

TRANSPORTATION ADVISORY BOARD MINUTES

DRAFT

HELD ON January 16, 2024

The Transportation Advisory Board of the City of Mesa met in the Lower Council Chambers, 57 East 1st Street, on January 16, 2024, 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
Melissa Vandever (Vice Chairperson)	Ashley Gagnon	Anna Janusz
Lea Bertoni	Rodney Jarvis	Jason Coon
Rob Crist	Daniel Laufer	David Calloway
Mike James	Megan Neal	Daksha Masurkar
David Winstanley		Mark Venti
		Vamshi Yellisetty

Chairperson McCroskey called the January 16, 2024, Transportation Advisory Board meeting to order at 5:32 pm.

Item 1. Approval of the minutes of the Transportation Advisory Board meeting held on November 21, 2023.

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

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCroskey – Vandever – Bertoni – Crist – James – Winstanley

NAYS – None

Item 2. Items from citizens present.

None

Item 3. Discuss and take action on staff recommendation to approve the installation of speed cushions on 32nd Street between McKellips Road and McDowell Road

Ryan Hudson, City Traffic Engineer, introduced himself and indicated that he would present staff recommendations to approve the installation of speed cushions on 32nd Street between McKellips Road and McDowell Road.

Mr. Hudson provided an overview of 32nd St., where staff is recommending speed cushions. He elaborated on the results of the traffic speed study and stated that the posted speed limit is 30 MPH with the 85th percentile of speeds exceeding 42 MPH. There are 1,300-1,600 vehicles a day that travel on this road segment and he added that at least 70% of the affected property owners support the installation of speed cushions, meeting the Speed Hump Policy requirements. Also, a summary of all public outreach results, including the denial survey and two-week public survey, were shared with the board. He then turned the meeting back over to the board for discussion and to act on the agenda item.

Chairperson McCroskey inquired about feedback from the schools.

Mr. Hudson explained that Stapley Junior High School and Ishikawa Elementary School, being property owners along this corridor, had a vote through the Speed Hump Policy process. He noted that one of the school principals submitted a comment card and was present at this meeting.

Chairperson McCroskey noted what appeared to be bike lanes on both sides of the road and asked for clarification.

Mr. Hudson explained that they are not designated bike lanes, but shoulders, as parking would be prohibited if they were bike lanes.

Chairperson McCroskey asked if bike lanes were discussed during the initial talks with the neighborhood.

Mr. Hudson explained that there were no one-on-one meetings with the neighborhood, but there were some comments about bike lanes received. The survey was circulated by the neighborhood liaison. He added that the striping on 32nd Street is perceived as bike lanes. They operate as bike lanes most of the time except maybe during school times when parents are parking along there. He added that if desired by schools and the community, staff could explore the possibility of designing bike lanes separately from this request for speed cushions.

Chairperson McCroskey then asked to hear the public comments.

Evan Henry, resident at 2656 n 32nd St., expressed his support for the speed cushions.

Deanna Gaiser, resident at 2536 N 32nd St. gave her comments in favor of the speed cushions.

Shelley Heath, principal at Ishikawa Elementary School, expressed her support for the speed cushions.

Trevor Orme, resident at 3154 E Leland Cir., gave his comments in favor of the speed cushions.

Chairperson McCroskey asked Mr. Hudson to summarize the online comment cards.

Mr. Hudson advised the board that the four people that spoke today were part of the 30 online comments cards they received. He said that 29 of the comment cards were in support of the speed cushions and one was opposed. He then summarized comments for those in support and for those opposed.

Board Member Winstanley inquired about alternative traffic calming options, like adding a stop sign at Hermosa Vista.

Mr. Hudson emphasized the cost-efficiency of speed cushions and added that federal standards, per the MUTCD, state that stop signs should not be used for speed control. Stop signs are specifically used to assign right of way at an intersection, not as a traffic calming feature.

Chairperson McCroskey asked if a stop sign could be considered in the future if the volume will increase at that intersection.

Mr. Hudson stated that it could be studied, and an all-way stop could be installed if warranted. An all-way stop must consider many factors and is currently not recommended. Again, this type of traffic study can be done independent of the speed cushion discussion.

Chairperson McCroskey encouraged the audience to return to the Transportation Department if the speed cushions do not address speeding concerns. She then asked Mr. Hudson about school safety measures.

