



Minutes City Council's Transportation Committee January 27, 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Transportation Committee held on Tuesday, January 27, 2009, 3:00 p.m., in the 3rd Floor Conference Room, Tempe City Hall, 31 E. 5th Street, Tempe, Arizona.

Committee Members Present:

Vice Mayor Shana Ellis, Chair
Councilmember Ben Arredondo

City Staff Present:

Angel Carbajal, Asst Police Chief
Dawn Coomer, Transportation Planner
Carlos de Leon, Dep Public Wrks Mgr
Greg Jordan, Transit Administrator
Gregg Kent, LRT Proj Engineer
Glenn Kephart, Public Wrks Mgr
Amanda Nelson, Comm Outreach Mktg Supvr
Bonnie Richardson, Principal Plnr
Elizabeth Thomas, Neighborhood Pgm Spec
Oddvar Tveit, Environmental Qual Spec
Robert Yabes, Principal Plnr

Guests Present:

Chris Diba, ASU student
Jayson Matthews, Tempe Transportation Commission

Vice Mayor Shana Ellis called the meeting to order at 3:05 p.m. and everyone introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None.

Agenda Item 2 – Apache Boulevard Parking

Robert Yabes presented a handout and summarized that as part of the Apache Boulevard Streetscape Improvement Project, staff tested the preliminary design of reducing the number of lanes and adding 108 parking spaces between Terrace Road and Forest Drive. Most of the businesses along Apache cannot use the parking spaces, however, because there is no turnover. The spaces have become long-term parking for ASU staff and students. The proposal is to first sign the spaces for 90-minute parking before installing parking meters in order to evaluate potential impact of student parking in the surrounding neighborhoods. The Chamber of Commerce is supportive. With parking meters, a significant amount of money could be collected. Based on 120 days per year when nothing is collected and all the meters are covered only 50% of the time, the City would net about \$181K per year. There are essentially 63 non-revenue days that parking isn't collected in the downtown area, and by using the same principal, that revenue could be increased. The rates would be the same as downtown and the same rules would apply. The ordinance regarding meters would also apply to this area. Staff is seeking direction from the Transportation Commission,

Council Committee and City Council to proceed with further studies and installation of parking meters along Apache Boulevard.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked for clarification on “maximum of 1 hour” which appears on the first page of the handout. However, on page two, it cites “maximum time of 90 minutes.’

Mr. Yabes clarified that it is actually 90 minutes and the figures presented are for 90 minutes.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that part of the question presented is who should manage the parking.

Mr. Yabes stated that staff proposes that the City manage the parking.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that the City would have to provide the initial capital outlay for the meters and this would be a way to recoup that.

Mr. Yabes stated that currently the only parking meters are downtown and at ASU, so those entities manage them. His proposal would be to install the meters and contract with DTC or ASU to collect the revenue for a fee and the excess revenue would go into the general fund.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked if an RFP would be required.

Carlos de Leon responded that it might be possible to buy parking meters through a state contract but that the service might require an RFP.

Vice Mayor Ellis added that a third vendor could come in and propose to do that for the City.

Councilmember Arredondo stated that improved information on where to park was needed.

Jayson Matthews added that this has been presented to the Transportation Commission. The only concern was that it be something the businesses want (and they have demonstrated they do want this), and that there was minimal impact to the surrounding neighborhoods.

DIRECTION: Forward to Council at an IRS at the direction of this Committee, with the recommendation from the Tempe Chamber of Commerce and the Transportation Commission.

Agenda Item 3 – ADA Fare Policy and East Valley Dial-a-Ride Information

Carlos de Leon summarized that staff is focusing more specifically on the ADA Fare Policy because it has been overlooked in the discussion about the bus service. He provided background information:

- Valley Metro Board allowed the public hearing process to begin in January and a series of meetings have been held.
- The public did not support the large increase of \$1 and there was concern from a number of organizations, including the Tempe Chamber of Commerce and the East Valley Chamber, regarding the impact on those who are dependent upon transit, as well as the timing of the impact on economic downturn. The most favored increase was at 50 cents (probably a 25 cent and 25 cent step). Although, no increase was not an option.
- This is currently going through committee process. The intention is to go to the Board on February 19th and, assuming it is approved, recommend the first increase for July of this year.
- For Dial-a-Ride, fare recovery is very low compared to fixed route. Over time, the fare recovery has decreased from approximately 7% to 4%. The proposed increase would raise the fare from \$2.00 to \$2.50

next year, and any subsequent changes would be a 25 cent increase, depending on ultimately where the base bus fare would be.

