

**ASHLAND TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
MINUTES
March 24, 2016**

These minutes are pending approval from the Transportation Commission.

CALL TO ORDER

Graf called the meeting to order at 6:03 pm

Commissioners Present: Danielle Amarotico, Joe Graf, David Young, Alan Bender, and Sue Newberry

Commissioners Absent: Dominic Barth and Corinne Viéville

Council Liaison Present: Stef Seffinger

SOU Liaison Absent: Janelle Wilson

Staff Present: Scott Fleury, Mike Faught and Kyndra Irigoyen

ANNOUNCEMENTS

None.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Approval of February 25, 2015 Minutes

The minutes were discussed and approved as amended.

ADJUSTMENTS TO THE AGENDA

None.

PUBLIC FORUM

Michael Shore, 140 Clay Street

He shared today he was driving into town on East Main St. and is not used to how people stop for pedestrians or how pedestrians walk around everywhere in Ashland. While approaching the train crossing, a pedestrian stepped off the curb. The driver in front of him stopped, which made him come to a stop on the train tracks. He then saw a train coming his way. There were no bells or whistles going off. He said it made him think of how that area is structured. There should be a designated place to stop and to arrange the arms so that someone could pull around to get out of the way of the train coming so this does not happen to someone else.

Huelz Gutcheon, 2253 Hwy 99

He discussed busses. He said when they were in town people just walked onto the bus and now they have to pay when they board the bus. Some years ago he said Julie from RVTD presented new buses, without advertising, but now they have advertising. He spoke with them recently and said they have a two hour run with stops, now there are more people, newer buses, and the buses are always running late so they drive fast and stop fast. He thinks it should be a half hour run. He said the drivers do not realize how fast they are driving. Route 10 does not have any other inter-route connections. He said it would be nice to have an electric bus in town because we are getting traffic jams in town now.

NEW BUSINESS

None.

OLD BUSINESS

Tolman Creek and Siskiyou Blvd. Stop Sign

Graf said the issue here is the Oregon Department Of Transportation (ODOT) is interested in putting in a 4 way stop at Tolman Creek and Siskiyou Blvd. and has asked for the City to support it. The next step is to have public input about the matter.

David Widup, 1495 Tolman Creek Rd.

He lives on Tolman Creek Road right up the hill from the intersection. Since living there, it seemed to him that something else was needed at the intersection. There is poor line of sight. and limited visibility when crossing Siskiyou Blvd. from Tolman Creek. He said cars there have almost hit him and something needs to be done. It is a matter of safety in his opinion and it is only a matter of time until there is a bad accident there. People heading towards the freeway are going faster than 35mph and it is hard for people crossing Tolman Creek from Siskiyou Blvd.

Scott and Marlane Balcomb, 1153 Tolman Creek Rd.

Scott said he lives a block up from Tolman Creek and has witnessed two accidents there. He has had close calls at this intersection as well. People coming off the freeway do not drive the 35mph speed limit, including semi-trucks there late at night. One time he had to stop and look, because he could not see, and a sheriff pulled him over probably thinking he did not stop even though he stopped four times before he turned. It is a terrible intersection and a 4-way stop would be great. Marlane said she stops and goes too to make sure no cars are coming. Scott said you have to be cautious in this area to make sure no one is coming. You cannot even get across the intersection when school drop off is happening early in the morning.

Zach Brombacker, 1370 Tolman Creek Rd.

He has lived at this location for almost 40 years. He said you have to inch out into the road to make sure another car is not coming. There needs to be a light there for safety. People are trying to get across and it is just a traffic jam. His wife was in an accident due to a van that used to park there obstructing view. He once saw a woman with children almost get hit by a car. It would really help to get a light in there and it would be a tremendous safety thing. He said it is unbelievable the amount of cars in this area during school drop off and pick up. His idea is to come off Siskiyou, go around to their grass area, and have some kind of area where the kids can be picked up and dropped off. He is happy that the commission is looking at this issue.

Howard Hunter and Anna Marino, 2312 Green Meadow Way

He said he was excited to see the letter about this. He tries to avoid this area, agrees with everyone's comments, and is supportive of something happening here.