Mr. Hudson highlighted the complexity of school traffic management with traffic circulation at each school having its own set of challenges, routes, and key areas where kids are crossing. He explained that a yellow crosswalk establishes it as a 15-MPH crosswalk and the schools roll out the 15-MPH school zone signs as one measure. He added that staff collaborates consistently with Mesa Public Schools to address circulation and traffic safety issues that are raised.

Chairperson McCroskey said some of the worst speeders in her neighborhood were parents. She suggested additional reminders to parents from the school regarding speed limits.

Board Member James proposed bulb-outs as an option to enhance students' safety which will shorten the crossing for the students, and it is a sharper turn for the cars which means they cannot turn as fast and are more likely to see the students. He then explained what it was to other TAB members.

Chairperson McCroskey asked Mr. Hudson about the process if the neighborhood pursued the bulb-outs.

Mr. Hudson stated that bulb-outs or sidewalk extensions have been implemented in other areas but there are some very significant impacts that come along with them. He explained that there could be drainage impacts, among others, and it becomes a question of how to accommodate those impacts with the bulb-outs.

Chairperson McCroskey inquired about exploring the option further if deemed necessary by the neighborhood.

Mr. Hudson emphasized the need to evaluate potential impacts against the benefits of implementing the bulb-outs.

It was moved by Board Member Bertoni, seconded by Board Member Crist, to approve the installation of speed cushions on 32nd Street between McKellips Road and McDowell Road

Upon tabulation of votes, it showed:

AYES – McCroskey – Vandever – Bertoni – Crist – James – Winstanley

NAYS – None

Item 4. Hear and discuss a presentation on the Transit Master Plan Update.

David Calloway, Transit Coordinator, introduced himself and indicated that he would be presenting the Transit Master Plan along with Daksha Masurkar, Project Manager/Transportation Planner at AECOM.

Mr. Calloway provided an overview of their completed tasks, progress updates, and mentioned the commencement of phase three of public outreach.

Ms. Masurkar discussed the five types of transit recommendations: route modifications and extensions, service improvements, new routes, emerging markets, and high-capacity transit. She elaborated on each type and discussed aligning routes.

Mr. Calloway added that by interlining routes that work independently, they can potentially use fewer vehicles and serve a greater section along those routes.

Ms. Masurkar detailed route 77, originating in Tempe and extending a few miles into Mesa along Baseline Road. They are considering extending the route to Superstitions Springs Transit Center in phases.

Chairperson McCroskey sought clarification.

Ms. Masurkar explained the current route's terminus and the proposed extension to the Superstition Springs Transit Center. She emphasized that they plan to implement it in phases to ensure smooth operation and assess ridership before considering further expansion to the Superstition Springs Transit Center. Additionally, she mentioned that the initial extension will likely be to Gilbert Rd.

Mr. Calloway explained the proposed nine-mile extension of route 77 to the transit center. He emphasized that some of these routes under consideration are regional, also serving areas like

Tempe and Phoenix. Route 77 is a very long route stretching all the way to 75th Ave and Baseline in Phoenix. He expressed satisfaction that this extension, long discussed, is not becoming a reality.

Ms. Masurkar continued with her presentation, highlighting two additional extensions. First, she addressed route 156, emphasizing its connection to Phoenix-Mesa airport. She detailed the route's current loop around the airport and the Polytech campus, noting plans to expand this loop to include more businesses in the area and make it more accessible for students. Then she discussed Route 408, originally serving Sunland Village East but now under consideration for a termination at Superstition Springs Transit Center due to low ridership.

Chairperson McCroskey inquired about the potential impact on Superstition Springs Mall questioning whether it would attract more traffic to the area.

Mr. Calloway confirmed the likelihood of increased traffic. He explained that there are currently five routes going to Superstition Springs Transit Center, and their proposals will add two more routes to the transit center.

Vice Chairperson Vandever inquired whether the location served as a Valley Metro hub.

Mr. Calloway confirmed, noting that it functions as both a park and ride and a transit center. He highlighted the diverse range of services available, including local and express bus routes to downtown Phoenix, as well as the number of Valley Metro Vanpools at this location.

Ms. Masurkar continued with her presentation, addressing route 277 and discussing Mesa's growth. She emphasized efforts to enhance frequency on selected routes, aiming to increase service intervals from 30 minutes to every 15 minutes on weekdays and from 60 minutes to 30 minutes on weekends.

