

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

### 2023 – 2025 Council Members

John Courage, Dist. 9, Chair

Dr. Sukh Kaur, Dist. 1 | Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, Dist. 2

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6 | Marina Alderete Gavito, Dist. 7

**Tuesday, June 4, 2024**

**10:00 AM**

**City Hall**

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee convened a regular meeting in the City Hall Council Briefing Room beginning at 10:09 AM. City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** John Courage, *Chair*  
Dr. Sukh Kaur, *Member*  
Jalen McKee-Rodriguez, *Member*  
Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Member*  
Marina Alderete Gavito, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

### Approval of Minutes

#### 1. Approval of minutes May 21, 2024 Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda moved to Approve the minutes of the May 21, 2024 Transportation and Infrastructure Committee meeting. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Courage, McKee-Rodriguez, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito  
**Absent:** Kaur

### Public Comment

All public comments were regarding Item 3.

Stephanie Garcia, owner of one of the horse-drawn carriage companies, played a video in support of the industry and spoke in support of keeping the businesses downtown.

Katie Jarl, Southwest Regional Director, The Humane Society of the United States, spoke in opposition to having horse-drawn carriages downtown.

Ben Espy, local Veterinarian, who was contracted with the City of San Antonio to monitor the health of the horses employed in the downtown Horse Drawn Carriage industry spoke in support of keeping the Horse-Drawn Carriage Industry downtown.

Kathy Stephens, owner of Bluebonnet and Lollypop and Chris Davis, owner of one of the carriage companies and Rose Hill spoke in support of keeping the Horse-Drawn Carriage Industry downtown.

Mariah Smith requested an immediate and permanent ban on horse-drawn carriages.

City Clerk Debbie Racca-Sittre read a written statement from Councilmember Viagran into the record supporting the recommendations from the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) that included phasing out weekday shifts, reducing evening hours to accommodate rush hour traffic and keeping the existing temperature and ozone day guidelines specified in City Code Chapter 33.

## **Briefing and Possible Action on**

### **2. Briefing on the status of FY 2024 Neighborhood Traffic Calming Program initiatives.**

[John Peterek, Interim Assistant City Manager; Razi Hosseini, Director, Public Works]

Razi Hosseini provided an overview of the Item which included a review of the FY 2024 Adopted Budget for the Program. Hosseini reported that 31 projects had been completed using the \$1 million in traffic safety and operations improvements. He stated that with the \$300,000 to replace 100 stop signs with flashing stop signs, 34 locations had been identified and 10 were installed. He added that the Radar Feedback Sign Program included \$700,000 for the installation of 100 feedback signs in high-risk locations that met specified criteria; one sign had been installed and construction was nearly complete on 27 more locations.

Hosseini stated that \$550,000 had been budgeted in each council district for the Neighborhood Accessibility and Mobility Program (NAMP) for eligible projects such as community-requested infrastructure improvements to address safety, multi-modal transportation, connectivity, and roadway functionality within the public right of way or on City property; 76 projects had been selected.

Chair Courage asked how much each flashing stop sign location cost in case a council district wanted to add another. Hosseini stated that placement of the flashing stop sign in-house was cheaper than going through a contractor which would cost approximately \$3,000. Chair Courage requested the average cost for adding a speed hump and the difference between asphalt and rubber. Hosseini stated that asphalt was being used because it was less expensive and required less maintenance, noting that the criteria for speed humps had been relaxed. Chair Courage

asked how long it would take to complete all projects. Hosseini replied that all projects would be completed by the end of summer 2024.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito supported the Program and noted that some projects in her council district had already been completed. She commented that speeding was a citywide issue causing problems with safety and recommended increasing the commitment as traffic fatalities were at a 40 year high in the United States and asked for data on San Antonio traffic fatalities. She noted that just last night there was a traffic fatality in Council District 7 and suggested that lowering speed limits to 20 miles per hour on residential streets could be a potential solution.

Councilmember Alderete Gavito requested the speed limits throughout San Antonio and asked how they could be reduced. Hosseini stated that the majority of residential streets were still 30 mph under State Law and recommended collecting information from the radar feedback signs to share with the police department. Interim Assistant City Manager Peterk commented that there had been a State Law keeping residential speed at 30 mph and the City had previously pushed for 25 mph but did not receive support in the State Legislature.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda suggested that the Programs had made significant positive impacts in Council District 6 and the radar feedback signs were particularly effective adding that the flashing stop signs had been well received. She appreciated the use of NAMP to supplement the department's Program. Councilmember Cabello Havrda requested information on the effectiveness of traffic calming efforts on automobile crashes and pedestrian accidents. Hosseini predicted that the Program would make a significant impact but did not have the data.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked how much funding was being recommended in FY 2025. Hosseini recommended installing 100 flashing stop signs and radar which was 10 each per council district noting that the department really could not handle more and the money would go unspent. Interim Assistant City Manager Peterk noted that flashing stop signs in some areas did not work as some residents did not like them shining in their windows at night.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez noted that the new speed hump rules had not been updated on the website. Hosseini committed to updating the website. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended exploring the opportunity for asphalt art to connect neighborhoods, help with speeding, and increase walkability and pedestrian safety.

