

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

DRAFT

HELD ON March 21, 2023

The Transportation Advisory Board of the City of Mesa met in the Lower Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on March 21, 2023, at 5:30 p.m.

<u>TAB Members Present</u>	<u>TAB Members Absent</u>	<u>Others Present</u>
Michelle McCroskey (Chairperson)	Tara Bingdazzo	Ryan Hudson
Ryan Wozniak (Vice Chairperson)	Rodney Jarvis	Sabine King
Ashley Gagnon	Sam Gatton	Anna Janusz
Mike James		Mike Kuntz
Daniel Laufer		Jodi Sorrell
Megan Neal		Rachel Nettles
Melissa Vandever		Mark Venti
David Winstanley		Andre Rioux

Chairperson McCroskey called the March 21, 2023, Transportation Advisory Board meeting to order at 5:34 pm.

Item 1. Approval of the minutes of the Transportation Advisory Board meeting held on January 17, 2023.

It was moved by Board Member Laufer, seconded by Board Member Winstanley, that receipt of the above-listed minutes be approved.

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCroskey – Wozniak – Gagnon – James – Laufer – Neal – Vandever – Winstanley

NAYS – None

Item 2. Items from citizens present.

None

Item 3. Hear a presentation and discuss the City of Mesa 2050 General, Transit, and Transportation Plan Update.

Sabine King, Supervising Engineer, introduced herself along with Jodi Sorrell, Transit Services Director and Rachel Nettles, Assistant Planning Director. They proceeded to give an update on the City of Mesa 2050 General, Transit, and Transportation Plans.

Ms. Nettles explained that the General Plan is a comprehensive plan that covers various departments and is developed in collaboration with the community and City Council. The plan must be updated every 10 years, ratified by the voters, and requires two-thirds approval from City Council. The upcoming 2050 General Plan will be on the general ballot in 2024. She stated that they reviewed the concerns from the last plan update, which included a lack of job opportunities and a need for diversified housing. Additionally, there was a push to have a better job to housing ratio. One of the key themes in the new plan is to create a sense of place, addressing the lack of commercial activity and connection to neighborhoods. The 2040 General Plan's three guiding principles are creating and maintaining great neighborhoods, growing and maintaining diverse and stable jobs, and providing rich, high quality, and diverse public spaces and cultural amenities. Ms. Nettles reported that they are currently in the first stage of public engagement, which includes launching a website, conducting interviews with community members (in groups and one on one), attending public events, and conducting a survey until the end of the month. They are also tracking responses to ensure they receive a diverse range of feedback throughout the community.

Ms. Sorrell presented the Transit Master Plan updates, highlighting their efforts to understand future needs and finalizing it for incorporation into the Transit Master Plan update. She also discussed the community outreach they have conducted, including public surveys available on www.tomorrowsmesa.com.

Ms. King then presented updates on the Transportation Master Plan efforts, informing the Transportation Advisory Board that they are in the first phase of the public outreach. After her updates, she asked for any questions and for board member feedback.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak inquired about the progress made since the last update, particularly in regard to the previous themes from 10 years ago. He asked where the push for change is coming from and what hurdles may have been experienced in the past 10 years, following the previous Master Plan update and associated goals. Mr. Wozniak asked how the Master Plan priorities are ultimately formed into actionable policies with associated performance measures.

Ms. Nettles explained that seeing results takes time. They have been working on several policy changes over the past decade and it requires community support to make these incremental changes.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak expressed his concern about the lack of progress with some of the Master Plan goals that were established through the previous update.

Chairperson McCroskey requested a summary that would show both successful and unsuccessful efforts toward the goals. She also asked for clarification on the definition of “auto-centric” master planning and for examples of non-auto-centric characteristics.

Ms. Nettles responded by saying they are aiming to create an action plan with measurable results in the new General Master Plan. Then she defined “auto centric” as planning and development that requires a reliance on access to a car to perform daily procedures, rather than being able to take a ten-minute walk or bike.

Chairperson McCroskey asked for a good example of a non-auto centric environment in Mesa or the region.

Ms. Nettles cited downtown Mesa as an example. She also mentioned Hawes Crossing near Hawes and Elliot as a potential model for future village communities.

Chairperson McCroskey inquired about the feedback received from bus operators as part of the Transit Master Plan’s operator interviews/outreach.

Ms. Sorrell responded that the bus operators shared concerns regarding stop issues, pedestrian crossing problems, safety issues, and suggestions to improve efficiency.

