



Minutes City Council's Transportation Committee February 24, 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Transportation Committee held on Tuesday, February 24, 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
Jyme Sue McLaren, Dep Pub Wrks Mgr
Amanda Nelson, Comm Outreach Mktg Supvr
John Osgood, Dep Pub Wrks Mgr
Elizabeth Thomas, Neighborhood Pgm Spec
Oddvar Tveit, Environmental Qual Spec
Amber Wakeman, Gov Rel Dir
Robert Yabes, Principal Plnr

Guests Present:

Don Cassano, Tempe Transportation Commission
Wulf Grote, METRO
Colby Picton, ASU student
Marc Sorenson, METRO
Jayson Matthews, Tempe Transportation Commission
Michelle Wilke, ASU student

Vice Mayor Shana Ellis called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m. and everyone introduced themselves.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None.

Agenda Item 2 – Tempe South Corridor Study

Dawn Coomer stated Marc Sorenson from METRO will provide an update on the Tempe South Corridor Study. She added that staff will be asking for direction to take this item to an Issue Review Session.

Marc Sorenson summarized that five different alternatives were examined.

- Utilization of the Union Pacific right-of-way for a bus rapid transit program with stops approximately every mile. This assumes a share/purchase agreement with the railroad. There are many engineering issues. The alternative did not receive a lot of support through the community process.
- A Mill/Kyrene bus rapid transit operating on Kyrene and over to Mill into the downtown area with stations about every mile utilizing the existing RPTA Link bus technology.
- Mill Modern Streetcar has been getting favor. This assumes the RPTA bus rapid transit on Rural Road would continue to operate from the Chandler Fashion Center in addition to the Route #72. The Mill Modern Streetcar would operate from Rural and Southern to Mill and then operate on Mill and the downtown area, either having a hard transfer or a direct connection to the 20-mile starter line. This is similar to what is being operated in Portland, Oregon. There is also an option to use the light rail vehicle in a modern streetcar environment.
- Rural Light Rail Transit - operating on Rural Road for two miles of light rail transit consistent with the Regional Transportation Plan. This would be a full interline operation where the trains from Southern north could operate into the west or the east. The same thing could occur in Mesa, operating south. One of the issues is that this is only two miles, which is all that can be funded with the funding sources available in the Regional Transportation Plan. This assumes there would be a feeder bus route, the #72 or the #472. To save right-of-way in the area, it would assume that at left turn locations, the tracks would share space with general purpose vehicles. A bridge over the Union Pacific railroad spanning about 1400 feet would be necessary.
- Rural Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) – could be implemented quickly. In the area between University and Baseline, there is an option to operate a high speed traditional bus rapid transit where the outside lane of Rural would be converted into “business access and transit” and through-traffic would be restricted to the inside lanes. Three queue jumpers which would separate the right turns from the buses at Southern, Broadway, and Guadalupe. Two legs would be assumed, one operating from Chandler Fashion Center and the other from a park-and-ride lot at Kyrene. This would operate in conjunction with Route #72. One goal is to decrease travel times and make direct connections with the 20-mile starter line. This area is some of the highest ridership in the Tempe South Corridor.
- Public meetings were held for both Tempe and Chandler residents and surveys also produced a lot of information. No one supported the Union Pacific BRT option. Rural Road BRT was supported as a very cost effective solution that could be rapidly implemented. There is still a desire for a rail option in this corridor. LRT and modern streetcar options drew a lot of support. There was some recognition that the two-mile LRT doesn't go far enough and there was concern about the 10-year timeframe to implement one of the rail alternatives.
- Findings are pointing to two specific alternatives: BRT as a rapid implementation on Rural Road, and Mill Modern Streetcar as an operation from the Library Complex to the downtown Tempe area.
- BRT is a candidate for economic stimulus. It serves the high demand areas of downtown, ASU, west Chandler. Initial capital implementation is relatively low compared to rail, however, over the 30-year life cycle, it begins to level out. It is also eligible for the FTA Very Small Starts Program for BRT projects under \$50M.
- Modern Streetcar has a lot of support. It has second highest boardings. There is a lot of support from the downtown Tempe community. It integrates with the Tempe Library Complex and Route #72. It requires more right-of-way in some areas and there would be disruption on Mill because more traffic signals would be included.
- Costs: Two BRT alternatives for Rural Road, with one of them reduced at less than \$50M could qualify for economic stimulus but would qualify for the FTA Small Starts Category. It assumes pulling the three park-and-ride lots, two of which are in Chandler, out of this because the extra money is assumed in park-and-ride and property for those. About half the cost is in buses. LRT would be a little over \$200M depending on how it is defined. Because of some of the expensive utility relocations on Rural, it would cost approximately \$100M per mile. Modern streetcar would be a little over 3.5 miles at approximately \$190M to \$200M.

