



Minutes

City of Tempe Transportation Commission

August 9, 2011

Minutes of the City of Tempe Transportation Commission held on Tuesday, August 9, 2011, 7:30 a.m., at the Transportation Center Don Cassano Community Room, Tempe, Arizona.

(MEMBERS) Present:

Alana Chavez-Langdon, Matthew Garcia, Ben Goren, Pam Goronkin, Charles Huellmantel, Phillip Luna, Gary Roberts, Steven Saiz, Bryan Young

(MEMBERS) Absent:

Marcellus Lisotta, Kaysan Morgan, Peter Schelstraete, Augustus H. Shaw IV, David Strang

City Staff Present:

Joe Clements, Cathy Hollow, Eric Iwersen, Greg Jordan, Carla Kahn, JymeSue McLaren, Yvette Mesquita, Bonnie Richardson, Nancy Ryan, Jennifer Svetichan, Sue Taaffe, Robert Yabes,

Guests Present:

Shana Ellis (Councilmember), Wulf Grote (METRO), Marc Soronson (HDR, Inc.)

Steven Saiz called the meeting to order at 7:34 a.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Consideration of Meeting Minutes

Commissioner Saiz asked for a motion to approve. Commissioner Chavez-Langdon made a motion to approve, Commissioner Huellmantel seconded the motion. The following minutes were approved:

- Transportation Commission Meeting Minutes – July 12, 2011

Agenda Item 2 – Public Appearances

None

Agenda Item 3 – Tempe Streetcar – Project Definition Recommendations

JymeSue McLaren gave background on the project:

Last fall, the Transportation Commission recommended to City Council the advancement of the 2.6 mile Streetcar project along the Mill Ave. corridor. A community working group compiled of city staff and significant stake holders along Mill Ave, has been working on the project definitions since that endorsement. The committee was chaired by Councilmember Ellis and Commissioners Strang and Huellmantel also sat on the committee working group. Three specific aspects were evaluated by this community working group including track locations, stop locations and bicycle and pedestrian access in and around the streetcar. The committee is seeking the Commission's recommendation to advance the project to City Council in September based on these recommendations.

Wulf Grote presented the following information:

The extension of the Street car would travel down Mill Ave from Southern Ave to Rio Salado Ave with a loop along Ash Ave and the possibility of future extensions. He outlined the anticipated costs and ridership along with the committee's plan for an environmental assessment draft that is anticipated to be available later this month. This assessment is conducted and submitted to the Federal Transit Administration to obtain federal money for the project.

Commissioner Saiz asked about what is involved with the environmental process. Wulf responded with issues such as traffic impacts, air quality, historic properties, noise and vibration, and ground water to name a few.

Two grant programs are being targeted for federal funds. The TIGER program is a national competitive grant program and the application will be submitted in October 2011. The Small Starts program is also a national grant program that will be looked to for funding.

The timeline for the project will move to the design phase next with completion anticipated for 2016.

Commissioner Roberts asked if the funds from Prop 400 are dedicated funds and if not what impacts would they anticipate if there were shortfalls in those funds due to economic means. Wulf responded that they are dedicated funds as of now and would make adjustments as needed when they update their yearly transit budgets based on ADOT forecasts.

Commissioner Chavez-Langdon asked what the economic development impact will be on Tempe. JymeSue answered that Tempe's funding portion is the operation of the system. Tempe has no direct capital investment as it is funded by regional and federal sources. A portion of the operational funding will come by eliminating some existing bus service that today operates along the Mill Ave. corridor. The total estimated annual cost to operate the streetcar is about \$3.1million. They have identified the economic development opportunities along the corridor and estimated the economic return on investment. Commission Chavez-Langdon requested a copy of the updated Economic Development Analysis report.

Marc Soronson presented the following information:

The overall recommendations for the project were presented including recommendations for the stop locations, track locations, traffic lane locations, left turn locations, bike lane locations, pedestrian access, street parking and the overall dimensions of those facets.

The Streetcar stop locations were presented. They are approximately half mile apart taking into consideration the neighborhood and business access as well as bus route connections at major arterials like Southern Ave and Broadway Rd. The integration of bus stops and orbit stops was also considered.

Commissioner Young asked if there were existing lights at the proposed stop locations. Marc replied that the stops will be similar to current bus stops along Mill Ave. JymeSue included there will be signalized locations at every stop.

