



Minutes City Council's Transportation, Housing and Environment Committee June 17, 2008

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Transportation, Housing and Environment Committee held on Tuesday, June 17, 2008, 2:00 p.m., in the Public Works Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Council Members Present:

Councilmember Shana Ellis, Chair
Vice Mayor Hut Hutson

City Staff Present:

Craig Hittie, Housing Services
Jyme Sue McLaren, Public Works/Light Rail
Carlos de Leon, Public Works/Transportation
Glenn Kephart, Public Works
Gregg Kent, Public Works/Light Rail
Amanda Nelson, Public Works/Transportation
Sue Taaffe, Public Works/Transportation
Greg Jordan, Public Works/Transit
Chris Salomone, Community Development
Neil Calfee, Community Development
John Osgood, Public Works/Field Operations
Dawn Coomer, Public Works/Light Rail
Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Services
Chris Anaradian, Development Services
Kathy Wittenberg, Development Services

Guests Present:

Wulf Grote, METRO
Marc Soronson, METRO
Steve Wise, Tempe Community Council
Paul Berumen, Local Government and Relations/ASU
Emily Ryan, Arizona Multihousing Association
Beth Fiorenza, TCAA

Councilmember Shana Ellis called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

Gail LaGrander, Tempe resident, was unable to attend in person. She requested that in lieu of attendance, her comments supplied in a letter be placed in the meeting's record. Ms LaGrander resides near the intersection of Price and Guadalupe and is a regular user of the 521 line and

other connecting routes. Unable to attend a prior neighborhood meeting of the Orbit she contacted Greg Jordan who stated that five (5) bus routes were operational north of the US 60, but he could not state with certainty if or when her neighborhood would be served by the Orbit.

She applauds the City for implementing this concept but feels that there is a lack of parity in terms of access and the funding of the circulator buses. The buses are paid for through the transit tax which south Tempe residents also pay while being denied access to the mini-buses. She is asking that Councilmember Ellis and Vice-Mayor Hutson lend support on behalf of South Tempe to expand the Orbit to that area.

Agenda Item 2 – Tempe South High Capacity Transit Study Update

Deputy Public Works Manager Jyme Sue McLaren and Senior Transportation Planner Dawn Coomer explained that the City has been working with METRO in coordination with the Federal Transit Administration on a 24 month study to analyze potential high capacity transit improvements.

METRO Corridor Planning Manager Marc Soronson of METRO updated the committee on the improvements analyzed. These include:

- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), which uses exclusive lanes or roadways with traffic signal priority with a 90 passenger bus capacity.
- Commuter Rail, which uses existing railroad freight corridors for longer distance and carries 2,000 passengers per hour (This would require an agreement with Union Pacific who is currently carries freight on the lines). It would make more sense to extend the line into Maricopa to the south and Phoenix to the north.
- Light Rail Transit (LRT), which requires dedicated right-of-way (ROW) with limited stops and carries 525 passengers per 3-car train. This would be coordinated with traffic signal systems for travel time savings.
- Modern Street Car, which can use dedicated ROW or shared traffic lanes with autos. This would have frequent stops (local circulator) with a capacity of 124 passengers per car.
- Potential north-south alignments.

The Tier 1 phase of the process is nearly complete. The purpose of this phase of the process is to eliminate alternatives that: do not meet the project goals or purpose; do not increase transit ridership; are not technically feasible or have serious environmental impacts; adversely impact traffic, pedestrians and/or bicyclists; and are not supported by existing land use or other plans.