- Schedule: Staff would like a recommendation to go forward to Council before summer on where we are headed with the locally preferred alternative.

Ms. Coomer added that another piece of the locally preferred alternative is continuing to work with MAG and ADOT on implementing some kind of regional commuter rail solution. There has been a lot of discussion about commuter rail in this project, but it has to extend outside of the boundaries of the study to be effective, so staff would like to continue to work on that effort as well.

Glenn Kephart added that this also relates to the economic stimulus discussion, especially in relation to the BRT option. He suggested holding off on direction until that discussion has occurred.

Agenda Item 3 – Economic Stimulus – Transportation Prioritization

Glenn Kephart stated that staff has been preparing for an economic stimulus bill since November. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act was signed on February 17th. Staff took the original list submitted with all the projects, and based on the MAG and RPTA criteria, some rose to the top as high priority. Staff had discussed returning to prioritize this list, and an alternative would be that all of these projects are positioned to qualify for money. Perhaps an approach would be to have them all as high priority and let staff and elected officials negotiate. Staff is requesting to leave the list open and see how it plays out.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that these are the projects that were already queued up. The stimulus could fund those and take them off and we could backfill with other projects on the regular CIP list.

Mr. Kephart agreed. In addition, staff is working on this through MAG and RPTA. The governor will also have discretionary money for other projects and staff is going through all of the CIP projects and creating a comprehensive list to submit to the governor for consideration. It is hoped that the list will get to the governor's office tomorrow. The transportation projects are not included in that list. There is some regional energy behind the Rural Road BRT corridor and there may be the opportunity to get stimulus funding for that project. If that is the case, we will need to make a decision fairly quickly that that is a project that we want to move forward. It comes with some challenges in that this project would be accelerated by about two years from that scheduled in the Prop 400 plan. That acceleration causes a gap. The stimulus funding will provide the money to build the project but it doesn't give the money to operate the project, and, in addition, it may or may not help with the buses. We would have a two-year window to maybe advance the money to accelerate this project to get economic stimulus funding. Staff is suggesting that we keep that window open and see if we can bridge that gap, and if we can, that could be a good thing. To that project specifically, we would like to have a policy level decision sooner rather than later to see if that is a project we want pursue, and if so, is it a project that we want to accelerate?

Jyme Sue McLaren added that the issue of the lane on Rural Road being dedicated to bus rapid transit and right-turn only does have an impact on traffic. Staff is still working through that issue so the impact is unknown. The economic stimulus package is getting ahead of our study process, but we did want to make it clear that the impact is still an unknown. We think it is workable, but we need to analyze that aspect.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that MAG hadn't determined how much would be available for each community and they were thinking about basing it on population. When will that decision be made?

Ms. Coomer responded that it will go through the MAG process. Last week at the Transportation Policy Committee of MAG, on which the Mayor sits, several different scenarios were presented. They will run those scenarios through the MAG process and it will eventually go to the MAG Council.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that staff is suggesting to submit all the projects and MAG can figure out what the criteria is.

