



Minutes Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group April 25, 2011

Meeting of the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group was held on April 25, 2011, 4:30 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
Janie Shelton
Paul Kent
Steve Tyree
Rebecka Johnson
Cheryl Hornyman
Nancy Hormann
Karyn Gitlis
Charles Lee
Charles Huellmantel
Frank Granillo
Mary Ann Miller
Dale Larson
Margaret Hunnicutt
Michael DiDomenico
Bob Gasser

Members Absent:

Frank Granillo
Chuck Newkirk
Stephanie Nowack
David Strang
Lisa Roach

METRO Staff & Consultants Present:

Marc Soronson
Wulf Grote
Ben Limmer
Stephanie Shipp
Howard Steere
Saroja Devarakonda
Alec More
Tad Savinar
Angela Dye
Joe Racosky
Deron Lozano
Lisa Procknow
Robert Forrest
MB Finnerty
Gabe Grijalva

City Staff Present:

Jyme Sue McLaren
Nancy Ryan
Eric Iwersen
Shauna Warner
Charlie Meyer
Shelly Seyler
Bonnie Richardson
William Kersbergen
Cathy Hollow
Greg Jordan

Shana Ellis called the meeting to order at 4:36 PM.

Agenda Item 1 – Welcome and Introductions

Chairperson Ellis welcomed the members to the meeting and asked that the Tempe Streetcar Community Working Group (CWG) members, staff and audience members to introduce themselves.

Agenda Item 2 – Approval of Minutes from February 28, 2011

Nancy Ryan explained that there was a posting notice requirement issue with the March 28, meeting, but assured the CWG that their comments will be reflected in the upcoming records. Chairperson Ellis called for the review and approval of CWG minutes from February 28, 2011. Nancy Hormann made the motion to approve the minutes and Dale Larson seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously approved.

Agenda Item 3 – Public Appearances

Mr. AJ LaFaro, a resident of south Tempe, noted that he has lived in in Tempe since 1986. He asked if there is anyone represented from South Tempe on the Commission. Janie Shelton of the CWG responded that she lives in the area of Warner and Rural and another CWG member responded that she lived by Carver (Kyrene Middle School). Mr. LaFaro continued by saying it's my understanding from Congressman Paul Ryan from Wisconsin, that projects like this are not going to be funded, and the five Republican congressmen from Arizona are not going to support the funding of this project. You are not able to fund the current transportation system and yet you are talking about funding the streetcar. He said that it's my understanding that if you do not get the funding from the Federal Transportation Authority, and then are you going to get the funding from the Prop 400 transportation tax money? The federal transportation money is not going to happen. We fiscal conservatives of the Tempe Tea Party and of Arizona are going to make sure you do not get the federal money you need for the streetcar project. He stated that the streetcar is not a need, it is an unnecessary want. Anyone living south of the U.S. 60 freeway does not receive benefit for the things we subsidize north of U.S 60. Even though you cannot respond (for non agenda topics), I hope in the future we can have a dialogue about this.

Haryaksha Knauer from Tempe referenced an article from Arizona State University's newspaper that discusses traffic congestion at University Drive. He added that I know this has nothing to do with the streetcar, but it reminds me of the rezoning of land north of the river, and we have too many cars on Rural Road. I would like to leave this article with you. I agree with AJ that we should fund the modes of transportation that we already have.

Agenda Item 4 – Review of downtown Mill Avenue streetscape integrated with streetcar

Chairperson Ellis turned the agenda item over to Marc Soronson.

Marc Soronson initiated the discussion by saying that the information presented tonight is just one piece of a larger puzzle. He continued that tonight we will look at traffic and urban design, next month we will present the consolidation of the information you provided on track alignment and stops that you worked on last month and the previous month. Marc said we've taken into consideration for the track alignment, stops and activity centers and started to make changes to the plans to reflect that.

Marc Soronson said that today on Mill Avenue, there is about 18 feet from the curb to the front of the property. Within the typical section from the curb there is about eight feet depth with street furniture and trees, a six-foot clear zone for pedestrian passage, and four foot area that could be used for dining. In Alternative 1 (curb lane) it would have an 8 foot depth for streetcar platform, (length varies from 40 to 60 feet depending on vehicle selected and where the doors are situated), a six-foot clear area and then four to five feet for sidewalk dining. For Alternative 2 (shared through lane) parking and bike lane would still exist and the platform would extend into the parking lane. There would be the six foot clear zone and a four to five foot area for sidewalk dining. Marc said the bike lanes would probably be behind the platform and away from the tracks.

