

# City of San Antonio



## Minutes

### Transportation and Mobility Committee

#### 2021 – 2023 Council Members

Melissa Cabello Havrda, Dist. 6

Mario Bravo, Dist. 1 | Teri Castillo, Dist. 5

Ana Sandoval, Dist. 7 | Clayton Perry, Dist. 10

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**Monday, August 29, 2022**

**9:30 AM**

**Municipal Plaza Building**

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The Transportation and Mobility Committee convened a regular meeting in the Norma S. Rodriguez Council Chamber in the Municipal Plaza Building beginning at 9:34 AM. Deputy City Clerk Aurora Perkins took the Roll Call noting a quorum with the following Committee Members present:

**Members Present:** Melissa Cabello Havrda, *Chair*  
Mario Bravo, *Member*  
Teri Castillo, *Member*  
Ana Sandoval, *Member*  
Clayton Perry, *Member*

**Members Absent:** None

#### Approval of Minutes

##### 1. Approval of minutes for the June 21, 2022 Transportation and Mobility Committee meeting.

Councilmember Perry moved to Approve the minutes for the June 21, 2022 Transportation and Mobility Committee meeting. Councilmember Castillo seconded the motion. The motion carried by the following vote:

Aye: Cabello Havrda, Castillo, Sandoval, Perry

Absent: Bravo

#### Public Comment

Javier Tristan spoke in support of Item 4 and asked for consideration of the recommended amendments.

Linda Thomas spoke to taxicab driver challenges due to lower rates and in support of increased rates.

## **Briefing and Possible Action on**

### **2. Briefing and possible action on the Proposed Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG) & Capital Area Rural Transit System (CARTS) Inter-Urban Bus (IUB) Service Between Austin and San Antonio, Texas. [Roderick Sanchez, Assistant City Manager; Tomika Monterville, Director, Transportation]**

Former U.S. Secretary of Housing and Urban Development Henry Cisneros introduced the Item and stated that the issue of transportation and mobility were vital issues to address and to increase bus rapid transit especially between the City of San Antonio and the City of Austin. He noted that transportation options in the East/West and North/South corridors were important to expand. Cisneros stated that the rapid growth between the surrounding counties of San Antonio and Austin supported the need for a bus rapid transit system and he introduced Diane Rath with the Alamo Area Council of Governments (AACOG).

Rath provided an overview of the Capital Area Rural Transit System (CARTS) Inter-Urban Bus (IUB) Service between the cities of Austin and San Antonio. She noted that VIA Metropolitan Transit (VIA) and Capital Austin Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) were vital contributors to the proposed Plan and that they agreed on the need for a rapid transit route. She stated that the route included stops in San Antonio, New Braunfels, San Marcos and Austin. Rath reviewed the components of the route to include bidirectional routes, schedules and stated that a two-year program was proposed at a cost of \$1.5 million. She stated that the vehicles used would be coach type buses and would be ADA accessible. She reiterated that the proposed program was collaborative between the stakeholder organizations and had proposed various connector services from the transit connections.

## **DISCUSSION**

Chair Cabello Havrda thanked Cisneros and Rath for the briefing and stated that she was supportive of the program. Chair Cabello Havrda asked for clarification on the program funding associated with cost of vehicles and services. Rath stated that the vehicles would not be purchased and would be contracted with a bus service company. Rath stated that AACOG would apply for additional grant funding to expand the program.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked how funding would be divided by the participating cities and counties. Rath provided specifics of the funding per entities. Chair Cabello Havrda asked that staff readdress the funding from the City of San Antonio and Bexar County since there was a large overlap of the entities. Rath stated that staff would review the funding.

Chair Cabello Havrda expressed concern that the beginning route from San Antonio would be at the Randolph VIA Stop and Ride and asked that the beginning route be considered closer into the downtown area or other City areas. Rath stated that VIA had expanded services from the

Randolph Park-n-Ride stop but would look at other options.

Councilmember Castillo asked if VIA stops in other areas of town were considered. Rath stated that all routes were considered but that the Randolph route was thought to be most beneficial. Councilmember Castillo stated that residents in the South and East side would be required to transfer buses in the downtown area which would expand travel time for those residents. Councilmember Castillo asked if the buses had Wi-Fi and restroom facilities. Rath stated that the buses would have Wi-Fi but did not have restroom facilities but that all stops would have restroom facilities.

Councilmember Castillo asked if a ridership comparison of Amtrak and Mega Bus Lines were conducted for a similar route. Rath stated that they were not since those services were private and on a cost per ride basis and not on a weekly commuter rate structure. Councilmember Castillo recommended that the ridership data be reviewed, and information provided to the Committee.