Mr. Kephart clarified that all projects have been submitted. It's just a matter of whether there are any particular projects that Council prefers, or whether we just position ourselves to be open. Not knowing whether they define it by population or by need, makes it difficult to prioritize.

Vice Mayor Ellis noted that it looked like there was strong support from the business community for the modern streetcar, but that is more expensive and the time frame is longer. Are we making the decision that we are going in the BRT direction?

Ms. McLaren responded that the modern streetcar is not at a point in the process to pursue economic stimulus money, but it is important to recognize that the reason we have the corridor study that extends to Chandler is because there is a BRT corridor that goes from Scottsdale through Tempe into Chandler. That was funded as part of the RPTA pot of money through Prop 400. In addition to that, we have about \$200M in the Valley Metro Rail pot of money, so we believe we can fund both aspects of our program, one through Valley Metro Rail and one through the RTPA. Staff will not have the studies available for modern street car within the required twelve months.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that even if, through the stimulus package, the BRT should get funded, and even though we don't have the money for the buses and operations, we will still look at the modern streetcar and still proceed to see if that is a viable option.

Ms. McLaren agreed that would be staff's recommendation.

Councilmember Arredondo asked for clarification that the list of high-priority transit and street projects shows the total cost. The item of Tempe South BRT Park-and-Rides and Transit Centers, for example, says that the Economic Stimulus Request is \$40M. The Western Canal Multi-use Path shows \$9, with \$3M of federal funds, and we would look at the stimulus package for \$6M. Does someone have control to say that rather than the \$6M, the stimulus package would be \$5M, so if we want to do it, the City would have to chip in \$1M. Can that happen?

Mr. Kephart clarified that these projects listed as high-priority for CMAQ close-out funding have already been approved. Local funds are already dedicated. Whatever they give from the stimulus package, we would take because it is more than we have now.

Councilmember Arredondo cautioned with the economic time that we don't take money just for the sake of taking it and be careful that we don't have enough money to back it.

Mr. Kephart added that all of these projects, with the exception of the BRT, fall into that category. The BRT has some significant financial concerns and we want to have these discussions because it is still a good opportunity, whether we can overcome those financial concerns, is a discussion we need to have and we don't want to answer that prematurely.

Councilmember Arredondo felt it was too soon to have that discussion.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that for the ones that are in this year's CIP, if they went through, there wouldn't be any other costs associated, unlike the BRT where we would have to scramble.

Mr. Kephart added that, for example, the Baseline bridge replacement is an existing project that is currently funded, but it is short-funded because of the construction costs. Staff has to come back and ask for additional money for that. In the CIP, we currently have \$4M dedicated to that project, but it is looking more like a \$6M project, so this economic stimulus bill would really make up for a shortfall. Staff suggests taking Mr. Sorenson's presentation to Council and then to ask Council to discuss the issues with the BRT and try to get direction as to whether to continue

to move forward and push for economic stimulus for that project, understanding that we have some economic challenges that we will have to overcome.

Councilmember Arredondo asked staff to be very clear about what it means from an economic standpoint.

DIRECTION: Present to Council at IRS on March 5th.

DIRECTION: Present BRT and economic challenges on March 5th IRS.

Agenda Item 4 – Regional Transit and ADA Fare Policy

Greg Jordan summarized that there were two scenarios on the table: first, the recommended fare policy by Transit Manager's Committee (TMC) in November and, second, the Phoenix recommendation driven by their need to close a \$19M revenue shortfall. Both scenarios were on the lower end of the scenarios that went to the public. He presented a spreadsheet that showed the current consensus of the various cities, Option 1A. This will be going to the TMC in a week or so.

