



Minutes Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group February 28, 2011

Meeting of the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group was held on February 28, 2011, 5:00 PM at the Don Cassano Community Room of the Tempe Transportation Center, 117 E 5th St., Tempe, Arizona.

Members Present:

Shana Ellis, Chair
Mark Yslas
Mike Wasko
Manjula Vaz
David Strang
Janie Shelton
Paul Kent
Steve Tyree
Rebecka Johnson
Cheryl Hornyman
Nancy Hormann
Karyn Gitlis
Lisa Roach
Charles Lee
Charles Huellmantel
Frank Granillo
Mary Ann Miller
Dale Larson
Margaret Hunnicutt

Members Absent:

Mike DiDomenico
Bob Gasser
Sam Wheeler
Chuck Newkirk
Stephanie Nowack

METRO Staff & Consultants Present:

Marc Soronson
Wulf Grote
Ben Limmer
Stephanie Shipp
Howard Steere
Hillary Foose
Saroja Devarakonda
Alec More

City Staff Present:

Jyme Sue McLaren
Nancy Ryan
Eric Iwersen
Shauna Warner
Charlie Meyer
Shannon Selby
Bonnie Richardson

Shana Ellis called the meeting to order at 5:02 PM.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

Chairperson Ellis welcomed the members that had not attended the first meeting of the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group (CWG). Mary Ann Miller and Margaret Hunnicutt introduced themselves and identified their affiliations within the community.

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Minutes from January 24, 2011

Chairperson Ellis called for the review and approval of Community Working Group meeting minutes from January 24, 2011. Mike Wasko identified a correction. Charles Huellmantel made the motion to approve the minutes with the correction provided by Mike Wasko and Nancy Hormann seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances

There were no requests to speak during the public appearances.

Agenda Item 4 – Track Configuration and Stop Location Activity

Chairperson Ellis turned the opening comments over to Ben Limmer.

Agenda Item 4A - Activity and the Purpose and Goals

Ben Limmer noted that the last meeting provided a primer on “Streetcar 101”, and this meeting we will be taking the CWG through a small group activity. The purpose is to identify the appropriate track location, (at curb or in the median), turn lanes, bike lanes, and stop locations. The 2.6 mile corridor is split into two segments. This month we will review Mill Avenue from 13th Street to Southern and in our March meeting from 13th Street north to Rio Salado Parkway including the Mill Ave/Ash Ave loop. Ben explained all the maps and plans on the walls and on the tables. Mill Avenue cross sections with existing conditions and proposed streetcar tracks were described by Ben. All of the materials are conceptual and not meant to be final.

Agenda Item 4B - How the project team developed the conceptual track configuration and the locations for station locations

Marc Soronson explained that the CWG would be looking at a baseline or draft effort to locate the track and streetcar stops. The materials also provide ideas for the areas for bikes, sidewalks and driving lanes could work best together. There are some neighborhood issue and some activity centers that should be considered in the decisions too. We want to know if we have enough stops or too many stops. The conceptual plan you are reviewing has a baseline cost that is targeted based on affordability at this time. We want you to spend time looking at the traffic/travel lanes and bike interface. The area from 13th Street to Southern is a lot less complicated than the area to the north, so you will get experience before addressing even more complex issues in downtown area next month. Very little additional property needed, and our goal is to stay within the existing curbs to accommodate the streetcar. One major goal is avoid impacting utility lines to minimize construction cost to the project and to allow it to be constructed faster.

Marc Soronson shared the design width requirements for bike lanes, sidewalk, traffic lanes and the streetcar track and stop. Marc reviewed how bicycle lanes can be routed past or around the streetcar stops. Marc said that there will be staff at each table to facilitate the discussion and specialized experts roaming between the tables to answer technical questions as they arise. The idea is to evaluate what works and what doesn't. Maps on the table are split from Southern to Broadway and from Broadway to 13th Street.

Agenda Item 4C - Track Configuration and Stop Location Activity

Ben Limmer noted that the group discussion would be about 45 minutes total and then each group should have an identified spokesperson to share your ideas. The four tables began their group discussion.

Agenda Item 4D - Sub-Groups Report Findings & Community Working Group Discussion

At the end of the activity each group reported their findings.

Karyn Gitlis reported that at Table 1:

- Adding extra stop at Erie, by the disabled housing complex at Broadmor and a stop by the hospital
- The underpass grade change limits how to place a stop
- Prefer outside lane for track, as less confusing for all the users
- Bus pullout north of Broadway being lost was a concern
- Stops can be offset or not have a matching stop

Dale Larson reported for Table 2:

- From Southern to Broadway tracks are safer on the outside
- Streetcar stops before the intersection, concern about if stops were after the intersections the vehicles would line up within the intersection.
- Hospital runs 70 ambulances entering at the Mill Ave entrance every 24 hours and 120 emergency visits daily. The hospital is seeing more people come by ambulance. There is concern about left turns from Mill and whether the streetcar would stop or how it could stop for emergency vehicles. If drivers are caught in traffic when the ambulances are coming, would it cause more confusion with the streetcar? Is it possible to put an emergency signal at the driveway for ambulances?
- Consider a streetcar stop at Hudson St, north of the hospital, where the streetcar could have a better view of what is happening ahead at the hospital emergency entrance. There are medical offices on Hudson that would have the potential to be served by the streetcar.
- Because of the historical district south of 13th St, is it possible to consider a center stop instead of the side stops.
- How does the stop at 13th street relate to whatever the next stop to serve Gammage Auditorium