Board Member Neal asked for an update on the north/south ADOT corridor study.

Ms. King replied that she does not have an update on it.

Board Member Neal spoke of Pinal County trying to move people north though Mesa and major concerns for how this impacts Mesa’s master planning efforts.

Board Member Vandever expressed her observation of increased traffic going through Mesa due to development in surrounding cities and asked if the surveys included responses from non-Mesa residents.

Ms. King clarified that they are coordinating with neighboring cities and the surveys are open to everyone, including non-Mesa residents.

Board Member Winstanley raised a concern about the lack of schools in Eastmark, which is an issue for families who want to raise their children in Mesa. He also mentioned that the schools are not well connected in the southeast valley.

Chairperson McCroskey emphasized that safety is important to raise a family in Mesa. She also expressed a desire for agriculture to be included when we talk about diversity. Regarding the plan’s approval in 2024, she raised a question about what would happen if it does not pass.

Ms. Nettles explained that if the plan does not pass, they will readopt the current one, make necessary changes, and then present it to the voters again.

Chairperson McCroskey also emphasized the importance of trails, particularly in more densely populated areas where people need outdoor spaces to enjoy.

Board Member Winstanley then raised a question about whether homelessness was addressed in the community input, and whether the primary input was through the website www.tomorrowmesa.com.

Ms. Nettles confirmed that the primary input was gathered through the website www.tomorrowmesa.com and acknowledged that homelessness has not been a major topic in their survey, but it is one of Council's priorities. She explained they are working on the Balanced Housing Master Plan and in the General Master Plan, both of which will address access to housing and how to address homelessness. She added that the website is the most accessible source for providing feedback, but they are also attending events. Then she shared some of the upcoming events they are hosting.

Board Member Winstanley offered to organize an event in Eastmark, which Ms. Nettles thanked him for.

Chairperson McCroskey asked if they reached out to the different HOA's.

Ms. Nettles said she would have to check with the consultants to see if they have done any specific outreach to them.

Chairperson McCroskey said that they would be a good source.

Board Member James shared his vision for Mesa, emphasizing the importance of walkability, bike-ability, and better connections citywide. He stated that is what makes Mesa a great city. On the land use side, he suggested integrating pedestrian oriented mixed-use developments into residential areas. He explained that people want to be able to walk to coffee shops or nice restaurants in their neighborhoods, but currently, the residential areas are too far away from commercial areas. He believes that integrating mixed-use developments into residential areas would make it possible.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak added that he would like to see some aggressive modifications to the parking requirements near restaurants and bars, focused on promoting parking reductions. Additionally, he believes that land use and transportation must come together, especially when it comes to specialized corridors or sub-areas, such as the planned, potential streetcar corridor.

Ms. Nettles shared that they won an award from the FTA last year to conduct a TOD study. She said they are working to get their consultant on board so that they can begin studying soon.

Item 4. Hear a presentation and discuss the Lehi Loop Shared-Use Path Project Update.

Mark Venti, Senior Transportation Engineer from the Transportation Department, began by introducing himself and Andre Rioux, Landscape Architect from the Engineering Department, who will be giving an update on the Lehi Loop Shared-Use Path Project.

Mr. Venti shared his excitement to see a component/project that originated through the Bicycle Master Plan come to fruition, from being just an idea to becoming a reality. He then turned the presentation over to Mr. Rioux.

Mr. Rioux introduced himself and proceeded with the presentation, detailing the Lehi Loop Shared-Use Path Project's two phases. Phase one will begin construction along the ADOT right of way and the SRP canal, covering approximately half of the ultimate five-mile shared use path loop designed for walkers, runners, cyclists, and equestrians. The path will consist of a two way, 10-foot-wide asphalt path and a 6-foot-wide equestrian trail. It will be accessible from two trail heads with several neighborhood access points. The first phase is a 2.5-mile pathway connecting a trailhead at McDowell and Lehi to a trailhead at Val Vista and SR202. The approximate cost for this phase one project is \$5.5 million. Construction is set to begin in the Summer, with an approximate construction time of one year.

Mr. Rioux explained that the phase two project is a feasibility study that was started in January 2023, and the final report should be completed by June 2023.

Mr. Venti opened it up to questions.

During the Q&A session, Board Member James asked about the possibility of having trees and landscaping along the path.

Mr. Rioux stated that due to budget constraints, the landscape would be limited to and focused at the trailheads, as adding landscape along the SRP canal path and ADOT right of way would significantly increase the project's cost.