Councilmember Perry asked for a history as to why rail options were not available. Rath stated that Union Pacific Railroad (UP) owned the rail lines and had priority for the usage of the lines. She added that the rail line from San Antonio and Austin were the primary rail line from Mexico to the rest of the United States which caused there to be very long trains on the route.

Councilmember Perry asked if the pilot program funding would expand beyond the two-year proposed plan. Rath stated that the pilot program funding would be sufficient for the two year period and would allow for gathering of data for true costs of transit services. She noted that the \$10 weekly pass would allow for monitoring of the interest of the route.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked if the legislature had created a rail district to support the Toyota Plant. Rath stated that the legislature had created the Lone Star Transit District but that it did not address the rail and did not support the Toyota Plan. Cisneros stated that the Lone Star Transit District addressed the specific Toyota need but not along that route.

Councilmember Sandoval stated that she supported the much needed proposal which she felt was reasonably priced. She stated that it was important to address future sustainability of the program. Sandoval asked if there were any funding commitments from the Cities the route supported. Rath stated that there was great interest in funding but that many were waiting to see what infrastructure grants would be available in the future. Cisneros stated that there were increased possibilities for funding and that there was already increased capital improvement funding by government entities and that all supported the need for transportation options to Austin.

Councilmember Sandoval asked if there would be a dedicated lane for the route. Rath stated that a dedicated line was not currently available but the Department of Transportation was proposing legislation for emergency and transit vehicles to use the shoulder lane but that had not been approved by the Governor. Councilmember Sandoval stated that she was concerned that the City of Austin stop was very useful and walkable and that the Randolph stop, while good, there was still a need for consideration of additional stops consideration to increase workability to the route stop. Cisneros stated that the route timing of 90 minutes was why the Randolph site was proposed for the pilot program and future stops would be considered after the pilot program timeframe. She added that direct routes would be proposed later from Randolph to other San

Antonio key areas such as downtown and north side. Councilmember Sandoval reiterated her support of the plan.

Councilmember Bravo entered the meeting at this time.

Chair Cabello Havrda stated that it was important to consider expansion of the program after completion of the pilot program.

Councilmember Perry stated that it was important to collaborate with the Texas Department of Transportation (TXDoT) and asked Assistant City Manager Jeff Coyle if staff were addressing the need for a dedicated lane for transit services. Coyle stated that staff would research and provide an update during the Intergovernmental Relations Committee meeting.

Councilmember Castillo stressed the need for additional options from the downtown area and expressed concerns for the lack of ridership options. She recommended that additional buses be used during the pilot program but acknowledged funding restrictions. She also expressed concern regarding capacity on the buses and it being at full capacity when it reached other proposed stops. Rath stated that at this time it was not anticipated to be at full capacity but that it would be tracked to see if additional buses were needed.

No action was required for Item 2.

**3. Briefing and possible action on the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program and the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program.** [Roderick Sanchez, Assistant City Manager; Razi Hosseini, Director, Public Works]

Public Works Director Razi Hosseini provided an update on the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program and the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant Program and reviewed the City of San Antonio Infrastructure Investment Strategy. He noted that staff worked closely with TXDoT and other stakeholders. Hosseini stated that the Reconnecting Communities Pilot Program had \$195 million in funding for 2022 and there were two projects proposed to be benefiting from the grant funding. He stated that the projects were for the Hemisfair and Port San Antonio areas.

Hosseini reviewed the Railroad Crossing Elimination Grant and available funding of \$573 million for 2022. He reviewed the available types of programs eligible for the grant funding and stated that the grant application would include projects for Rittiman Road and Gibbs Sprawl Road. He reviewed the next steps in the grant application process.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked of the criteria for the selection of the proposed projects. Hosseini reviewed the criteria and considerations. Chair Cabello Havrda stressed that these projects were needed to bring San Antonio to the next level of transit and stated that she supported the pilot program. She stated that it was important to look at other project areas for future funding to improve transit connectivity.

Councilmember Perry expressed concern regarding the previous unsuccessful grant awards such as the RAISE grant opportunities and asked if staff had considered lessons learned from those grants. Hosseini stated that staff were working very closely with TXDoT and other stakeholders

to be successful in the future. Assistant City Manager Jeff Coyle spoke to the lessons learned from previous grant applications and working closely with partner organizations to have successful grant submissions to obtain awards from the competitive grants. Councilmember Perry recommended the use of a consultant to improve grant applications and asked for a briefing on the grant process.