- The \$1.75 increase under Option 1A increases the fare by 50 cents and the annual cost to the person who would buy that local base fare ten times per week, would have an annual impact of \$650.
- The local day pass purchased on board would increase to \$5.25, with an annual impact of \$1365. The rationale is to move that type of transaction off the bus.
- Local day pass purchased off board would increase to \$3.50, with an annual impact of \$910.
- 7-day pass would remain the same at \$17.50.
- Monthly pass would increase to \$55.00, with an annual cost of \$660.
- Express fares would increase to \$2.75 base fare, \$7.25 for all day on-board purchases, \$5.50 all day off-board purchase and \$85 for monthly pass.
- Valley Metro's analysis shows this would result in a regional revenue increase of \$18.6M. For Phoenix it generates \$14.5M. It is still \$5M short of where they need to be. Regional farebox recovery in FY 2010 would rise to almost 30%, and by FY 2013, to 27.9%.
- Most of the cities have reached consensus on this option. It minimizes the effect on ridership and is on the lower end of the scenarios presented to the public and it restructures some of the passes to make a transition to another pass category a little more attractive. It helps with the offboard/onboard issue and is generally below the peer average.

The second option, 6A, achieves the \$19M for Phoenix and has the 2-4-6 scenario (\$2 to board, \$4 off board, and \$6 on board).

Vice Mayor Ellis asked for clarification that these increases are proposed for July 1st implementation.

Mr. Jordan confirmed that the increases would be effective July 2009.

Councilmember Arredondo stated that he is opposed to any fare increase but is most concerned about the youth and the seniors. Does this make any allowance?

Mr. Jordan responded that there is a reduced fare category, which is 50% the regular price. The cash fare for a senior would increase from 60 cents to 85 cents. The off board day pass would go from \$1.25 to \$1.75. The 31-day pass would increase from \$22.50 to \$27.50.

Councilmember Arredondo stated that the complaint he hears is that we just increased fares and now they already

want another fare increase. There should be some consideration given not to hit another fare increase for at least a couple of years.

Vice Mayor Ellis added that she felt Phoenix would come back next year for another increase.

Councilmember Arredondo asked what would happen if Tempe said no. Isn't there a message that could be sent that we have to go along with it, but we are still saying no? If we are even going to consider supporting it, it is based on two or three year commitment of no additional increases. We owe it to our community to stand up and say no.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked if the Phoenix City Council comes back and says no to Option 1A and that they will support Option 6A, what will be presented at the TMC meeting?

Mr. Jordan responded that Option 6A gets them exactly where they need to be.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that Phoenix could propose anything at their meeting today and questioned what option will move forward to TMC.

Mr. Jordan responded that it is the Valley Metro's Executive Director's intention to move forward with Option 1A.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked if it puts staff in a bad position if they vote against it since staff has been negotiating Option 1A as a compromise.

Mr. de Leon responded that it did not place staff in a difficult position since staff was trying to help Phoenix structure the rates to have the least impact on riders. If someone is currently paying cash on the bus for a single fare at \$1.25, and if they could switch to the monthly pass, they would see a small increase of \$10 in their annual costs to ride transit.

Councilmember Arredondo added that from here on, it is a political thing and the Council needs to stand up and say no. The purpose was to help people, not to come in and offer to help, and then ask for more. There should be a strong message carried forward that Tempe does not support it.

Vice Mayor Ellis stated that it was discussed at the Metro Rail meeting and the Mayor stood against it and no other city stood with him. She agreed that she would carry that message to the Valley Metro regional meeting.

Mr. Jordan added, concerning the Dial-a-Ride piece, that nothing has changed concerning the proposed policy. He would recommend tabling a fare increase until we understand the impact of the other potentially forthcoming free fare, fixed route pass for ADA-eligible riders. If revenues prove out to their estimates, they would vastly exceed the revenue that would be generated by the increase in ADA fares. Essentially, it isn't about the revenue, but the argument is to simply keep in line with the Phoenix ADA fares. Phoenix will approve to increase its ADA fares from \$2.50 to \$3.50 in July. The issue is trying to make sure that the demand for Dial-a-Ride services is not hugely incentivized by virtue of a very low fare.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked if the fixed route fares and the Dial-a-Ride fare would be two separate decisions.

Mr. Jordan stated that he had asked for that, but it will not be done separately.