Mike Wasko asked if there would be a risk to the bikers if someone gets out of a parked car (into the bike lane). Marc Soronson responded that there are couple ways to answer that; today there is a conflict with parked cars only on the driver's side as opposed to the passenger side. He continued, some would argue that drivers expect that (the presence of cyclists) but passengers don't. In Alternative 2 the bikes are on the passenger side of the car; but note every parked car has a driver, but not every parked car has a passenger. He said METRO will be working through a way preserve the bike lane and do it with a level of safety that is acceptable.

Marc Soronson added that METRO wants to make sure that in the areas where the bikes cross a track, and there are a few of those locations, that the bike wheel does not get caught in the track.

Agenda Item 5 – Traffic Analysis Presentation

Marc Soronson explained that there was a lot of detail that went into the traffic analysis. We wanted to present it in a way that you could understand it. Marc noted that Shelly Seyler, from the City of Tempe, will assist to explain this. She will talk about existing conditions, 2015 travel forecasting on the no build (growth in traffic without the streetcar), and also with the Alternative 1 curb lane and Alternative 2 shared through lane on top of the 2015 conditions, and what happens. We will also spend time reviewing the traffic signal cycles, because there are differences between Alternative 1 and Alternative 2. Marc emphasized that it's important that everyone understands how those movements are made.

Marc Soronson said that traffic is one piece of the puzzle that will go into making a decision on where the stops are and where the track alignment is in downtown. If you remember, previously we eliminated the center of the street running alternative, and all options on Ash Avenue except the west side running. At a later meeting we will present some of the conclusions about the stop locations, taking into consideration the comments you made and how they relate to the track alignment. I think you will see the number of changes made to address the comments received.

Shelly Seyler shared the data collected in order to analyze the existing conditions scenario for traffic along Mill Avenue streetcar route. She noted that the data included vehicle, pedestrian and bike counts in the past month. For 2015, there is a growth factor added to 2011 data to forecast the 2015 No Build traffic volumes. Shelly continued that in the analysis we included bus blockage that occurs today along existing bus routes, on street parking and used current

signal timing at intersections. Shelly noted that the current lane striping was used for the existing conditions and adjusted the volumes to look at the peak hour. She said for 2015 with Alternative 1 and 2 pedestrian volumes were added pedestrian trips based on where we would expect to have pedestrians using the streetcar stop.

Shelly Seyler said that the analysis conducted does not include a streetcar in the transportation model, so a bus was simulated to account the delay factors similar to the streetcar. On-street parking was left in the scenarios and the existing signal timing was used but optimized for 2015 conditions and adjusted for peak hour factors. The greatest impacts to traffic will occur in the PM Peak.

Shelly Seyler explained what the level of service from A to F means. Marc Soronson went through a series of slides with charts on the level of service (LOS) rating for all the intersections along the route. Marc noted that one interesting thing about the traffic on Mill Avenue was there is less of a problem with traffic congestion than the perception of it. This occurs on existing conditions and the 2015 forecast. Marc shared the key intersections that had lower (D) level of service were at Mill and University; Mill and Broadway, and Mill and Southern. Marc noted that there is a lot of east-west and a lot of north-south traffic. Marc shared that southbound Mill Avenue (in downtown) was most congested in the PM Peak and added that one reason for the streetcar loop was that it would not operate in the southbound direction in downtown.

Mike Wasko asked if the level of service estimate was analysis of just the north-south conditions, or is the east-west conditions included in all these intersections. Marc Soronson replied that the LOS took into consideration all the intersection movements. Shelly added that the LOS is an average of all the movements over one hour time. Mike said, so there may be more congestion at the Broadway side of Mill and Broadway, but it's averaged. Marc noted that where it says "N/A" it's because this is the No Build condition, and there are not signals at those intersections unless the streetcar is built. The N/A intersections are where a new signal would be constructed for the streetcar.

Marc Soronson explained that the models are showing us that they are not significant difference in the intersection delays from either Alternative. The intersections that have a greater than 5 second delay were highlighted on the slide.

Marc showed slides with the phased movements for the Rio Salado Parkway and Mill Avenue.

- At Mill and Rio Salado Parkway there is a separate phase for streetcar movement for the curb lane Alternative 1, where the streetcar turns left from the curb to the center lane on Rio Salado Parkway. Basically every turn movement is held so the streetcar can turn.