Councilmember Perry asked for a list of all railroad crossings which had challenges. Hosseini stated that he would provide a list for review.

Councilmember Castillo asked for data on the connectivity challenges in the proposed areas of Hemisfair Park and asked for fatality data of the sites. She stated that she felt that there were other areas that should be considered due to increased fatalities and that Hemisfair had received much funding in the past. Assistant City Manager Coyle stated that the Connectivity grant funding was new and that it addressed deconstruction of roads to meet connectivity challenges especially in the Port San Antonio area.

Councilmember Castillo asked if there were ways for community organizations to provide support for projects. Andres Andujar spoke to the community engagement conducted for the Hemisfair proposed project with addressed connectivity challenges from the Alamodome, railroad crossings and interstate to bring connectivity back to the Hemisfair Fair era. Assistant City Manager Coyle stated that letters of support from stakeholders were important and would be included in grant applications and staff would work with the council district offices.

No action was required for Item 3.

**4. Briefing and possible action on amendments to Chapter 33 of the City Code and to the ordinance restricting an industry representative from serving as the Transportation Advisory Board Chairperson.** [Maria Villagomez, Deputy City Manager; William P. McManus, Chief of Police]

Assistant Police Chief Rick Riley provided an overview of the proposed amendments to Chapter 33 addressing the vehicle for hire industry. He summarized the impact of ride-share programs on the cab/taxi industry and reviewed the six proposed amendments to Chapter 33. The proposed amendments addressed specifics associated with: time frames to add/replace vehicles; insurance; Taxicab Permit Allocation Committee (TPAC), taxicab permit request process, fuel surcharges and references of Transport Network Committee (TNC). Riley also reviewed proposed amendments to taxicab rates to include airport and downtown district rates, alternative vehicles for hire and group cycle service vehicles. He stated that staff supported all amendments except the TAB amendment and reviewed the timeline for City Council approval.

Chair Cabello Havrda stated that the increased cost of doing business supported the increase in rates and that she supported the amendments. She asked if the proposed rates were similar to ride share rates. Riley confirmed that they were similar and competitive. Chair Cabello Havrda asked if there were limits to group cycle permits. Riley stated that there were currently no limits due to demand. Chair Cabello Havrda expressed concern that there were no limits on these permits since she had observed high volume in other cities and did not want San Antonio to face similar challenges.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked for clarification on the TAB membership. Riley provided an overview of the TAB membership. Chair Cabello Havrda stated that she supported the current membership.

Councilmember Perry asked for clarification of the TAB membership and which industries were not represented. Riley stated that the only industry with no seat representation was the group cycle industry which was due to volume.

Councilmember Perry expressed concern for the reasoning of regulation of rates by code and not allowed for the industry to set. Riley stated that regulation allowed for ridership protections and safety consideration and that SAPD addressed complaints and had recourse for bad behavior. Yellow Cab Representative John Bouloubasis spoke in support of the proposed amendments and associated rate formal structure changes. He spoke to additional proposed changes to include top light requirements.

Councilmember Perry requested additional time to review the proposed amendments. Assistant City Manager Villagomez stated that there was not a specific timeline but that the Taxicab industry wished to move the amendment forward sooner than later due to increased fuel costs. Chair Cabello Havrda clarified that if the Committee did move forward today for full City Council consideration in September 2022 that it still allowed Councilmembers time to address any concerns or provide comment.

Councilmember Castillo asked for clarification on the impact of taxicab driver wages and if increases would impact wages and asked for additional data on that.

Councilmember Bravo asked what taxicab ridership was expected to be in the future compared to other rideshare options. Riley stated that taxicab ridership was an older population who didn't use digital sources for obtaining rides resulting in more comfort in taxi usage. Councilmember Bravo asked for clarification on fuel charge rate increase considerations and if the proposed rate was sufficient. Riley stated that fuel rates were evaluated every 45 days and increased in five cent increments. Councilmember Bravo expressed concern that rates were not sufficient to support the taxicab industry.

Councilmember Bravo asked for clarification on signage and rates associated with taxicab and other rideshare programs. He supported the need for additional time to review the Item.

Chair Cabello Havrda asked staff to add the Item for consideration at a later meeting and requested individual briefings to Committee Members prior to the next meeting.

No action was required for Item 4.

## **Adjournment**

There being no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 11:42 AM.

**Approved**

*Melissa Cabello Havrda, Chair*

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*Debbie Racca-Sittre, City Clerk*

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