In the downtown Mill Ave corridor stops were determined based on transfer opportunities to bus and light rail as well as left turn opportunities. Also, special consideration was given to the service of Tempe Beach Park as well as accommodating the special events held in downtown.

Street configuration was proposed that the streetcar would operate very similarly to the bus along the curb lane. The bike lane would stay as it is today. At the stops where the platform would come out to meet the Streetcar the bike lane would be routed behind the platform. In the downtown area, retaining on

street parking was very important to the DTC so the Streetcar lane would be the regular east side of Mill Ave thru lane. There are no impacts on the west side of Mill Ave or to the median in the downtown area.

The Streetcar would run both north and south along Ash Ave during special events that close Mill Ave. It will have a curb lane on the west side of Ash Ave and some east side on street parking will be retained north of 5th St. by removing the left turn lane.

The plan moving forward is to present this information to City Council on September 8th with the Transportation Commission's recommendation. Also, there will be a public open house at Tempe High on September 6th.

Commissioner Chavez requested a copy of the integration slide.

Commissioner Saiz asked if there was a reason behind how and why Ash Ave was selected as a Streetcar route. Marc responded that due to utilities on the west side of Mill Ave that prevented the rails to be installed there without significant costs. It also solved the special event problem of when Mill Ave is closed and promoted the Mill Ave. as a district not just one main thoroughfare. Commissioner Huellmantel included the time delay of moving the utilities on Mill Ave concerned the business owners and also that Chase and US Airways, which are two major employers, are located on Ash Ave. which impacts ridership. Selecting Ash also allowed for less disruption later if the Streetcar is expanded in the future.

Commissioner Roberts asked about the location of the maintenance building and housing the trolleys. Marc answered that they plan on using the current yard. We will work with Metro to utilize the additional track space along the light rail on Mill Ave and 3rd.

Due to the TIGER grant consideration, we are required to Buy America. There is currently only one manufacturer that is certified Buy America, but other companies are working toward that certification. Buy America is defined as a certain percentage of the parts are manufactured in the US.

Commissioner Goren expressed his extreme concern of the location of the bike lane on Mill Ave between the Streetcar and the parking lane. He recommends the parking lane being eliminated to make it safer for bicyclists. Commissioner Huellmantel addressed that the remarks that DTC did not want to lose the on street parking by saying that they simply did not want to lose the space period. If tracks were put there it would eliminate any future opportunity to put anything there including an extended sidewalk. Ultimately they want Mill Ave to be more pedestrian friendly. He also included the possibility of shifting the parking off on Mill Ave to 5th Street where there is far less bike traffic and there would be no presence of the Streetcar.

Commissioner Young asked about the possibility of restricting delivery truck hours or changing access points for delivery on Mill Ave. Commissioner Huellmantel said the DTC had addressed that issue, but ultimately it is a city issue.

Commissioner Chavez-Langdon added the possibility of exploring car sharing programs that have been successful in San Diego. Since they are typically smaller cars it may help with the safety aspect of downtown parking while continuing to have it.

JymeSue pointed out that the configuration presented today that includes the Streetcar is exactly the same as what is present today.

Eric Iwerson added that there is no police data that supports an increase of accidents on Mill Ave. since the street reconfiguration about 6 years ago to its current state.

Greg Jordan included that he is not aware of any accidents between bus and bike on the Mill Ave corridor.

Marc also included that the Streetcar will not be going twenty miles per hour in downtown. There will be trained operators in the Streetcar. Also, cyclists and pedestrians will be able to predict the route of the Streetcar versus a bus or car that can veer one way or another.

Commissioner Garcia included that as a cyclist it is his opinion that Mill Ave in the downtown area is one of the safest places to bike and it is the widest and faster streets are the most dangerous.

Commissioner Roberts added that human element must be taken into consideration. Proper signage and markings will help make people aware of their surroundings and what to look out for.

Commissioner Huellmantel made a motion to approve staff recommendation as stated. Commissioner Roberts seconded the motion.

Motion passed 8-1. Commissioner Goren voted against the staff recommendations as stated.

Future Agenda Items

- Commissioner Chavez-Langdon requested future discussion of a car sharing or bike sharing program

Meeting adjourned at 8:50am

The Commission's next regular meeting will be held Tuesday, September 13, 2011 at 7:30 a.m. in the Don Cassano Community Room, 200 E. Fifth Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Prepared by:
Jennifer Svetichan

Reviewed by:
Greg Jordan