Chairperson McCroskey added that is important to know that SRP is still using that canal bank and SRP's primary concern is access to maintain the canal.

Mr. Venti added that normally the city takes one side of the canal for recreation while SRP uses the other side for service access. In this case, the other side is virtually unusable as a path, so the city came to an agreement with SRP to use their service side.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak expressed his concern about bike safety along the path and asked if there is any assurance from SRP on safety and maintenance since it will be a shared path.

Mr. Venti explained that SRP is required by Maricopa County to keep dust down and to control the dust, they put a layer of slurry down along their service access road. People ride on those service access roads, but they are not true paths. The Lehi Loop Shared-Use Path will have asphalt, and the City of Mesa will operate and maintain this path per an agreement with SRP.

Board Member Winstanley asked if the tunnel was included and funded in phase one.

Mr. Rioux confirmed that the tunnel is part of phase one.

Board Member Winstanley said the crossing for phase two looks like it uses the existing freeway bridge.

Mr. Rioux said yes.

Board Member Winstanley inquired about the transition between the path and the existing bridge, as he has noticed issues in other areas at those transitions.

Mr. Venti explained that this is where feasibility studies are valuable in catching potential issues before design. He noted that currently, the path from the bridge down to the north side will pose some design challenges given grades and other existing conditions.

Board Member Winstanley said he has ridden it and indicated that he knows what Mr. Venti is talking about.

Mr. Venti mentioned that is why feasibility studies are so valuable.

Chairperson McCroskey added that safety is a concern for horse riders, as there are few trails that they can ride down safely. So, that is why they have been very vocal about safety. She then mentioned that the proposed path has only six feet for horse riders, but twelve feet would be better to accommodate wagons and horse carts.

Regarding the Lehi Neighborhood being cut in half by SR 202, Chairperson McCroskey asked if there was a way to connect the neighborhood in phase two by building a separate bridge for horse traffic, as has been done in other communities.

Mr. Venti said eventually there will be a way to get from one side of Lehi to the other.

During the meeting, Vice Chairperson Wozniak raised concerns about horse waste on the Lehi Loop Shared Use path.

Mr. Venti stated that he is not aware of any plan regarding horse waste, and he would need to check it.

Chairperson McCroskey shared that horse manure breaks up quickly and goes back into the ground.

Chairperson McCroskey also confirmed that horses are vegetarian which helps with breaking the waste down naturally.

Board Member James expressed his appreciation for the project after 15 years of waiting, while Chairperson McCroskey expressed the gratitude of the equestrian community for the project moving forward.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak asked if the tunnel under Val Vista was a significant part of the \$5.5 million budget, to which Chairperson McCroskey clarified that the tunnel was already built as a part of previous improvements on Val Vista, someone had the vision to put it in there.

Board Member James attributed the construction of the tunnel to Keno Hawker who had a vision of a continuous eight-mile path.

Mr. Venti expressed gratitude for the luck they had with the tunnel. He explained that during the initial stage of the project, someone mentioned the possibility of a tunnel under that bridge

during a public meeting. They had to excavate the area to locate it, but they were fortunate to find it.

Item 5. Hear and discuss a presentation on eBike Laws.

Mike Kuntz, Police Officer, introduced himself and informed the board that he would be presenting on eBike Laws.

He started by explaining the different classes of eBikes: class one with pedal assist that can reach up to 20 miles per hour, class two without pedal assist also capped at 20 miles per hour, and class three with pedal assist that can go up to 28 miles per hour. He said that in Mesa, only class one and two eBikes are allowed on bike paths. He also mentioned that eBikes manufactured or distributed in the United States after January 1, 2019, are required to have their class labeled on the bike, but many eBikes from other countries lack such labeling. He elaborated on the challenges faced by officers enforcing eBikes laws, given the public's lack of awareness regarding the rules around these bikes. He then presented pamphlets recently created by Mesa that discuss the different eBike types. These pamphlets will be used to educate the public and students in schools, with a plan to make them available online at a later date.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak acknowledged the reasoning behind prohibitions of eBikes on sidewalks due to the potential risk to pedestrians. However, he raised concerns about the lack of protected facilities for bicyclists, especially next to vehicles traveling at high speeds. He inquired whether the laws will be amended to allow eBikes on sidewalks, if they become more popular.

Officer Kuntz referred the question to Mr. Hudson.