Councilmember Arredondo asked why this hasn't been reviewed by the City's ADA person, Karl Stephens. It is a very important question and it should have been reviewed by him. He heard at a Council meeting that they are very concerned that ADA is followed in everything the City does, and he couldn't assure anyone that it is being followed unless he sees a stamp of ADA approval.

Mr. Sorenson agreed to consult with Mr. Stephens.

DIRECTION: Keep committee posted.

Agenda Item 5 – Light Rail Park-and-Ride Restrooms

Greg Kent summarized that at last month's meeting, there were some issues raised about lack of restrooms at the park-and-ride facilities.

- Currently there are two existing permanent facilities where there are restrooms: the Tempe Transportation Center and at the downtown Phoenix Transportation Center.
- Additionally, the City of Mesa has placed three portable restrooms at their park-and-ride lot at Sycamore and Main.
- During the design process, there were several reasons why it was decided not to add restrooms. Most peer cities do not have restrooms except in locations similar to the transportation centers.
- Other security issues include vandalism, use as shelters or showers for homeless, hiding places for criminal activity, and the need for additional security staff.
- Travel time between facilities is 15 minutes between Sycamore and the Tempe Transportation Center, 25 minutes between the Tempe Transportation Center and downtown facility at Van Buren, and 30 minutes from that location to the end of the line.

There are two options that could be pursued.

- The City could request that the METRO look at building restroom facilities at the major park-and-ride lots. A preliminary cost estimate for design and construction would be approximately \$300K.
- Similar to the City of Mesa, staff could provide portable restrooms at the Price parking facility. Portable restrooms can present the same security issues as noted, as well as complaint issues from riders and the public. Estimated cost for this option is approximately \$300 per month for each.

Councilmember Arredondo agreed that all the reasons for not having the facilities are valid reasons. He asked if staff had looked at installing security cameras to assist with security. He also suggested posting a clearly visible sign that notes where restrooms are located.

Mr. Kent added that the brochures currently do not show that information. The next time the brochures are printed, that information will be added. Also, security cameras are located at all park-and-ride lots.

Councilmember Arredondo suggested adding that to the signs to let people know that security cameras are in operation and where restroom facilities are located.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked if the two places that have the restrooms are open only during business hours, or open the entire time light rail is operating.

Mr. deLeon responded that the Transportation Center is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. and is closed on Sundays. Security is present 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and can let someone into the restroom upon request.

Vice Mayor Ellis suggested making that clear in any brochure as well.

Councilmember Arredondo suggested adding "Security on Premises" to the brochure and to the signs.

Agenda Item 6 – Transportation for America

Amber Wakeman summarized that this organization contacted several elected officials regarding the City becoming a partner. Several of their policies align with the key transportation policies of the City:

- Creating a sustainable transportation system
- Supporting safe walking and biking, reduced exposure to vehicle injuries and dirty air
- Supporting transportation investments that support desired land use and development patterns.

Staff has reviewed this information and believes it is a good organization to belong to, it is a lobbying effort to make our multi-modal stand stronger, and there is no financial obligation. Staff is seeking direction to determine if this is something to move forward.

Vice Mayor Ellis stated that she talked to them and also discussed it with the City's federal lobbyist. The lobbyist verified this group did good work and didn't think it was in conflict with what they do.

Councilmember Arredondo asked that a footnote be inserted asking them to work with the City's federal lobbyist and keep them informed.

DIRECTION: Include in a Friday Packet memo and stay in touch with the federal lobbyist.

Agenda Item 7 – Fixed Route and Orbit Bus Service Changes

Greg Jordan summarized that a public involvement process has begun to present six specific route modifications and a general call to the Orbit-riding public to gain feedback on the Orbit service. The route changes are motivated by an effort to increase efficiency or effectiveness and remain budget neutral or reduce costs.