Mr. Calloway chimed in, stressing the importance of achieving a 15-minute frequency to offer passengers more flexibility and expedite their bus commutes. He acknowledged that while light rail typically operates with a 12-minute schedule, ongoing construction projects might temporarily extend wait time to around 20 minutes.

Ms. Masurkar noted that light rail frequency had increased during the pandemic.

Vice Chairperson Vandever raised a question about extending the light rail routes for longer stretches. She explained that while she could reach a destination within 20 minutes by car, the same trip might take 45 minutes on the light rail.

Ms. Masurkar responded, highlighting that travel durations on the light rail vary based on origin and destination. She added that they have the Fiesta Buzz and Downtown Buzz that are connections plus they are looking at a streetcar along Dobson that will give that quick access.

Board Member Bertoni inquired about ridership patterns during weekdays vs weekends.

Ms. Masurkar confirmed higher ridership on weekdays.

Board Member Bertoni inquired about potential increases in transit service during events such as the Cubs spring training. She expressed her preference in using the light rail when attending events in Phoenix, such as basketball games, as it offers a convenient alternative to paying for parking. She emphasized the likelihood of people opting for transit when attending games, regardless of whether they occur on weekdays or weekends.

Ms. Masurkar sought clarification, asking whether Board Member Bertoni was recommending this adjustment for the light rail or a local bus route.

Board Member Bertoni suggested implementing adjustments across multiple modes of transportation.

Vice Chairperson Vandever further clarified with Board Member Bertoni that she was also speaking of some events in Mesa like spring training games.

Board Member Bertoni affirmed Vice Chairperson Vandever's clarification.

Chairperson McCroskey endorsed promoting transit during events, citing its potential impact on tourism.

Mr. Calloway elaborated on existing initiatives, noting that they have already begun promoting transit for events, citing the launch of Fiesta Buzz and collaboration with the Cubs. He mentioned that these efforts have been in operation for a year and highlighted additional services added to route 48 in those areas.

Ms. Masurkar added that the future streetcar route will go through that particular area.

Board Member Winstanley inquired about the role of budgetary restraints in their planning.

Mr. Calloway indicated that they would address budgetary constraints later in their presentation.

Ms. Masurkar continued with the presentation, discussing the introduction of new local routes, and providing detailed information about them.

Mr. Calloway highlighted route 277 which follows the same alignment as a pilot program conducted in 2012. He expressed interest in observing its positive reception once again.

Board Member Winstanley inquired whether the southeast valley continues to experience low ridership.

Ms. Masurkar acknowledged the prevalence of industrial areas in the region but noted of emerging market for Eastmark and surrounding areas.

Mr. Calloway supplemented by mentioning their exploration of alternative transportation options for Eastmark, such as micro transit or a circulator, as traditional fixed-route bus services have not performed well in these areas based on projections.

Board Member Winstanley highlighted that some of the highest density locations are in the southeast valley, implying that current transit options essentially compel residents to rely on their car.

Mr. Calloway countered by suggesting while there are alternative options available, the Board should consider that density does not necessarily correlate with a transit propensity.

Board Member Bertoni emphasized the challenges faced by individuals with disabilities in using traditional buses, expressing the need for more personalized or convenient transportation options. She acknowledged that increased frequency would help but stressed the importance of accommodating diverse needs.

Ms. Masurkar addressed concerns about paratransit services, assuring that despite the increased regular bus services, paratransit would remain available to meet the needs of passengers requiring specialized assistance.

Board Member James stated that currently the City of Mesa has a 3/10 of a sales tax for transportation but it excludes transit. He asked what the city could get if just 2/10 was allocated for transit.

Mr. Calloway regretfully informed the Board that such considerations were not part of the current plan, suggesting that it is something that they would look at a later time.

Ms. Masurkar continued with the presentation by showing the streetcar alignment. She explained that phase one would extend from the Tempe alignments to Dobson and Main, with phase two extending from there to Southern and Alma School. She clarified that the project is split into two phases due to its high implementation cost. Additionally, she mentioned that although connecting the streetcar to the light rail at Gilbert Road has been identified, it's categorized as a post 2050 plan item.

Chairperson McCroskey inquired about the basis for their recommendation.

Ms. Masurkar clarified that the proposed phase is not included in the MAG regional plan which primarily emphasizes streetcars for the 2050 plan.

Chairperson McCroskey observed that their approach aligns with MAG's directions.