Graf said the two emails he received are in support of the stop signs.

Graf confirmed this is a 4-way stop, not a stop light. ODOT is willing to go ahead with it if they get the 'ok' from the City. This is the first step and ODOT will come back with a design for the City. Faught said he does not know if they will eventually add a red flashing light, this is just the design phase. David Widup said he thinks people will blow through a stop sign. Fleury said he agrees that a flashing light would be good there too. Widup said the issue there now is that people stop on Siskiyou when they are not supposed to stop. Graf said he does not know the exact design yet, which could be a light. This meeting is for the City to give the go ahead for ODOT to proceed with the design. The final vote will come from City Council. Faught said the design is unknown, it first needs to be approved by the Transportation Commission and then Council will vote for final approval.

Young/Newberry m/s the Transportation Commission recommend that ODOT enter into the design phase for the 4-way stop at Siskiyou and Tolman. All in favor.

Young said this intersection is high priority and appreciates the input from the public. Newberry said she has experienced frightening incidents when the children have been crossing in the cross walks. She saw a crossing guard trying to control traffic and it almost caused an accident and hopes that ODOT really looks at this area because it is a very dangerous place for children.

FOLLOW UP ITEMS

Transit

Graf said at the last meeting we supported the levy for RVTD for Route 10. Fleury said he had drafted a staff report to go to Council discussing the levy. Council showed support for the levy at the last meeting. He said they are going to talk with the city administrator and make sure that the staff report should still go forward and that the Transportation Commission made a recommendation for support of the levy as well. Faught said it is important that Council hear that they are in support of the levy. Graf said it is important that it be approved through the official

channels.

Graf said the next step is to discuss the internal circulator and the steps for that process. He asked how we want to move forward with this. What sort of routes and population do we want to serve and do we want to hire a consultant or a staff study. Young said as he mentioned last time we have had two consultants and two processes including the TSP update and the downtown plan. The first one was a circulator that went back and forth from exit 14 to the plaza. A consultant from the University of Oregon thought there was good reason to expand from exit 14 through the plaza up North Main to exit 19 and back and forth. There was plausible evidence as to why this would be successful. We have many citizens who have energy to put into this and have made it clear that their support would be for something along that route. His theory is that we will get in the weeds about thinking of other routes and other populations but this is the spine and core of what we need to focus on. He fears we are going to make this too complicated by adding in more routes. He fears that it will get too messy if we start thinking too big with too many options. It will serve tourists, schools, downtown, hotels, and the hospital with the route downtown. He thinks we should focus our efforts on the downtown route.

Amarotico said she has to disagree with Young. She thinks that Route 8 has already shown that the population is there, but they do not have the funding to do it. It covers something completely different from what is covered now through the current bus system. If we could figure out something to get Route 8 closer to Clay Street, she thinks it is worth consideration. Young said they are not mutually exclusive. Amarotico said she thinks they can probably only choose to do one to start with. Young said RVTD has the one he is describing that proposes a bridge over Nevada Street and the proposed funding from RVTD, we are talking possibly another ten years for that to happen. He said he agrees with Amarotico's idea too.

Faught asked for clarification on the outcome from the last meeting. The commission decided to look at all of the TSP's inner city routes and then make adjustments. It could be similar to the route Young described, Route 8, a hub or a circulator. He thought that the commission had agreed to discuss all of these options and consider all the proposed ideas.