Mr. Hudson stated that he does not anticipate the city changing its code to allow eBikes on sidewalks. He noted that this issue is more about how the riders feel about being on the road and the city is working on creating more protected facilities that separate bicyclists from motorists. It is a common goal to continue to build out the Mesa bike network.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak then asked about areas like Southern in west Mesa, where the sidewalk is designed to accommodate both bikes and pedestrians.

Mr. Hudson responded that such facilities are not suitable for eBikes from a safety perspective, especially ones that can go up to 20 miles per hour, but it is a very good question. He asked Officer Kuntz to address the issue of enforceability.

Officer Kuntz confirmed that any law can be enforced. While there is no push to enforce bike laws on Southern Ave, he explained the potential dangers of riding a bike against traffic on a sidewalk. The driver is taught to look left for a vehicle, right for a pedestrian, and then left again before proceeding. However, an eBike traveling at 20 miles per hour could cross in front of the vehicle during the second left look, leading to a crash. This is why Officer Kuntz does not recommend riding bicycles on sidewalks and the bike crash statistics support this.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak inquired about eBikes along canal paths.

Officer Kuntz clarified that only class one and two eBikes are allowed on these paths, whereas class three eBikes are not permitted.

Vice Chairperson Wozniak suggested that the laws regarding eBikes should be posted on the trailhead signs, which Officer Kuntz agreed with.

Board Member Winstanley mentioned a crash he witnessed in Eastmark involving a father on a 'fat tire' scooter who picked up his daughter and collided with a bicycle while riding on the sidewalk.

Officer Kuntz clarified that due to high-speed capability, the 'fat tire' scooter should be considered more like a motorcycle. He noted that it cannot be registered as a motorcycle with the MVD, and there is no legal place to ride it.

Board Member Winstanley asked if there are any available statistics on eBike crashes.

Officer Kuntz replied that although there may be a way to obtain the data, it would require manual review of each crash report to determine whether it involved an eBike or regular bicycle.

Board Member Winstanley noted that there is no official classification for eBike crashes.

Chairperson McCroskey thanked Officer Kuntz for his presentation.

Board Member Winstanley suggested installing speed limit signs on the multiuse paths to slow traffic down around pedestrians and horses.

Mr. Hudson explained that the idea had been previously discussed but brought up issues such as what speed to post and how to enforce it, and therefore the current stance is not to install them.

Chairperson McCroskey raised concerns about the safety of riders and horses when using the tunnel. She suggested the installation of a sign asking others to wait for the horse to get through. This would prevent accidents and injuries.

Board Member Winstanley followed up on Vice Chairperson Wozniak's suggestion about entrance signs.

Mr. Hudson explained that while signs are helpful, they need to be supplemented with practical enforcement. However, he agreed that they could explore the possibility of installing entrance signs.

Chairperson McCroskey raised the possibility of future legislation that could address the access issue related to motorcycles and other high-speed vehicles being used along the canals.

Officer Kuntz brought up the concern about enforcement and the type of vehicle that could be used for police officers to access the areas for patrol. He suggested that motorcycles are really the only vehicles that Mesa PD could use to access most of these shared use pathways.

Chairperson McCroskey suggested that bicycle officers could also be used for enforcement.

Officer Kuntz explained that they have bicycle officers, but they are dedicated to the downtown area of Mesa. The issue with using a motorcycle is its noise that could startle horses.

Chairperson McCroskey said it will be interesting to see what our future holds with the shared-use paths.

Board Member Gagnon mentioned that if special enforcement is done on the path, more people will expect it on the sidewalks as well.

Board Member Vandever asked Officer Kuntz if they were planning to hand out fliers anywhere else besides schools because she has seen more children driving minibikes in Mesa.

Officer Kuntz explained that they had just received their first batch and were planning to start in the schools because that is where they could reach the most kids. It is mostly high schools and junior high schools.

Board Member Winstanley asked Mr. Hudson if there were any planned interactions with the sustainability and transportation committee.

Mr. Hudson stated that there were none planned at this moment, but he could provide information to the board about them.

Chairperson McCroskey suggested adding it to the agenda for a later time.

Mr. Hudson said that was possible but to follow the TAB bylaws procedures related to agenda preparation.

It was motioned by Board Member Winstanley, seconded by Board Member James, to adjourn the meeting.

AYES – McCroskey – Wozniak – Gagnon – James – Laufer – Neal – Vandever – Winstanley

NAYS – None

The meeting adjourned at 7:08 pm.