Mary Ann Miller asked how far back would the streetcar stop be located, it was by the parking lot just past the 3rd Street Light Rail station. Marc Soronson said it would be by the Mill and 3rd intersection. Mary Ann asked if it would be a long phase and about how it would work with cars hurrying to get ahead of the streetcar in the curb lane to use the right turn at Rio Salado. Marc replied that there is a potential conflict and would need to have signage to address vehicles and streetcar, but it could work.

Karyn Gitlis asked whether this is comparable to the five phase cycle elsewhere on light rail. Marc asked Shelly Seyler if there is any light rail operation in Tempe that has an additional phase. Shelly noted that there is no special phase that occurs along light rail in Tempe. Marc commented that in Phoenix there is one at Central and Washington.

Mark Yslas asked if you give a LOS D for some of the intersections in 2015, what those would be today. Shelly Seyler replied that those same intersections are a LOS D today. Marc noted that the traffic is one part of the puzzle, and from the analysis the streetcar does not have a real detrimental effect on traffic. He continued, that there not a significant difference for traffic from Alternative 1 and Alternative 2 (in downtown). Shelly added that there is a range of delay for a LOS D, so today it could be at the low end of the level and in 2015 be higher, but still within LOS D. Marc explained the turn movements for Alternative 2 (shared lane) at Rio Salado Parkway and Mill Avenue. He noted that in Alternative 2 the streetcar would move from the through lane into the left turn pocket similar to a bus and use the left turn phase to move through the intersection identical to how the intersection operates today.

Mike Wasko asked if you could do the lane change in Alternative 2 (shared lane) for Alternative 1 (curb lane), so the streetcar would have it in the left turn pocket and could transition earlier to use the left turn. Marc responded that the traffic would have to be stopped further south to allow the streetcar to move across two lanes.

Charles Huellmantel noted that 3rd Street has the least amount of cross traffic because nothing feeds into or out of it, so red could be triggered at the stop by Third St and allow the streetcar to change lanes there. Shelly clarified, so instead of impacting Mill and Rio Salado with an all red phase, it would implement the all red phase at 3rd St and Mill for the streetcar. Shelly noted that would be a possibility, but is more complicated at that intersection today than a signalized intersection without the light rail.

Steve Tyree asked how that intersection would work with special events where people are crossing that intersection too. Marc noted it would be a whole different issue and depending on the special event, the streetcar might not be running on that section of Mill Avenue, but on Ash Avenue.

Mike Wasko asked if there was any option considered to keep it off of Rio Salado Parkway (street) and stay on the sidewalk on the south side of Rio Salado. Marc Soronson clarified that there is limited room on the south side because of additional property would be needed and the left turn would have to start further south. Shelly noted that the intersection would need to change and would probably be (elongated) outside the size allowed for traffic engineering. Wulf Grote noted that there is Monti's at the southwest corner of Rio Salado and Mill, which is a historic building.

Marc Soronson showed the slides for the Mill and University intersection movements.

- Both alternatives have a transition of the streetcar northbound cross over to the curb lane as they pass through the intersection.
- In phase two, the north-south through traffic moves through, and the streetcar makes its transition to the curb lane with traffic. The southbound streetcar on University approaches the left turn pocket of the intersection.

- Phase three allows left turn from eastbound University to Mill, and the streetcar moves with the vehicles, but turns right to the inside through lane on southbound Mill.
- In phase four the left turns for both west and east bound move.
- In the fifth phase the east and westbound traffic on University moves.

Mary Ann Miller asked if the southbound turn phase will be tripped by the streetcar. Marc Soronson commented that there would be more cycle time to allow the streetcar (and vehicles) to make it through the intersection.

Summary slide was reviewed by Marc Soronson

- Both alternatives operate at acceptable level of service
- Curb lane running has less overall traffic delay
- Both alternatives will allow bike lanes to be part of the design.
- Parking and loading zones will be reduced on all Alternatives. Neither alternative affects the loading and parking on the east side of Mill.

Marc Soronson said there will be a whole matrix of things to consider, and traffic is just one. We are seeing that there is not a clear decision you can make by looking at just traffic. We have all the back-up and detail on this information. Marc called for any questions or comments on what they have seen.

Nancy Hormann clarified what she heard from the presentation to be that there is very little difference in traffic consideration between the curb lane and the through lane alternatives in downtown. Shelly Seyler explained that the reason is because it's operating in the northbound direction, and in the PM Peak the highest delay of traffic is in the southbound direction. The fact that the streetcar is running northbound is a benefit for both alternatives. Nancy asked whether the CWG is going to study the other things that may be impact by choosing one of the alternatives. Marc Soronson shared that there are a lot of things to consider but for traffic neither of the alternatives appear to have a fatal flaw.

