project definition, and that is what will be shared at the Council meeting on September 8.

Carla Kahn thanked Tempe High Principal Mark Yslas (a CWG member) for allowing the public meeting at the high school.

Lisa Roach asked what hours the Kinkyshario vehicle would be on display. Carla replied the display is from 8AM to 12PM. Chairperson Ellis noted that there are a number of streetcar manufacturers that are being considered, of which Kinkyshario is just one display which is traveling the country. A lot of the manufacturers have come forward with their designs, so keep in mind Kinkyshario is just one of them and that does not mean that their streetcar is a done deal.

Agenda Item 8 –Wrap-up and Closing

Chairperson Ellis noted that this was the last meeting of the CWG, and thanked the group for their service. She noted that we had promised to get the work done by October but it was completed early. She said that was because we had quorums and staff has been wonderful in having materials easy to read and understand in order to make decisions. Chairperson Ellis added that hopefully you understand this is one step in the process and there will be public involvement throughout various steps in the process. She said that this committee as we know it is disbanding. She continued to say because you gained so much knowledge, hopefully we will be able to call on you and look to you for help again. She noted that she hoped the CWG members can attend the IRS on September 8.

Steve Banta of METRO said in this economic climate it's important to have a strong foundation in community support. He continued to say this is a great project, part of a regional transportation network; it provides not only economic vitality but connects to the twenty mile light

rail system and provides for people from outside of Tempe to see more of Tempe. He added that this project is prime candidate for alternate delivery methods of construction such as Design Build or Construction Manager at Risk, so all opportunities that we have to advance this project are being explored. Steve noted METRO and Tempe are doing everything to advance this project to its fullest. He added that along with FTA emphasis on the importance of community they also look for whether there is a partnership with the transit agency that has experience designing, building and operating a system and for that METRO gets high marks. Steve thanked the CWG for their work, and noted this will not be their last engagement and hoped that CWG members will be advocates for the streetcar project and the region's transportation plan as a whole. Steve explained that it speaks volumes when people from the region recognize the importance of what public transportation does while METRO is advancing the total 57 mile system; the more information you know, the more opportunity you will have to speak about the benefits of transit in your neighborhoods and community circles.

Marc Soronson noted a thank you for the hard work that has gone in the meeting preparation, by his team. Chairperson Ellis thanked Nancy Ryan and Jyme Sue McLaren for staffing and organization from the Tempe side.

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 PM

Prepared by: Nancy Ryan
Reviewed by: Jyme Sue McLaren

Nancy Ryan
Community Development