Graf thinks they agreed to look at the internal circulator within Ashland and what route it would be, was somewhat open. He said they will not necessarily be picking one or the other from the TSP, but would see what kind of internal circulator would best serve the City. We could be thinking of some new design based on the population we decide to serve. Young said we got a clear answer from Paige at RVTD that they have no interest in getting an internal route in Ashland. Our boutique needs are not in their priorities. Graf said RVTD wants to serve White City, RCC, West Medford, and bring back Saturday and evening service. Faught said if we are talking about spending city money on a project we should be looking at which one we want to recommend. In the TSP, it recommends supporting RVTD if we do not have the financing and meeting their tiered approach, but if the commission wants to move forward on something, we have to make a recommendation of what we think is best and spend city money or look for other grants because RVTD is not offering money for the trolley either. Graf said RVTD is not offering money for anything except improving headways on Route 10. Faught said we should not separate Route 8 just because RVTD does not have that on their priority list, if we want to make a proposal that will include some city funding that should be part of the proposal. Newberry said she is not clear about the route Young mentioned. Young said it was recommended in the TSP and goes from exit 14, down Ashland St., turning onto Siskiyou, and to the plaza. Early in the proceedings of the downtown committee, the consultant recommended extending it down N. Main and to exit 19.

Bender asked why we are discussing specific routes. He asked what the next steps are because deciding on a route is not the next step. Graf suggested thinking of what populations or areas we want to serve, which includes the tourists and could include people in affordable housing, or traveling to Mountain Meadows or ScienceWorks Museum, etc. We need to think if it makes sense to do something like that. Faught said part of it is to define our objective, reduce vehicle traffic, increase ridership for low income, and what we want to accomplish. We need to define what we want to do. He is talking to the Council right now about street maintenance funding. There is a limited amount of money we are working with & the details need to be worked out. The commission seems to want to solve transit and he recommends using a consultant who knows transit who can help the commission set the objectives. Graf said we do not have to decide that today and he can work with Fleury and Faught for some direction for the commission.

Young said he does not agree. He feels that there is a lot of work being done and community support from the people who came out. Even the population from Mountain Meadows, who you would not expect to come out, support the routes identified in the two processes he already mentioned because they will be an asset to this town. He feels that anything else right now is a stall tactic and creates complication when there is a clear sense of community support, which makes this take a backseat to the Nevada Street Bridge project, which is highly controversial. There is a sense a lot of the money could go to other transit options. There is community support for this and a well-vetted route that is worth looking at. He said that looking at other options is a delay tactic and he does not think that Faught wants to support it. He disagrees in hiring a consultant.

Graf said his understanding of the group is to have an electric shuttle that improves life in Ashland and gets people out of their cars, but not partial to a particular route. A citizen from the audience announced she wants to lesson our carbon footprint and encourage people to get around without their cars to have a clean city. Bender said he agrees. He said a few months ago we discussed being a role model city. We have many things that put Ashland in a league of its own and agrees to reducing our carbon footprint. The overarching concern is for us to be a trendsetter and that has to come first.

Newberry asked about the timeframe in hiring a consultant and what would happen if we did not hire a consultant. Graf said we have to decide if we have enough information to move forward. He said if we do not need a consultant, we have to do the next level of study. If we decide to do a trolley or circulator we still have to do more work than what is in the TSP. We could have an ad-hoc committee or do something else to produce a study, but somebody has to do it and whether it takes more time or less time it has to get it done. It will take a very long time if we only talk about it for 20 minutes every meeting once a month. We have to get more information from someone. The citizens did a great job looking at the electric buses, but we still have to figure out how to pay for it, whose going to drive, and operations or if there will be a public/private partnership. Young asked about the citizens. He said there is a lot of energy and expertise in our community and they can find these answers; maybe there can be an ad-hoc committee for this. Newberry said she has worked on projects like this where the consultant will work hand in hand with the citizens who are actively involved. The consultant has the tools that the citizens do not have, but in the end, we had educated and informed citizens. She believes we need to engage our citizens, not just have them give input at every meeting, but have the consultant involve them in the work and engage them. She is interested in getting a consultant on board provided any request for proposal includes a close involvement with the citizens who are interested. Bender said given the turn out a few months ago there seems to be people who want to be fully engaged.

Young said he was a member of the ad-hoc committee for Siskiyou Blvd. under Paula Brown and they did not have a consultant. He said they received statewide awards for the design. It was informative and energizing. Everyone was involved and there was a good outcome from it. Many citizens want to stand equally with us to get the work done. He said he is not opposed to having a consultant organizing the work to guide the citizens though.

