



Minutes City Council's Transportation Committee October 27, 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Transportation Committee held on Tuesday, October 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:

Jan Hort, City Clerk
Glenn Kephart, Public Wrks
Jyme Sue McLaren, Comm Dev
Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Admin
Sue Taafe, Comm Rel
Shaun Yunt, Transit

Carlos de Leon, Public Wrks
Greg Jordan, Transit
Amber Wakeman, Gov't Relations
Jason Hartong, Transit
Tom Duensing, Financial Svcs
Dawn Coomer, Dev Svcs

Guests Present:

Mark Sorenson
Jayson Matthews, Tempe Transportation Commission

Amanda Markell
Don Cassano, Tempe Transportation Commission

Vice Mayor Shana Ellis called the meeting to order at 3:06 p.m. and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Agenda Item 1 – Public Appearances

None.

Agenda Item 2 – Recommended Revisions to Transit Services Changes

Greg Jordan stated that staff has been working with the Accountability & Governance Committee to analyze ways to reduce budgetary expenditures as a result of the continual decline in funding/revenues. As a result, a two-stage public involvement process was implemented to solicit input on draft recommendations for transit service changes and reductions which have resulted in the following phased in approach:

Phase 1 – Immediate Service Changes (FY 2009-10)

The revised set of immediate bus service changes would take effect between January and July 2010 and would yield up to \$3.5 million by FY 2016-17. These recommendations will be the subject of a second round of public involvement beginning in late October before being taken through the committee and council process for final approval. Tempe has submitted the proposed transit service changes to the City of Phoenix for a Title VI (Civil Rights Act, 1964) analysis to ensure service changes and/or reductions are equitably distributed. The results of this analysis should be available in late October and may necessitate additional service adjustments.

Phase 2 – Assess Impact of Operational and Financial Variables (FY 2009-10)

There are several operational and financial variables (e.g., future contract costs, fare recovery, tax credits, and federal grants) that presently have uncertain impacts on the operating budget. Positive outcomes for these variables could provide up to \$1.6 million by FY 2016-17. Staff recommends allowing 4-6 months to conduct further research and take action as situations warrant.

Phase 3 – Additional Service Changes (2010-11 thru FY 2011-12)

Based on the extent of budget savings generated by these operational and financial variables, an additional package of service changes may be recommended. These changes involve deeper cuts to bus service frequencies, route eliminations, and the possible introduction of an Orbit fare. The changes could yield up to \$2.9 million by FY 2016-17.

Phase 4 – Impact of streetcar on Mill (2016-17)

Based on information provided by Metro (Valley Metro Rail), a streetcar service on Mill Ave. from 3rd Street to Alameda Dr. is estimated to cost approximately \$1.8 million to operate (in FY 2016-17) depending on the level of service. Passenger fare revenue and bus route restructuring may offset this cost by 20-50 percent. Phases 1, 2, and 3 will affect the amount of available bus service that potentially could be restructured in Phase 4. In addition, specific operational considerations such as end of line bus turnaround capability will also affect if bus service can be restructured.

Carlos de Leon stated that regional funding may be adversely impacted by new Arizona Department of Transportation sales tax projections for the region.. These projections have not been taken into account in the four phases presented by staff. Glen Kephart added that as the financial environment changes, these phases will be adjusted accordingly. Federal funding will also impact how these phases are accounted for in the budget and ultimately how they are implemented. Amber Wakeman added that the federal funding agenda that will be presented to the City Council will include transit projects and timelines associated with submitting applications for grant funding opportunities.

Mr. Jordan then briefed the committee on proposed route changes, hours, frequency adjustments, public commentary and ridership information.

Councilmember Arredondo voiced the importance of staff meeting with school representatives to ensure that their collaboration and input is taken into consideration during the formulation of these phases. Councilmember Arredondo asked that staff also include the state legislature representatives for Tempe in this process.

Sue Taafe stated that changes to transit services will be well publicized via banners, posters, fliers, website and other social media. Councilmember Arredondo suggested that there be literature available to the public that could be available regarding these changes, as well as incorporating this information into the water bill. These system changes should also be articulated on TV Channel 11, which could be done inexpensively – perhaps Don Cassano could do this service announcement. ASU should also be apprised of these transit changes and assist in getting the word out to their respective constituencies.

Vice Mayor Ellis asked what surrounding jurisdictions are doing with their transit programs and how does that impact Tempe. Greg Jordan stated that Scottsdale's service reductions have already taken place with no adverse impact to Tempe, however Phoenix' and Mesa's service reductions are yet to be determined. It is anticipated that changes to Chandler and Gilbert transit service will be minimal, with little impact to Tempe. Mr. de Leon assured the committee that there are regional updates regarding transit service changes so that all jurisdictions are kept informed and updated regularly.

Agenda Item 3 – Ad Hoc transit fund Committee Update

Carlos de Leon stated that staff has recently been informed by the Financial Services Manager that the long range forecast reduction in funding for the transit program has increased from \$8.7 million to \$11.7 million. This will require further examination of where additional budget cuts are feasible. Because of this, staff anticipates that it will be spring of 2010 when the remaining proposed budget reductions will be presented to this committee.

Councilmember Arredondo stated that it is imperative that all revenue generating ideas be included when budgetary cuts are being considered. The possibility of taxing services was mentioned. Vice-Mayor Ellis voiced frustration about the continual pushing back of budget plans due to the changing financial environment.

Glenn Kephart stated that there is a longer timeframe in which to bring this fund into balance. If the financial climate were to significantly improve, staff has the ability to incorporate those changes into the budget so that the cuts would not be as drastic. Tom Duensing added that recovery projections are built into the transit fund budgetary calculations. Councilmember Arredondo acknowledged this and stated that transit is an integral and essential component to the community.

Mr. de Leon stated that staff anticipates making a presentation in November to this committee concerning \$1.2 million reduction in the operating transit budget, with the understanding that additional budget cutting measures will be presented at a later date. Councilmember Arredondo commented that staff levels should be maintained enough to adequately ensure that buses are maintained and kept clean.

Agenda Item 4 – Valley Metro ADA Eligibility Determination Program

Greg Jordan stated that the purpose of this program is to ensure that program participants fall within the government mandated adults with disabilities guidelines and that their disability status meets the guidelines to allow them the opportunity to utilize some or all of the disability transit options, depending upon the severity of their disability. The findings indicate that some individuals are using higher levels of services than their disability qualifies them for, which stresses system costs. Valley Metro has conducted public hearings on the proposed changes, which could save the City of Tempe approximately \$97,000. Program changes being proposed are:

- Conduct in-person interviews on 100 percent of applicants;
- Conduct functional assessments as needed;
- Interviews and assessments will be conducted at a single site and contracted to a professional health and rehabilitation organization;
- Increase ADA certification periods from 3 to 5 years and offer life-time certifications as needed;
- Provide or enhance alternative transportation options such as taxi subsidy programs, travel training programs, mileage reimbursement programs, and neighborhood circulator routes;
- Allow cities to opt into a program which would provide free bus/rail passes to their ADA Para transit certified residents.

Staff will also be making this presentation to the Mayor's Commission on Disability Concerns. Councilmember Arredondo stated that the costs of free pass programs need to be imparted to school district authorities so that they understand the financial contributions local and state authorities make to their school districts.

Agenda Item 5 – Future Agenda Items

Next scheduled meeting is November 24th.

Meeting adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Prepared by: Kay Savard and
Reviewed by: Carlos de Leon

Jan Hort
City Clerk