Chair Courage suggested that the radar feedback sign recordings could be used by the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) to understand traffic patterns and recommended development of a process to share information routinely. Hosseini stated that the data would be shared with SAPD and Public Works Engineers would also use it. Chair Courage noted that the policy on street striping increased the frequency of refreshing the crosswalks, lane marking, and other signs. He suggested that some could be moved up on the schedule if needed or potentially cleaning the markings. Hosseini stated that pressure washing was as expensive as restriping so they preferred repainting the stripes.

Item was for briefing only so no action was taken.

### **3. Briefing and possible action on the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD) update to the**

**Transportation Committee on feedback received by the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) regarding the City Council Consideration Request (CCR) asking for a Just Transition from Horse- Drawn Carriages, background on current horse-drawn carriages operations, and a tentative timeline to address the CCR.** [María Villagómez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

Rick Riley, Assistant Director of the San Antonio Police Department (SAPD), provided an overview of the Council Consideration Request (CCR) which was submitted by Councilmembers Viagran and McKee-Rodriguez on November 28, 2022 which requested the development of a plan to phase out the use of horses with horse-drawn carriages in San Antonio, to include the abolishment of Ordinances or policies as they related to Chapter 33 permitting equine drawn carriages. He stated that the CCR requested the plan to include: 1) Determination of the feasibility and establishment of a program to support a workforce transition from horse-drawn carriages to electric carriages and pedicabs; 2) Establishment of a prohibition on the use of horses with carriage rides; and 3) Immediate cessation of the issuance of all new horse-drawn carriage permits, medallions, and/or Special Events Permits so that eventually all would expire.

Riley reported that the CCR was heard by the Governance Committee on April 17, 2024 and referred to the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. He stated that the current operations of horse-drawn carriages were governed by Chapter 33 of the City Code and the City had issued permits since 1865. He added that currently, there were five permitted horse-drawn carriage companies each holding five permits for a total of 25 horse-drawn carriages and 81 permitted horse-drawn carriage drivers.

According to Riley, regulations did not allow carriages to operate when temperatures were above 95 degrees, and suspended operations from 12:00 p.m. until 8:30 p.m. on Air Quality Health Alert Days. He noted that under Chapter 33, horses were required to be licensed by Animal Care Services and examined by a Veterinarian every six months, offered water and given a 10-minute break between trips, not work more than 8 hours in a 24-hour period, and given at least 16 hours of continuous rest. Horses were required to be at least three years old and would be deemed unfit for use if they were lame, had open sores or wounds, showed signs of emaciation/dehydration/exhaustion, had loose or no shoes or exhibited uncontrollable behavior. Riley noted that a Veterinarian, employed by the City, was required to be available regularly to provide inspections and ascertain compliance.

Riley noted that horse-drawn carriage operators were required to be within a two mile radius of City Hall but were prohibited on Houston Street (between Flores Street and S. Alamo Street), Losoya Street, Commerce Street (except for routes from the barn), and Caesar Chavez Boulevard (between IH-10/35 and St. Mary's Street). He stated that they also could not be operated in the King William District after 10:30 p.m. Monday to Sunday nor before noon on Sunday. Riley reported that the hours of operation for the carriages were Monday to Friday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and 6:00 pm to 2:00 a.m.; 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 a.m. Saturday, Sundays, and Holidays. Rates were \$40 per couple for a 10-minute ride, \$50/\$75 per couple for a 20-minute ride, and \$70/\$100 for a 30-minute ride. He noted that staging areas were defined as any unoccupied Commercial Loading Zone (CLZ) in the downtown area but the primary location for staging was in the CLZ on Crockett Street (across from the Hard Rock Cafe).

Riley reported that SAPD's Ground Transportation Unit (GTU) Staff included one Supervisor and

three Transportation Inspectors who conducted random field inspections on all permitted vehicles-for-hire. He indicated that two of the Inspectors worked daylight hours, Monday through Friday from 7:45 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and the third was a night Inspector scheduled for 2:00 p.m. to 12:00 a.m. Wednesday through Saturday. He stated that in the first half of 2024, 15 citations had been issued compared to 51 in FY 2023.

Riley compared the Horse Drawn Carriage Programs of San Antonio, the City of Dallas and the City of Austin and noted that Dallas' Quality of Life, Arts, & Culture Committee voted in April 2024 to recommend banning horse-drawn carriages and were moving toward alternative mechanical or electric carriage options for the sake of horses, humans, and city roads.

The Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) met on May 22, 2024 and heard public Comments from the owners of all five horse-drawn carriage companies, according to Riley. He stated that the TAB unanimously recommended that the City Council consider keeping the horse-drawn carriages in downtown San Antonio and tasked City Staff to work with the Horse-Drawn Carriage Industry to set conditions to continue horse carriage service in downtown.

According to Riley, some cities recently enacted Ordinances to end the use of horse-drawn carriages including: Chicago, IL; Salt Lake City, UT; Camden, NJ; Santa Fe, NM; Key West, FL; Deerfield Beach, FL; Palm Beach, FL; Panama City Beach, FL; Pompano Beach, FL; Treasure Island, FL; and Las Vegas, NV (banned on the strip).

Riley proposed to complete research on other cities' operations and regulations during June 2024 and present the issue to the Animal Care Services (ACS) Advisory Board in July 2024 to collect feedback, then coordinate with the horse-drawn carriage stakeholders. Riley recommended briefing the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee on the research findings, ACS Board feedback, and stakeholder input in August 2024.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez thanked staff, the public, and members of the Horse-Drawn Carriage Industry for providing their feedback and noted that a ban had not been implemented, clarifying that the CCR was intended to open the dialogue and begin the process including community engagement, deliberation, and compromise. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez commented that his residents supported having the dialogue but he still felt the right solution was to move away from horse-drawn carriages as it was an outdated policy implemented in 1865 noting that it was the time when Black people in Texas were just getting their freedom. Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez expressed concern about the potential summer heat and requested that staff complete due diligence and bring back a draft plan in August 2024.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda commented that this was one of the remaining practices that began at the end of the Civil War and thought it was time for it to be replaced with more modern traditions. She noted that she had experience riding horses and did not doubt that the operators loved their animals and expressed concern about their businesses and jobs. She looked forward to the data that would be collected during the summer.

Councilmember Cabello Havrda asked Dr. Espy about his role. Dr. Espy stated that he was the only Equine Veterinarian contracted by the City of San Antonio to inspect horses. She expressed concern that Dr. Espy might not be objective because he would potentially lose his job

if the Horse-Drawn Carriage Ordinance was repealed. She asked why other cities had banned the use of horse-drawn carriages. Riley stated that more research was needed to determine why other cities took action to ban the carriages. Councilmember Cabello supported the timeline recommended by staff culminating in a draft plan in August 2024.

Councilmember Aldrerete Gavito wanted to support small businesses but expressed concern with the impacts on traffic, safety, first responder vehicles as well as the health and well-being of the horses. She wanted to ensure that if the Plan were to discontinue carriages, the horses would not be euthanized. She asked about other potential locations for the carriages to operate. Riley stated that there were preliminary discussions about other areas such as Brackenridge Park and Hemisfair.

Councilmember Aldrerete Gavito requested outcomes from the business owners in cities that had banned the horse-drawn carriages. She expressed concern with the large number of citations and asked if there had been injuries related to the downtown horse-drawn carriages. Riley noted that the largest percentage of citations seemed to be confined to the staging area and there had not been many injuries and traffic violations could include operating on a prohibited street or running a red light.

Councilmember Aldrerete Gavito recommended that staff ensure that businesses were provided sufficient meeting notice for issues that might impact them and looked forward to recommendations in August 2024.

Councilmember Kaur noted that she rode horses as a child and thanked the residents and business owners for providing their input. She asked how the 95-degree threshold was regulated. Riley stated that the Transportation Inspectors on duty during their regular schedules monitored the temperature and worked collaboratively with the owners; they also notified owners about the predicted Air Quality Health Alert Days. She was interested in how many days might be over 100 degrees and suggested that a summer month policy might be a consideration.

Councilmember Kaur asked how SAPD conducted its random inspections. Annual inspections were conducted upon permit renewal but daily random inspections were completed during operating hours according to Riley. Councilmember Kaur requested the methods to bring stakeholders together and recommended thoughtful consideration of input and a comprehensive collection of feedback, not just from the business owners including a survey of tourists regarding their interest in electric carriages. She also recommended the development of a transition plan for the companies and their employees potentially funding or a pilot to buy some electric carriages.

Chair Courage asked Stephanie Garcia about the video showing a person pulling a cart and whether this was a potential replacement for the horses. Garcia stated that the video demonstrated that the carts were not heavy.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez recommended that staff continue to work with the horse-drawn carriage companies without members of the public so that a compromise could be reached without distraction.

Councilmember McKee-Rodriguez moved to Approve the staff's recommended timeline as well as a plan to be presented at the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee in August 2024. Councilmember Alderete Gavito seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

**Aye:** Courage, Kaur, McKee-Rodriguez, Cabello Havrda, Alderete Gavito

### **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

**Approved**

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***John Courage, Chair***

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***Debbie Racca-Sittre***  
***City Clerk***