- Route 92 – re-route north from Broadway along 52nd Street and coming to downtown via Rio Salado Parkway. This can serve a presently unserved corridor and allow the elimination of the short segment on Route 30. It would serve a dense industrial area between University and Broadway, and a dense corporate employment area north of University and Rio Salado Parkway. One drawback is that currently it serves a number of students that go to Tempe High School that take the #92 to go to Broadway and Mill. This change would ask that they transfer to Route #45.
- Route 44 – predominantly a Phoenix route that serves 44th Street and Tatum and comes into Tempe on the western side of the Airport. It is currently operated by Phoenix and has a connection to rail at 44th Street and Washington. The light rail connection warranted cutting that route back to Phoenix.
- Route 40 – was approved in December to extend the route from downtown across University Drive and into the airport because of the significant public input received. Need public's sense to determine if it is important to keep that connection to the airport.
- Orbit Earth – suggested to make the route more efficient to enhance the travel times. While there is the virtue of operating within the neighborhood on Sunset Drive, the route makes it slow. With the proximity of Sunset to Rural Road and a great deal of service offered there by Route 72, it is proposed to bring it back over to College Avenue and also give the neighborhood to the east of College Avenue better access to the route.
- Route 62 – a minor change in the downtown Tempe only. No impact on anyone and the downtown turnaround loop would no longer be necessary due to the opening of the Transportation Center. This will result in cost savings.

He added that these are based on input received and there may be additional modifications. There are public meetings scheduled for March 24th through the 26th.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that the changes would become effective on July 27th. Will it go to Council after the public input?

Mr. Jordan responded that it would depend upon the Committee's direction.

Mr. deLeon added that typically smaller changes are not taken to Council.

Mr. Kephart added that staff was directed to come back on Route 40, so staff might as well come back on the other routes as well.

Councilmember Arredondo asked about Route #92's effect on the Tempe High students. He suggested that staff bring this to the Education Partnerships Committee and explain that to the superintendents.

There were additional ideas as follows:

- Phone number for parents to call
- Target through the youth bus pass
- Notice on buses
- Produce information to send home with students.

DIRECTION: Come back to the committee with any changes to routes.

Agenda Item 8 – Bus Stop Improvements Update

Robert Yabes summarized that 42% of all bus stops are covered compared to 20% of Mesa's stops. Glendale only covers 25% of their stops. This year, a grant from the region for about \$500K will be used to build shelters and this has been submitted through the CIP process.

Vice Mayor Ellis clarified that the 42% coverage includes all types of shelters.

Mr. Yabes agreed.

Councilmember Arredondo suggested that staff continue to work with ASU. The students are starting to learn to use this more, but they will be aware of where it is shady. If we put everything together, it all works toward economic development.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked if some of the sheltered stops simply have trees for shade.

Mr. Yabes responded that it has to be a real structure to be counted.

Agenda Item 9 – Bicycle Facilities Update

Robert Yabes summarized that the original RFP for the bicycle facility has closed and staff will review the respondent on Monday. This will operate a "bike station" on the bottom level of the Transportation Center.

He continued that the Rio Salado South Bank path has opened. Construction has begun on Western Canal (6 miles) path at Priest and moving east. The Crosscut Canal is currently in design and Tempe Canal is under construction. College Avenue is ready for streetscape final design, Broadway Road streetscape project has started, and a second community meeting will be held on March 17th. Curry Road and University Drive are ready for construction bidding. The current multi-use path mileage is 12 miles in length and an additional 8 will be added in the next year and a half.

Mr. Kephart added that the final contract for design for the College Avenue project will come to Council on March 5th.

DIRECTION: Share information with the Neighborhood staff for the neighborhood association and homeowners' association meetings.

Agenda Item 7 – Future Agenda Items

Vice Mayor Ellis stated that a Council budget meeting was set during the next regular meeting time for this committee. We will need to reschedule that meeting time.

Meeting adjourned at 4:35 p.m.

Prepared by: Connie Krosschell
Reviewed by: Carlos de Leon

Jan Hort
City Clerk