Graf summarized by saying everyone agrees to do this process while involving engaged citizens and maintaining a holistic view of transit options for the internal circulators within Ashland because we do not need so much if we are not doing Route 10. If we are going to mobilize all these people with all this energy, with or without a consultant, we need to come up with the right answer for Ashland.

Newberry said if you have a stakeholder group, it is up to them to pick the route. She said she does not know if the commission can say it should be one way or the other. Graf said it does not mean we are starting with this route. He said we are saying, this is what is in the TSP and this is what has changed in Ashland since the TSP was created. We do not choose the route now, we choose the process and the process will give us the route we need. The commission was quite clear that they want to work on the internal circulator.

Newberry said we want to define our objective and the method for achieving the objective. This would be a stakeholder-engaged process with a consultant on board to help with the heavy lifting and our objective is an internal circulator that serves the community well. She said she thinks they all agree on that. Bender said when we say, 'serve well' it implies just the transportation aspect and not necessarily the environmental aspect. Newberry said we need to define our objectives and construct a motion. She said she would like to craft a motion of recommending an

ad-hoc committee to work on the internal circulator.

Faught said he would like to research transit consultants. Staff will research a little bit more so that when the commission makes their motion, it is very clear to the Council what the recommendation is.

Graf said the important points are the internal circulator, citizen involvement, and in line with the goals that are set in the TSP. Seffinger asked if they are including charge and a timeline with this. Graf said we are not quite there yet, we need more details. Graf said it is important to make sure the objective includes serving the community. Newberry said she would like to use the word 'engagement'. Faught said staff will create something and the commission can adjust accordingly.

Downtown Parking and Multi Modal Circulation Study Update-Improvement Projects

Faught said there is a lot of community involvement in this group. He thinks they are close to wrapping it up. We are pulling projects that are out of the TSP that are part of the downtown. The following items have been added: a roundabout at Pioneer and Hargadine; removal of vehicle access to the beaver slide to limit to only pedestrians and cyclists and construct a path; and improving Lithia Street safety. Rick Williams (consultant) and Kim Parducci (Southern Oregon Transportation Engineering) are coming to the next meeting. The plan calls for us to hire a new staff member to work on the downtown traffic issues. This person will work on obtaining agreements for parking spaces. If staff is not hired, this project will sit on the shelf. It is recommended a new parking committee work and meet on downtown parking issues.

This will be taken to the next City Council study session for them to be fully engaged. It has been a long process. Faught feels that it is a good plan and if someone is hired to manage the plan, he sees it going somewhere. It is his hope that it will address all the parking and circulation issues downtown.

Graf said a very important piece of the plan is the streetscaping; it generates a lot of enthusiasm. He wants to make sure that the new staff member hired to manage the parking plan interacts with the commissions. Faught said he will have Rick Williams work on this with the committee. He needs the champion staff person to be working on the downtown issues. Seffinger hopes that there will be a physical walk through so the Council can see where it is they are talking about because it will be more helpful to understand the project and issues.

Bike Share/Car Share

Graf said they had a discussion by phone with a representative from Zagster. He said they learned that if we want to do a bike share with Zagster they will do the study to set up the bike share, but did not tell us the cost and the representative also said that bike shares never generate revenue. If we pay them directly, they will actually replace the bikes periodically. Fleury said the process for this would be to enter into an agreement with them. Zagster is essentially a turnkey operation. You pay your fee and all rental fees associated with the bikes go directly to the owner, which would be the City, they do not pay for themselves but they offset some of the costs. Young thinks we could spend half an hour deciding where the best places are to have these bike shares in our town. He thinks that having four or five stations would be a good idea and would give them something to work with.

Fleury said he saw that they are using a car share in New York and in London with Nissan, Toyota and Ford. It was interesting to see how that is working in those cities. He spoke with Wilson about having zip car representative come to a future commission meeting. Bender said a car share is taking on a life of its own in big cities and it is ideal to have a car when citizens need to leave Ashland. Young said he was in Miami and they used Uber the whole time and he does not know why we do not have that here.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

Nevada St. Bridge Extension Project

Faught said there has been a desire to have a community discussion and would like to have this done with a public meeting session next month to receive input. Newberry said this is a difficult way to get public input. She has been following this topic and most people do not want more traffic on their street, she does not blame them. Faught said there will be a presentation on the bridge to show them what it looks like. Newberry said many people have said they think it should just be a pedestrian and bike bridge and we should discuss that. Young agrees with Newberry's

concerns, that it belongs here, and that we should not take any action at that meeting. We need to get the public's input first. Faught said the letter that will go out will specify that we are just discussing the project and not taking action on it.