Another CWG member asked Nancy Hormann whether the curbside option is an impact to businesses. Nancy replied that that the idea of losing parking (or the perception of lost parking) is one that the businesses are not pleased about. With the sidewalk impact in the curbside alternative (Alternative 1) you lose a tremendous amount of pedestrian space by taking outdoor cafes and other things. We do not want to take away the pedestrian-oriented flow from downtown. Nancy continued that if we were to put this out to the businesses now, they would want the through lane alternative (Alternative 2) because it has the least amount of impact on their business in the downtown.

Marc Soronson commented that depending on the location of the stop, the curb lane running would provide a ramp up, platform and ramp down, which is all pedestrian-oriented. However, Marc added that there would be construction from the curb into the sidewalk. Nancy said so anywhere there is a stop, if a business had their café at the tree line that area would be lost. Marc replied that the dining could be moved adjacent to the building. Nancy responded that many of them cannot get adjacent to the building because there is not enough room, so they will lose outdoor space.

Karyn Gitlis said she wanted to support Nancy's comment about pedestrian flow, noting that at peak times on Mill taking away sidewalk and then dining is an issue. She noted she wondered if ADA access to the streetcar would be accommodated within that area. Nancy Hormann said there is enough room for ADA access as shown in the diagram. Nancy stated that there was the hope to expand the sidewalk space instead of reducing it. Angela Dye noted that the current ordinance requires six foot clear to get by, ADA access is 36 inches, and technically you can fit a café table and chairs in two feet, so there are many ways to fit the uses.

Mike Wasko noted that with the potential locations for the stops the only one that could impact the café space would be the one north of 5th Street, so it's not all of Mill Avenue that is impacted by the stops. Marc Soronson noted that based on comments some of the potential stop locations are being changed and you will see those changes collectively at next month's meeting. Mary Ann Miller added that what exists today may be a different business with different needs in the future, and we need to be flexible.

Steve Tyree commented that within downtown the location of the alignment does make a difference, so moving to the center would it change the affect the sidewalks? Marc Soronson noted that in the last discussion the center median running, and the left turns eliminated got everyone concerned enough that the center running was eliminated. Marc said that the stop is about eight feet and the length depends on the type of vehicle. Steve commented that he would like to know from artists, how will the stops look and function with the different alternatives.

Paul Kent asked about the height difference between the existing curb and the curb for the ADA platform. Marc Soronson responded that it would go from 6 inches to about 14 inches, a difference of up to 8 inches.

Agenda Item 6 – Conceptual Approach to Streetcar Design Guidelines

Tad Savinar explained that the guidelines that will give direction to the designers of the streetcar. Streetcar projects are different than light rail; they are more streamlined, less materials and the scale is simpler. Tad added that METRO is developing the design guidelines to be for the streetcar system, not just Tempe, but they might be in the Valley as a standard but with some customization in each neighborhood. The guidelines have a budget parameter and need to work in the future for other projects and in Tempe be special for Tempe. Tad noted the many design documents he reviewed, and interviews he held have helped to share the questions for discussion tonight. Tad shared that the drawings are not designs, but are to share what direction we might be heading.

- There is a downtown urban street character and then a residential character to the neighborhoods to the south.
- The slides showed bus shelters and streetcar shelters used elsewhere. There is precedence where a certain district might have a distinct design. Elements that comprise a streetcar shelter include shade, panels, landscaping, lighting and seating.
- The shelter would change depending on if it is a single or double loaded platform.
- The shade ideas could be dappled and variegated, and could use photovoltaic cells in a vertical screen, or fritting (ceramic material design within the glass). Another option could be for a cut metal screen, artist designed or not, easy to maintain and a step up from punched metal at other bus stop. Could be that artists do different segments or stations

within the line. There could be a series of horizontal bars, maybe a recycled material or as a branding opportunity, with the bars far enough apart that you can see through (for safety). These could be done by artists too.

- Landscape is an important part of how we keep ourselves comfortable. Landscape conditions vary by type and abundance of trees and as noted by Eric Iwersen there are xeriscape options in Tempe too.
- Paving examples could include taking brick onto the platform, or combining with an exposed aggregate. Another option is a saw cut pattern in the sidewalk. The track pavement can be a raked or broom finish.
- Art plays a role in making stations special. There are lots choices such as history panels, screens or standalone art. Where handrail is needed, some cities have used that space as art.
- One idea that is not in the budget, but could be accommodated might be to use a special light as identification, like a luminaria. A light that is more about community or spirit that would distinguish itself from all the commercial lights, something that has an ethereal quality that could be used to find a stop from a three-block distance. This example is to find a way to allow the streetcar system to blend with the community.