Ms. Masurkar affirmed, adding that Mesa Leadership is also leaning towards the streetcar concept.

Board Member James mentioned that phase one of the streetcar extension in Mesa corresponds to phase two of prop 400 plan, which is 2030-2035.

Ms. Masurkar confirmed the alignment with Board Member James observation.

Mr. Calloway provided insight into funding and prop 479.

Ms. Masurkar emphasized their utilization of the MAG regional model, which includes all their future predictions.

Mr. Calloway emphasized that regardless of the funding source, this plan is something we can operationalize and use.

Board Member Winstanley inquired about the estimated cost.

Mr. Calloway indicated that the cost discussion would follow in the subsequent slides.

Ms. Masurkar continued with the presentation, outlining the phasing transit recommendations for short, mid, and long-term phases. She explained the needs score, which evaluates various factors including current and future population, current and future employment, service equity, affordable housing, land use, key destinations, and compatibility with previous plans.

Mr. Calloway referenced Board Members Winstanley's earlier question regarding density, explaining that while southeast Mesa may exhibit high density, they consider multiple criteria under the needs score to ensure the rationale for extending services in those areas is justified.

Board Member Winstanley inquired about the document detailing the methodology behind the propensity score.

Ms. Masurkar explained that the information would be included in the report. She then proceeded to discuss the three phases: short (2024-2026), mid (2026-2035), and long-term (2035-2050).

Chairperson McCroskey sought clarification on the decision-making process between streetcar vs light rail.

Ms. Masurkar highlighted the significant increase in ridership along Dobson and in the areas earmarked for the streetcar route since the implementation of the Fiesta Buzz service. She explained that while there is considerable bus ridership along Main Street, it diminishes as you go east, indicating lower propensity for transit use in east Mesa. She emphasized that this assessment was not only conducted by their team but also in three to four other plans.

Board Member Winstaley requested clarification on the distinction between a bus and a streetcar.

Mr. Calloway clarified that buses have rubber tires while streetcars run on tracks embedded in the pavement.

Chairperson McCroskey questioned if a streetcar was like a trolley.

Mr. Calloway confirmed that.

Ms. Masurkar elaborated on the streetcar operation in Tempe, highlighting its utilization of a mixed-use lane, allowing both streetcars and other vehicles to share the same lane. She

mentioned that there is technology that allows the streetcars to operate using electricity or a battery, facilitating easier implementation.

Board Member Winstanley inquired about routes that might be self-sustaining, or if not, what is the average percent that the city is subsidizing.

Mr. Calloway noted the variability of subsidies across different markets and modes, indicating that such information would be detailed in the final report.

Ms. Masurkar explained that they would analyze the gather data to evaluate the cost per rider, enabling them to determine the productivity of routes. This will help them decide which routes will be implemented before other routes.

Mr. Calloway explained the upcoming phase three of public outreach, which will specifically target actual transit riders.

Ms. Masurkar added that outreach efforts would include posts on the City's Facebook page and other social media outlets, as well as collaboration with Valley Metro to disseminate information through their coordinators.

Mr. Calloway mentioned that following the outreach phase, they would proceed with implementation strategies, including cost estimation and funding analysis, culminating in the final report.

Chairperson McCroskey inquired whether streetcars are air conditioned.

Mr. Calloway confirmed that streetcars are air-conditioned, even when operating on battery power.

Ms. Masurkar mentioned the convenience of being able to bring bikes onto the streetcars.

Chairperson McCroskey raised concerns about potential attraction to homeless individuals.

Mr. Calloway clarified that streetcars, being smaller than light rail, have a security officer on every car cater to shorter trip service, primary serving student commuters and people commuting to and from work. He highlighted the positive reception of streetcars in Tempe and expecting a similar response in Mesa.

Board Member Crist questioned the impact of streetcar construction on businesses and why to not opt for an additional bus instead.

Ms. Masurkar explained that the study encompassed not only rider needs or short trips but also considered economic development perspectives, aiming to attract more businesses, residents and increase employment along the corridor.

Board Member Crist inquired if the preference for streetcars was due to their marketability.

Ms. Masurkar said yes. Buses are good but routes can change.

Vice Chairperson Vandever inquired about plans for small buildout phases to minimize disruption to businesses during streetcar construction.

Ms. Masurkar confirmed that such plans would be managed by Valley Metro in coordination with the City of Mesa.