Graf asked what action we could take. Faught said we have moved this through the TSP and Transportation Commission and it is in the design phase. We are now trying to securing funding for it. Now people want to see what it will look like. He said Paige Townsend from RVTD said having this bridge is the only way you will see transit out there. Graf said some people will not want it and others will want us to change it, while others are only concerned about the design. He wants to know how to tell the people what outcomes to expect when they come to the meeting. Young said there is a group of people who feel that this never saw the light of day. He said there was a sense that this was conceptual and not shovel ready, and there are many people who feel this went forward as a project without being able to respond. It has been presented as a done deal and people feel they have not had a chance to weigh in on the matter. Faught said if the commission wants to have more public process on this & he does not have an issue with that. We have a grant for this that is only good until 2018. This has been discussed at the commission level before. He said if they want to slow down the process, he is not opposed to that at all.

Graf said he is still concerned. He feels this is the place to have a public process; he wants to know what that public process is. If it is more like a presentation of the design and people's comments on the design, but if the commission ends up with some action items that is different. He said this was a high priority project within the TSP and it has moved up. He asked what we do in response to a full room of people who do not want to do it. He does not want to give people false hope that they are coming here to testify when it is already a done deal, unless we tell them clearly they are commenting on the design. Newberry thinks people need to understand why it is in the TSP, why it is a priority, and that it is important to tell people they are commenting on the design. Faught said he is going to explain why we should have it for the public forum. Young said the public is demanding a public process. The development of the TSP was controversial within the commission. His sense is that it has not been a perfect process, but the public does not feel it was proper process in presenting this project. He proposes that they hold the public forum to receive input and not take action, followed by further discussion.

Graf said he would like to be able to tell the public if it is a done deal or if we are reconsidering. He does not want to give the impression that they can overturn the project if they cannot. We all agree that they should have come in 2012 when the TSP was developed, but that is in the past. Faught said Young makes a good point. What he has told folks is that they are proposing a public forum to give input on the design. Young said he feels uncomfortable saying it is a done deal. Faught has heard a lot of support for the project but he is not opposed to having more public input on the project.

Faught said the community members who live in the vicinity of the bridge project that will be affected by travel will be noticed by mail. In addition, Mountain Meadows, The Greenway Foundation, and RVTD will be notified. A news release will also be posted on the homepage of the City website.

Young wants to have a discussion on the project that could leave staff to a yes or no and could lead to a future agenda topic to decide on. Graf said the issue is whether or not the commission plans to make a decision at the meeting.

Action Summary

None.

Accident Report

None.

Making an Impact Newsletter (March)

None.

Grandview Shared Road Status

Fleury said staff has received three conceptual designs from the consultant. Staff needs to review them before

bringing to the commission.

COMMISSION OPEN DISCUSSION

Fleury said right now the Rogue Valley Metro Planning Organization is redoing their intelligent infrastructure plan; which deals with the intelligent infrastructure throughout the Rogue Valley. This is the coordination of traffic signals and electric vehicles. There is a public hearing next week on this at the Medford Library. Fleury will provide information to commission.

Faught said he would like to invite the commission to the downtown committee next month.

Bender said one other multi-modal topic he would like to mention is that he hears the train from his house all the time now. We hear about passenger rail being used here off and on. He asked if it was too soon to start discussing the topic. Young said he likes the idea, but he feels it is too soon to start discussing.

FUTURE AGENDA TOPICS

Car Share

ADJOURNMENT

Meeting was adjourned at 8:06pm.

*Respectfully submitted,
Kyndra Irigoyen
Public Works Administrative Assistant*