Tad Savinar asked the group whether they see a difference between Mill and Ash or north Mill and south Mill and is there a reason to distinguish between those areas?

Charles Lee noted that he was born and raised here and would like to see support columns of the shelters mimic the Monti's adobe and beams near Monti's. He felt that different parts of Tempe should have different themes. Mary Ann Miller asked if you can see through the bus stop. Tad Savinar acknowledged that the shelters would be transparent, and that would be a guiding principle in these guidelines. Tad added that the leading criteria for design of shelters are security, safety and cooling which drive the design.

Mike Yslas asked if the design takes into consideration the cleaning and maintenance because it will get scratched, marked with graffiti and vandalized. Tad Savinar replied that it is METRO's job to maintain these, but maybe there are options to have Downtown Tempe Community involved in the maintenance in the downtown area like they do for the sidewalks. Tad added that you have to design these with materials that can be easily maintained because keeping these stations clean is critical to any transit system.

Charles Huellmantel said that he appreciated the efforts to make the units unique and yet identifiable at the locations, and to match the landscaping similar to what exists at the area. The idea of a branded light is a phenomenal idea that people can identify the streetcar as something that you find in a Tempe street, and instinctively know that there must be a streetcar stop up there.

Mike DiDomenico noted in selecting the materials, anything that is soft is etchable, any glass polymer or plexiglass will get damaged and anything aluminum will be stolen and recycled; which has been the case on every property my company maintains throughout the Valley. Mike asked if there is a need for shelters in the downtown area. Tad Savinar replied that if there was a platform where it may not be needed, it is at 5th and Mill, but there is a need for a canopy elsewhere. Shade is provided at some stops by trees, but that would not protect from rain.

Mike replied that the system in San Francisco does not have structures at each stop. Tad responded that he is open to that but needs guidance from Tempe and METRO on that. Mike noted that he is not specifically advocating for that, but noted that it would add of clutter and maintenance in the downtown and once you go south of University you need the shelters.

Karyn Gitlis said that she liked Charles comments on branding and using distinctive design in different parts of the route. She noted that she loves the idea of a light being part of that distinctive design.

Paul Kent added that he agrees with Mike DiDomenico that streetcar shelters would look weird in downtown, but that a pole and the light with a sign would be fine. South on Mill Avenue would be fine for shelters.

Tad Savinar noted there a step down option where you could take parts of the design, like vertical shade without going completely without any amenities.

Chairperson Ellis added that a question she is asked frequently is who is responsible for maintaining the art in the Tempe bus stops. She noted that they are often part of the Art in Private Development grant that the Tempe Art Commission is responsible for and the City installs the art features. She continued that it's my hope that we see a lot of development along this line and that the art amenities from private development could be directed to the local stops. Tad Savinar said that METRO has a public art program, and they do have funds set aside.

Chairperson Ellis added that what she is hearing that we need to look at each stop to determine if it needs a shelter, or if the stop location is where we could copy the unique character or does this stop need shade, etc. She agreed that they should have common themes, like the light was mentioned and definitely ensure there is shade whether it's already provided or by a shelter.

Tad Savinar suggested that once the stops are determined, that maybe a shading study could be prepared.

Agenda Item 7 – Wrap-up and Closing

Councilmember Ellis noted that the shorter meeting was allowing her to attend an event that honors youth in the community. She added that the next meeting on May 23, 2011 will be a week before Memorial Day, and will start at 5PM in this room. She asked if there were any highlights of what would be happening at that next meeting.

Marc Soronson noted that the next meeting METRO will share the comments received on stops and alignment and provide a list of the pros and cons of the locations, as well as have the CWG discuss the pros and cons. He continued that in June METRO would like to come back with a recommendation, based on the May meeting comments and see how the CWG feels about a recommendation.

Steve Tyree suggested that preference for the art ideas are hard to determine without any reference to cost, so could METRO provide some idea of what a standard stop would cost, and then differences with parts like the cut metal or other type panel in a broad cost comparison.

Meeting adjourned at 6:08 PM

Prepared by: Nancy Ryan

Reviewed by: Jyme Sue McLaren

Nancy Ryan
Community Development