Vice Chairperson Vandever sought assurance that construction in front of business wouldn't extend for years.

Mr. Calloway affirmed the commitment to ensuring minimal disruption.

Item 5. Hear and discuss a presentation on the Transportation Master Plan Update.

Mark Venti, Senior Transportation Engineer, introduced himself and indicated that he, along with Vanshi Yellisetty from Kittleson and Associates, would be presenting the Transportation Master Plan update.

Mr. Venti expressed appreciation for the previous comments from the TAB members and stated that they are doing their best to incorporate them into the findings. He explained that they work with the Transit Plan and General Plan. The General Plan must follow a very structured schedule, which they prefer to follow but are not obligated to. He advised the board of this because the Transportation Master Plan is off schedule due to their work toward the General Plan and ensuring it stays on track. He informed the board that the General Plan is currently open for comments and can be accessed on tomorrowsmesa.com.

Mr. Yellisetty noted that the City of Mesa continues to grow, and they are considering future needs in the near (2030), mid (2035) and long term (2050) future. He mentioned that by 2050, they expect to see an 18% increase in population with 48% increase in jobs. He said these numbers are for the whole county not just in Mesa. He presented the current congestion conditions and explained how congestion would worsen without road improvements. He focused on downtown and southeast Mesa. He discussed the outcomes of the Transportation Master Plan, including street typologies, complete networks, and travel sheds. He presented a map illustrating different modes of travel such as bikes, cars, freight, and transit and explained the city's future directions.

Mr. Venti clarified that the information presented was intended to inform the TAB of what is coming. He mentioned that staff had recently received this information and have not had time to review it thoroughly. Once reviewed and compiled into a report, it would be presented to the TAB for feedback.

Transitioning to public outreach, Mr. Yellisetty noted that the survey is available until January 31, 2024, and reported receiving substantial feedback, including 370 completed surveys and 209 map comments. He stated that future conditions discussed today would be available for TAB

review at the March Transportation Advisory Board meeting, along with prioritized future needs. The final plan might be presented at either the March or May TAB meeting for review.

Mr. Venti added that two other reports would be coming for TAB to review: a summary of the public outreach and street typologies. He anticipated having everything available at the May TAB meeting.

Board Member Crist raised concern about the limited number of surveys received compared to Mesa's population.

Mr. Yellisetty explained that they have attended several in-person events where they received public input, but not all attendees filled out surveys. Additionally, their website has had several more visitors who did not complete surveys, but their metrics track their time spent on the website.

Mr. Venti added that the current phase had fewer responses compared to phase one.

Mr. Yellisetty mentioned that they received about double or triple the responses in phase one.

Mr. Venti explained that they attended the same events as the General Plan to gather feedback.

Vice Chairperson Vandever suggested exploring additional ways to promote the survey, such as news stations.

Mr. Venti explained the efforts made by the Transportation Public Information Officer, including promotion on social media such as Facebook and Nextdoor, as well as information in the utility letters. He added that they feel like they got great feedback. He acknowledged the need to balance feedback collection without overwhelming the public with too many surveys. He said that they heard the confusion in the public after they filled out a General Plan survey and then were asked to fill out another survey for the Transportation Plan.

Vice Chairperson Vandever expressed concern about individuals who may not even have heard of the survey, suggesting more frequent mentions on social media. She said mentioning it on a utility bill isn't helpful if someone doesn't get a utility bill like her. She said she has not seen it pop up anywhere on the website and asked where it is. She said if she is not seeing it on social media, the website or anywhere else because it is not published often, then where is the public hearing about it.

Mr. Yellisetty confirmed that the survey was being promoted across all the social media channels.

Vice Chairperson Vandever expressed that promotion seems infrequent, having last seen it in early or mid-December.

Mr. Venti mentioned the gradual tapering of public outreach to focus on developing the product, but assured a final public outreach when they have the needs report to get a simplified evaluation.

Mr. Yellisetty also mentioned the online map where the public could leave comments on it while others are able to like, dislike, or add their own comment to it. He said with all the ways that they have received public feedback, it is a good representation collectively. He added that the information appears balanced and not biased.

It was motioned by Board Member Winstanley, seconded by Vice Chairperson Vandever, to adjourn the meeting.

AYES – McCroskey – Vandever – Bertoni – Crist – James – Winstanley

NAYS – None

Meeting adjourned at 7:19pm