Charles Huellmantel reported for Table 3:

- Favored outside lanes for streetcar unless there is a specific reason.
- Preferred to have the bike traffic go behind the stops
- Presence of a disabled housing development between Alameda and Southern and the ability to serve the adjacent residents without a stop was discussed. Would an extra stop reduce the travel times? Or could a stop at Alameda be placed closer to Broadmor?
- Tempe High, concern for potential issues of whether the streetcar stop should be on the north or south side of intersection, how it relates to bus stops. Would a stop by Walgreens create an issue for that business?
- It makes more sense to have a stop closer to the hospital.
- Look at the stop at 13th Street and the next north stop to make sure it serves both residents and Gammage Auditorium.
- Birchett Park is less desirable today, but is a real opportunity as you enter the downtown.

Mike Wasko reported for Table 4:

- Agreed the curb lane was best
- May be better to have a stop at Del Rio and Broadmor to be more equally spaced.
- Southbound stop at Broadway should be at Tempe High. Concern with the loitering and socializing by the high school students
- Stop around 13thst coordinated with the hospital, with the possibility of a light for emergency ingress and egress at Parkway Place
- Explore how to handle Birchett Park in connection with the stop to the north

Marc Soronson summarized the common themes of the group activity by noting:

- Tracks on the outside
- Desire for additional stops at quarter mile location
- There is a balance for historic neighborhood and wanting to provide access to those neighborhoods

Ben Limmer added that he heard from several groups

- To have a stop close to the hospital, without impacting the historic neighborhoods to the east
- There were several questions about the 13th Street stop location.

Jyme Sue McLaren noted that the next steps will be:

- Discuss the north half of the streetcar alignment next month
- Based upon comments made by the CWG, Metro and Tempe staff will come back, and identify the remaining issues on station locations, bike integration and track configuration.

Marc Soronson added that there will also be technical consideration based upon the information that has been collected on bike, pedestrian and traffic volumes to use in a simulation model that will aid in the streetcar analysis for the downtown area. Marc noted that the activity today was to get familiar with the south half of the project first before dealing with the difficult decision in downtown as it relates to parking, bikes and traffic. Did you feel the materials presented provide

useful information to make decisions, and how did the process work? He added if there are ways we can make it better, we want to do that for the next meeting.

In response to Marc's question, CWG members asked:

Could we identify where the bus stops are located?

Can we have the utilities (water lines) better marked on the maps? Marc Soronson agreed that the utility locations shown on the map could be clearer and noted some of the areas where lots of utility lines are present.

Can we have information at the next meeting about the businesses along Mill and their parking spaces? If you have tracks in the parking lane, will you have an impact on revenues to the city if parking is removed? Mark Soronson noted that there are fewer parking meters on the east side of Mill because of loading zones.

Jyme Sue McLaren stated that Metro and staff will take all comments this and next month and come back to the CWG for final consideration. Jyme Sue also noted that there was group discussion that dealt with whether to have the stop before or after an intersection. Jyme Sue stated that there are operational aspects to stop locations and the team will return with additional technical information for the group to consider.

Jyme Sue McLaren noted that she heard a lot of: What does the hospital feel about this? What does the High School feel about this? What about the DTC? We may want to rethink about how we report as a group and have some of those experts talk about what their issues are and the impacts to those particular businesses at a future meeting. That would include neighborhoods too.

Agenda Item 5 – Wrap-up and Closing

Chairperson Ellis noted that there is still some time left, and at the last meeting we ran out of time to take more comments.

Mike Wasko asked whether the alignment concept for the next section be sent to the CWG early. Marc noted that the maps are available in 11" by 17" format and could be sent to the members, by hard copy or electronically. Chairperson Ellis stated that once the information is added for bus stops and utilities we could make the maps available for the people ahead of time. She noted that one comment she heard was that people would like to have driven the route first to get a visual.

Mary Ann Miller noted that a question that came up in the group was whether there will be bikes on the streetcar, or has that been decided yet? Councilmember Ellis noted that in Portland, OR people walk on with their bikes because it such a short distance that they don't have to hang them up, like with light rail. Jyme Sue McLaren replied that a decision has not been made yet, but because Tempe is such a bicycle-friendly community it is hard to imagine that we won't have access for bikes. Jyme Sue continued that it might not be like accommodations found on light rail because the vehicles are so small that there probably will not be an area designated just for bikes. Mary Ann asked, so they won't have a front rack like on the front of busses?

Marc Soronson added that you would bring bikes onboard. Marc noted in Seattle and Portland you do not see that many bikes on the streetcars because it's a shorter route. Councilmember Ellis said that someone in the group had noted that if you ride your bike, most will go over to College Ave which is much friendlier with bike lanes and vehicle traffic is slower.

Councilmember Ellis called to CWG member Frank Granillo to introduce himself. Frank introduced himself and shared his community involvement in Tempe as well as his affiliation with Arizona State University.

The next meeting will be four weeks from now (on March 28th) at 5 pm. We will be doing the same type of activity. We will have a presentation from DTC and ASU about their areas.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 PM

Prepared by: Nancy Ryan
Reviewed by: Jyme Sue McLaren

Nancy Ryan
Community Development