



Minutes City Council's Transportation Committee September 22, 2009

Minutes of the meeting of the City Council's Transportation Committee held on Tuesday, September 22, 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
Oddvar Tveit, Environmental Qual Spec
Shauna Warner, Neighborhood Admin
Jyme Sue McLaren, Comm Dev
Sue Taaffe, Comm Rel
Shelley Hearn, Comm Rel
Shelly Seyler, Pub Wks
Greg Jordan, Transit Administrator

Glenn Kephart, Pub Wks
Carlos de Leon, Dep Public Wrks Mgr
Nancy Ryan, Comm Dev
Amanda Nelson, Comm Outreach Mktg Supvr
Joe Clements, Transit
Cathy Hallow, Pub Wks
Jerry Hart, Fin Svcs

Guests Present:

Jayson Matthews, Transportation Commission
Adam Perillo, Kimley-Horn
Gabriel Cabrera, ASU

Don Cassano, Transportation Commission
Michael Grandy, Kimley-Horn

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 – Rio Salado Low Flow Channel

Oddvar Tveit explained that the US Army Corps of Engineers worked in conjunction with the City of Phoenix and the City of Tempe to create a continuous low flow channel to the west of Priest Drive, directly adjacent to the Town Lake as part of a "Second Phase Habitat" Project. The Sunset Riverside Neighborhood Association has voiced concern over the continued release of storm water on the south riverbed of the Town Lake, which is creating wildlife habitats and increasing the amount of vegetation. Because of these outcomes, there is apprehension that the airlines will deviate from the riverbed flight path due to potential bird strikes, which will increase the noise in Tempe neighborhoods and pose safety hazards from low flying aircraft.

The Tempe Aviation Commission supports the Sunset Riverside Neighborhood Association and would like to see City staff begin a dialogue with Phoenix leadership so that noise concerns for Tempe neighborhoods are outlined and addressed. Nancy Ryan stated that staff meets biannually with Phoenix staff to discuss airport operation issues as they pertain to Tempe. With committee concurrence, staff would like to raise these issues at the next meeting. Committee members agreed that an appropriate approach would be staff to staff meetings.

Agenda Item 3 – First Street Alignment Study

Glenn Kephart stated that the study was included in capital improvement program (CIP) to evaluate the First Street and Ash intersection. Design and construction funds were not included in the CIP. Shelly Seyler introduced the consultant Michael Grandy who gave this presentation. Mr. Grandy stated that the purpose of this study is to look at ways to realign First Street to create improved access between downtown and the neighborhood to the west of downtown. Redesign constraints such as the railroad crossing, existing buildings and historic structures were cited.

Mr. Grandy outlined three redesign options for committee review. Currently the area of study does not meet existing city code design standards. The three options are 1) acquiring rights-of-way (R.O.W.) and relaxing city code roadway design standards; 2) shifting the road to the south and 3) installing traffic roundabouts. Roundabouts are being considered, but can pose confusion to drivers. These three options have flexibility with ultimately combining options. Option 1 and 2 increases time delays while option 3 decreases time delays and increases capacity. Costs are estimated as follows: Option 1 – R.O.W. \$350,000 to \$450,000, Construction \$1M – \$1.2M; Option 2 - R.O.W. \$350,000 - \$450,000, Construction \$1M - \$1.2M; and Option 3 – R.O.W. \$750,000 - \$900,000, construction \$.9M - \$1.1M. These are factors that are taken into consideration when determining traffic flow/delay time spans. The installation of sidewalks is another pedestrian/disability access area of consideration.

These options have not yet been taken to the public for input/feedback, however a presentation has been made to the Transportation Commission. Commissioners gave feedback on the three options and the costs associated with each option. Option 1 received minimal support and Option 3 was perceived as best accessibility. However, the felt roundabouts were difficult for ADA, pedestrians and bicyclists. It was also noted that the short term benefits do not justify the costs.

The next step of this project is to recommend option #3, with option #2 as a second choice and then to prepare a final report. This project has not been included in the Capital Improvement budget. Public comment will not be sought until after funding has been earmarked for this project. Committee members suggested that staff move forward with the design report so that when funding becomes available in the future, staff is prepared to embark on a public input process for the project. In addition Committee members suggested providing an informational memo to Mayor and Council to share the results of the report.

Agenda Item 4 – Long Range Transit Fund Update

Carlos de Leon reported that the forecast for the Transit Fund indicates that the fund is not sustainable over the long term. Because of this, the Transportation Commission formed an ad hoc committee to study and recommend a financial balancing plan with the goal of creating a sustainable transit fund.

The two financial strategies identified are:

- Using approximately \$40 million in fund balance to partially retire debt principal, which reduces annual recurring operating expenses by \$1.3 million.
- Reducing a total of \$7.4 million in annual recurring operating expenses by phasing in major reductions over the following years:
 - \$1.2 million in the current fiscal year
 - \$5.4 million from the next three fiscal years (FY 10-11 to FY 12-13)
 - \$0.8 million beyond FY 13-14

The process will include categorizing major program elements, identify and documenting potential measures, evaluating potential measures across categories, and determining the combined financial impact of the preferred measure.

Staff is also aggressively looking at making modifications to the bus system schedule in order to compliment the above mentioned funding recommendations.

Agenda Item 5 – Transit Services Budget Balancing Program

Greg Jordan stated that \$7.4 million in cost savings or new revenue needs to be generated in order to bring the transit fund into balance by FY 2012-13. Major program elements funded by the Tempe transit tax were noted:

- Local bus services - \$9.6 million
- Orbit - \$8.1 million
- Light rail - \$7.5 million
- Fuel - \$4 million
- Dial-a-Ride - \$462,000
- Flash - \$112,418
- Express bus services - \$0 (100% regionally funded)

Operational improvements being looked at are:

- Route restructures
- Eliminate route/service redundancies
- Modify hours of operation
- Match service levels to demand
- Combine routes
- Maximize fare revenue intake

Staff will also be meeting with school officials to discuss the program impacts to their respective districts. Public comment is being sought and incorporated in to the final recommendations to Council. A series of public meetings is planned for September, October and November regarding changes in the bus system.

Councilmember Arredondo stated that charging for the Orbit system could send a wrong message to the community. He also noted that the Orbit route serves Friendship Village and is essential to allowing residents an affordable mobility option. He discouraged the notion of charging a fee for this community amenity. The same pertains to other routes as well. He requested that staff work with the Tempe Community Council regarding demographics of the population that routes serve.

Staff was commended for how inclusionary this process has been, particularly the public input aspect of this project.

Agenda Item 6 – Future Agenda Items

Transit Services Budget Balancing Program

Meeting adjourned at 4:03 p.m.

Prepared by: Kay Savard

Reviewed by: Carlos de Leon