Alternatives that are recommended for further study are:

- Commuter Rail in Union Pacific Railroad (UPRR) Corridor
- BRT in UPRR Corridor
- BRT on Mill Avenue
- Modern Streetcar on Mill Avenue
- Light Rail Transportation (LRT) or Modern Streetcar on Rural Road
- BRT on Rural Road

Several alternatives were eliminated due to constraints as follows:

- UPRR – LRT (Exclusive Guideway); Constraints include: Extensive ROW needs; adverse effects on historic and archeological sites; major utility conflicts; LRT overpass of UPRR mainline needed; and high capital costs

- Mill/Kyrene – LRT (Exclusive Guideway)/BRT (Mixed traffic); Constraints include: Extensive ROW needs; interline with LRT Starter Line not feasible; Adverse effect on historic and archeological sites; LRT overpass on UPRR mainline needed; high costs
- McClintock – LRT (Exclusive Guideway); Constraints include: does not serve many activity centers; serves fewest low income and 0-car households; increased travel time to downtown Tempe and ASU; Traffic operations and local access adversely affected due to fixed guideway

Tier 2 will consist of determining alternatives for development, defining and evaluating alternatives and presenting findings and recommendations to the public and other stakeholders. The locally preferred alternative adoption process will include community meetings/public acceptance in review and approval process. Public meetings will be conducted in the fall of 2008. Tier I findings will be presented to council in August. Councilmember Ellis directed staff to include public comments received in the presentation to council.

Agenda Item 3 – Proposed Parking Meter Code Change

The City has experienced a substantial increase in parking meters being intentionally jammed in order to render them inoperable, making the adjoining parking space free under the current City code. Staff is proposing a change to City code to make it unlawful to use a space where the parking meter is inoperable. Staff would like this issue addressed prior to the start of classes in the fall. Staff is requesting they begin the process of the ordinance change on the next two Council agendas and the ordinance be approved as an emergency to take effect immediately. Staff was directed to proceed with the process as presented.

Agenda Item 4 – Sustainability Task Force Update

Chris Anaradian addressed the committee in regards to the Sustainability Task Force progress. After several meetings, they have come up with several possible practices for implementation. They will now put this in a presentable format, present it at the department head meeting, and present those ideas to the Council at a future IRS. Councilmember Ellis will work at getting it assigned to a Council committee during the Council Summit.

Agenda Item 5 – Proposed and Potential Orbit Improvements

Planned and potential improvements to the Orbit neighborhood circulator program were referred to this committee at the June 5 IRS.

Planned Orbit improvements include expanding Orbit Earth to directly connect Tempe Marketplace with downtown Tempe at an earlier date than the original planned date of November 2008; extend Orbit Mars to Price and Apache light rail station in December 2008; and target capacity improvements within existing resources for Mercury and Venus.

Per council direction, the acceleration of Orbit Earth is meant to close the loop between downtown and the Marketplace. However, staff will recommend a University Drive alignment be used instead of Rio Salado Parkway in order to provide service to adjacent ASU offices. Staff has identified sufficient funding through a partnership with Arizona State University (ASU) that will allow for an August 2008 expansion while maintaining 15 minute frequency. Rather than continue to fund a separate shuttle service, ASU is willing to provide funds annually to the City in order to offset the cost of Orbit service serving satellite ASU facilities. A final agreement has not yet been reached with ASU. Staff will report to council after receiving further updates regarding the agreement with ASU and submit the agreement to Council for approval.

Once development is complete along the Rio Salado corridor between McClintock Drive and Rural Road, the Orbit system should be reassessed to ensure this area is properly served by transit.

Potential improvements include the extension of hours at an estimated cost of \$1.25 - \$3.12 million annually; include Tempe Center for the Arts at an estimated annual operating cost of \$50,000 - \$500,000 and \$75,000 - \$150,000 in capital costs every 3 - 4 years; and geographic distribution to south Tempe with estimated costs of \$4-5 million annually and \$1.5 – 2 million in capital costs every 3 – 4 years.

Agenda Item 6 – Housing Trust Fund

Craig Hittie, Revitalization and Redevelopment, briefed the committee on the progress of developing a housing trust fund. Currently they are reviewing ordinances from other communities that already have trust funds in order to begin the drafting of an ordinance. This will be brought back to the committee at a future date as they progress in the project.

Agenda Item 7 – Future Meeting Schedule

No new meetings of the committee will be scheduled until after the Council Summit.

Agenda Item 8 – Future Agenda Items

Light rail grand opening
Lagging and leading left turn study
Bicycle facilities update
Housing trust fund

Meeting adjourned at 2:58 p.m.

Reviewed by: Carlos de Leon

Jan Hort
City Clerk