- Some of the objectives would be to increase fare recovery, standardize the ADA fare structure for the region, maximize the fare for ADA regulations, and allow Valley Metro Board of Directors' authority over the East Valley Dial-a-Ride fare policy.
- Estimated Tempe Revenue Gain
 - Annual revenue may increase from \$70K to \$100K.
 - Current operating costs are \$1.7 – 1.9 million
 - Recovery ratio increases from 4.8 to 5.4 percent
- The last fare increase was in 1994. In 2006, Mesa decided that seniors could not longer use Dial-a-Ride. Tempe has continued to fund senior trips to and from Mesa.
- Although ridership has been stable over time, there are currently less seniors and more ADA. Because ADA is given highest priority in the reservation system, many seniors have chosen to become ADA-qualified and are booking their trips with Dial-a-Ride as ADA.
- Trips within the system are primarily medical, as well a high number of trips to the Tempe Center for Habilitation workshop. Adult day care is the next largest. There are very few pleasure trips.
- The average rider is female, age 66, low income, 3.7 trips per week, with average trip length of 5 miles. The reason most use Dial-a-Ride is because it is too far to walk to the regular bus, or it is their only means of transportation.
- Advantages to the proposed fare are that it raises fare revenue, stabilizes recovery, and allows consistency with peer cities. If ADA users were given a free bus pass, they might be encouraged to use the fixed route services which cost less in terms of delivery, and would result in a decrease in expenditures.
- Disadvantages might be a negative impact on residents by raising fare during economic downturn.
 - Average individual spending on Dial-a-Ride from \$385/year to \$625/year.
 - Percentage of individual income from 3 to 5 percent.
 - Average income of Tempe Dial-a-Ride user is \$12,500.
 - Federal poverty guideline for individual in \$10,400, for 2 person household is \$14,000.
- Additional considerations
 - Limited policy analysis evaluating impacts and targeting alternative and supplementary tactics to increase revenue or improve operating efficiency
 - Fare policy recommendations are reactive to immediate regional/municipal financial challenges.
 - Fifteen years since last increase.
 - Is revenue gain worth the impact on residents?
 - Tempe has a surplus in Proposition 400 ADA funds so that all ADA service could be funded without impacting the local budget for the next 5 to 10 years.
 - Research and analysis suggests that introduction of free bus pass for ADA eligible riders would save Tempe \$90K per year on ADA Dial-a-Ride costs.
- Options
 1. Support Valley Metro recommendation
 2. Reject recommendation but adopt board approved policy.
 3. Reject recommendation and set ADA fare policy at local level.
 4. Suggest ADA fare policy consideration be tabled until impact of free bus passes is known.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked what other cities are proposing.

Mr. de Leon responded that the East Valley cities are supportive of the increase.

Councilmember Arredondo clarified that with option #2, we could say no, but that we will go along with the majority. That might be the best recommendation. He questioned option #4.

Glenn Kephart responded that staff would propose trying option #4, and if it doesn't carry the vote, then pick one of the others.

Councilmember Arredondo suggested supporting option #4, and if it doesn't pass, then come back to option #2. He concurred that an increase would hurt the seniors.

Vice Mayor Ellis agreed. She clarified that option #2 means that we would reject it, but we would go ahead. If other communities are doing option #3 and setting different fares for their communities, then we might as well do the same.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked what the budget for next year was based on.

Mr. de Leon responded that it was based on \$2.00.

DIRECTION: Mr. de Leon was directed to outline the City's support for the February 19th board meeting.

Agenda Item 4 – Regional Transit Fare Policy

Carlos de Leon summarized that the bus fare target is 25%. Projections currently show that the target will not be met, based on increase in costs and current fare recovery.

- The recommendation was to increase the base fare up to \$1 over two years (50 cents in the first year and 50 cents in the second year). Express service premium would increase from 50 cents to a \$1; discounted rates would remain at 50% of the base fare. Passes would be based on a ratio related to the base fare.
- Effect of any changes:
 - From the base of \$2.25 (going to the full dollar) there would be approximately \$150M in increased revenue, but boardings would decrease by 50M.
 - Most options would be able to achieve the target with a 30% increase in fare recovery, except the 25 cent increase.
 - To the average passenger riding five days per week, the most expensive option is to buy the daily pass (from about \$600 per year to \$1,800 per year by 2011 based on a full dollar increase); with a monthly pass, it would be a little less than \$600 per year to \$800 per year by 2011. Express day pass would be the least economical to buy. For the reduced fares at 50% of our base fare (primarily youth and seniors) riders are currently paying approximately \$300 per year, and depending upon the fare media, that would go up to \$800, and with a monthly pass, it would increase to a little over \$400.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that the local day pass riders are supplementing the local monthly pass riders.

Glenn Kephart added that the data is based on the assumption that someone rides five days per week. It would be hopeful that if someone is riding five days a week, they would not be buying a day pass.

Mr. Yabes added that many of the day pass riders cannot afford the monthly pass.

Jayson Matthews asked who is being impacted within that 50M boardings, and whether it is more of the express, or the regular routes.

Staff indicated that they will investigate who is being impacted. Staff also discussed a proposal to provide a discounted pass to Tempe residents. Based on monthly pass sales from the Transportation Center and assuming that 50% of the boardings would occur in Tempe, the net cost of a discounted Tempe pass would be \$30K to \$50K annually, assuming a full dollar increase.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that if Valley Metro decided to increase it, we would still profit from it, but not from our own residents. Part of that would be offset by the \$2.25 that we would collect from non-Tempe residents. The potential bottom line revenue would still increase, although we would lose passengers.

Mr. de Leon stated that proof of residency would need to be developed for the discounted Tempe pass program. He continued that:

- Advantages to the proposed fare price
 - Raises the fare revenue.
 - Improves fare recovery by moving toward a higher discounted rate for monthly passes, which speeds up boardings.
 - Provides consistency with peer cities.
- Disadvantages
 - Reduction in ridership which might affect federal revenue for rail extensions.
- Considerations
 - Conduct further peer city analysis and policy analysis.
 - This is a short term approach and there is no long-term strategic approach.
 - This is a very aggressive timeline for implementation.
- Next steps
 - February 19th – public hearing data will be brought forward to the Board
 - July – implementation

Mr. de Leon added that the average income for the current passenger is approximately \$35K per year, and 50% to 60% are dependent on transit.

Greg Jordan arrived at 4:15 p.m. and provided an update from the Valley Metro Board meeting. Over 1,000 comments were received by Valley Metro through seven or eight valley-wide meetings, and there was little support for any increases to the fares. The top reasons were that raising the prices would decrease the ridership, increasing fares during a tough economy was unwise, raising costs would be difficult for transit-dependent riders, and a need for fixed fare boxes. Among the various choices, the lowest choice, the 50 cent increase in one year, was the preferred one.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that the recommendation from the public was no fare increase.

Mr. Jordan will provide further information before February 19th. Many cities have not had a chance to evaluate this information, so it is hoped that the date will be extended so that Valley Metro would not vote on it until March.

There was also a request to separate out Tempe responses if possible.

Agenda Item 5 – Results of November 2008 On Board Orbit Rider Survey

Amanda Nelson summarized the Orbit rider survey, which was conducted last November by WestGroup Research.

- 1700 adults were surveyed, 16 years of age and older.
- Surveys were conducted on all five Orbit routes with a 95% confidence level.
- Mainly ASU students and staff are riding.
- Average riders are ages 16 to 24.
- 91% are using Orbit during the week.
- Major destinations are ASU, Library, work, shopping centers and to/from work.
- 30% said they would have walked if they hadn't ridden Orbit.

- 24% would have taken another bus.
- 23% said they would have driven a car alone.
- Orbit is becoming part of peoples' daily habits.
- Overall, satisfaction was high.
- Suggested improvements were to increase frequency and reliability.

Councilmember Arredondo stated that what he has heard from residents was a desire for Orbit to go further south in Tempe.

Mr. Kephart responded that briefings are being scheduled to provide budget information and the potential for expansion.

Councilmember Arredondo clarified that he would like information about going further south soon before Council starts to discuss the budget. He needs to know the cost and when it could be implemented. He has also heard about increasing frequency and operating hours for large events and he suggested having more publicity when that is available. School buses have put signage on the sides, and it might be good to have that on the Orbit buses that so neighborhoods would have a clear idea about the route.

Vice Mayor Ellis added that it is helpful at the Orbit stops to have signs showing the route. Regarding improvements, staff needs to weigh against improving the existing Orbit (increasing the hours or routes) and going further south.

Councilmember Arredondo asked staff to do an analysis of the routes and also make a presentation to the Education Partnerships Committee. He suggested investigating the potential need for port-a-johns at the park-and-rides and asked staff to return with a recommendation. He would also like to see the number of shaded and non-shaded stops and what it is costing. He also asked about if drinking water available at bus stops.

Staff will provide an update on the following:

- Analysis of alternatives for the Orbit system improvements
- Report on issue of port-a-johns at light rail park-and-rides
- Bus stop improvements

Angel Carbajal asked that the Police Department be included in the discussions regarding the port-a-john and drinking water issues.

Mr. Kephart asked that the discussion on the port-a-johns also be placed on the Valley Metro Board agenda. He asked for clarification on the Orbit rider survey finding that 23% would have driven alone. He asked for analysis on what that translates into for taking cars off the road.

Greg Jordan stated that he would analyze that.

Agenda Item 6 – Final Work Plan

Carlos de Leon outlined the work plan changes suggested by Mayor and Council at the IRS on December 11th. The following changes were incorporated into the work plan:

- Under Item #a, the following tasks were added:
 - Work to seek policy changes with the FAA to allow additional soundproofing for the community.
 - Work with the FAA to seek additional funding for soundproofing for our community.
 - Seek from the FAA improvements to Sky Harbor that would reduce noise impact in our community.

- Under Item #f, commuter rail was added.

Vice Mayor asked Mr. de Leon to develop a chart with monthly goals to be used in creating the agendas.

Agenda Item 7 – Future Agenda Items

- Orbit analysis
- Port-a-johns at park-and-rides
- Bus stop improvements

Meeting adjourned at 4:20 p.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell

Reviewed by: Carlos de Leon

Jan Hort
City Clerk