



MINUTES
TEMPE TOMORROW – GENERAL PLAN 2050
COMMUNITY WORKING GROUP (CWG)
January 17, 2023

Minutes of the regular meeting of the Tempe Tomorrow General Plan 2050 Community Working Group (CWG), of the City of Tempe, which was held in hybrid format in person and via Zoom at the Tempe Public Library, 3500 S Rural Road, Desert Willow Program Room (Meeting Room A), Tempe, AZ.

Regular Meeting convened at 5:36 PM

Present:

Staff:

Chair Andre Salais	Ryan Levesque, Deputy Director – Community Development
Vice Chair Anne Till	Ambika Adhikari, Principal Planner
Julie Armstrong	Brenda Clark, Neighborhood Services Specialist
Myrna Baez	Robert Yabes, Principal Planner
J.P. Coughlin	Lyle Begiebing, Transportation Planner
Donald Ortiz	Robbie Aaron, Planner II
Sarbeswar Praharaj	Jacob Payne, Planner I
Katherine Schmidt	Joanna Barry, Administrative Assistant II
David Sokolowski	
Nolan Williams	

- 1) **Call to order** by Chair Salais
- 2) **Attendance Roll Call:** Chair Salais made the roll call. A quorum was present with 10 members present.
- 3) **Public Comments:** NONE
- 4) **Voting of the Meeting Minutes**

Chair Salais called for a motion to vote on the meeting minutes from January 3, 2023.

Motion by Commissioner Armstrong to approve the Meeting Minutes of January 3, 2023. Seconded by Commissioner Baez. Motion passed on **10-0** vote.

Ayes: Chair Salais, Vice Chair Till, Commissioners Julie Armstrong, Myrna Baez, J.P. Coughlin, Donald Ortiz, Sarbeswar Praharaj, Katherine Schmidt, David Sokolowski, and Nolan Williams.

Nays: None

Abstain: None

Absent: Commissioners Sydney Bethel Price, Lilliana Cardenas, Jana Lynn Granillo, Patrick McNamara, Robert Moore, Shane Peterlin, and Logan Tokos.

- 5) **Presentation on General Plan Elements:** Presentation on General Plan Circulation Chapter: Travelways, Streets, Parking Access and Management, and Aviation elements. Presentation by staff.

6) Activity and Discussion: Discussion on the Circulation Chapter: Travelways, Streets, Parking Access and Management, and Aviation elements for Tempe Tomorrow - GP 2050

Commissioner Sokolowski stated he prefers east/west BRT along Southern Avenue as opposed to Baseline Road.

Staff advised that the location of east/west alignment is uncertain so this could be possible.

Chair Salais noted he would argue for alignment on Baseline Road, and he understands we considered signal prioritization for rail and BRT if in its own lane.

Vice Chair Till suggested we incorporate bridges/tunnels over or under the UPRR (Union Pacific Railroad) along Dorsey or Country Club to increase connectivity.

Staff advised that we do not have the Right-of-Way (ROW) under the UPRR bridge to make a safe bike and pedestrian path. However, there is a grant funded study to study the best place to benefit a new bike/ped facility.

Chair Salais noted that parking is a contentious issue as the parking spaces waste space when not actively used. He stated we have limited vertical space due to the airspace limitations as required by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). When looking through new permits, he commonly sees 24 story buildings where 1/3 of the building is above ground parking lots. He noted that spreading parking horizontally is bad for transit and sprawl, but vertical usage is not good either.

Staff advised that parking is enforced by Community Development and stated that maybe this can be mentioned in Land Use element instead. Zoning is regulated in the Zoning Code. Aside from what we require, many developments are overparked, but financial institutions sometimes want to see certain amounts of parking to ensure commercial viability of the development. In City Center (CC) zoning, the first 5,000 SF is waived for office and then is 1 per 500 compared to 1 in 300 elsewhere in Tempe. In surface parking lots, providing more than 125% of parking required will initiate a public hearing process. There are certainly other new systems we can try to implement, but it is not always the City to blame for excessive parking (i.e., financial institutions require it).

Chair Salais asked if this applied to underground parking.

Staff advised that it does, but undergrade parking is expensive and is not feasible in most places in Tempe.

Staff also noted that many cities in the US are either eliminating or considering reductions to parking ratios and standards. We are not there yet, but nationally this is changing.

Commissioner Williams stated that the General Plan 2040 did a good job with travel-ways and transit. He noted that usually we just say the new stuff we want and pile it onto the things we have. He likes the aspiration of the 20-minute city; and he said the presentation was done well.

Commissioner Sokolowski noted that we are aiming for carbon neutrality by 2050. We are behind and have lots of work to do to catch up to where Europe is. He stated that we can eliminate on street parking, and leave the garages as they are for now. He suggested changing the make-up of our streets to allow for other uses and make sure we can encourage these modes.

Commissioner Coughlin noted that travel ways mentioned models that measure loads and capacities. He asked if this is still relevant and stated that we should look at updating these procedures.

Staff advised that we do run models for new developments, but they are infrequent. The proposal we have now is to run a regular model or do a case when a large-scale development comes in. The ways to mitigate negative effects can be requirements to reduce demand for parking (employer makes employees use alternative modes).

We are working with projects to encourage users of other modes of transportation beyond the single occupancy vehicles.

Commissioner Coughlin noted that using models to anticipate changes when eliminating or adding lanes etc. will be very valuable.

Commissioner Praharaj noted that at ASU in the last few months, they have been conducting a biking study about how students get to and around campus. In the 2019-2021 data, the dip seen during COVID has not gone up, but is not back to pre-pandemic levels. Their observation was that we are experiencing new mobility tools like scooters. He noted they do not see a reflection of micro-mobility in this plan, and stated we need to consider the increasing popularity and how to respond to these in our plans. He liked how the land use plan compared how the uses changed over the plan life and shows the comparison. He stated that if we are to say we will reduce automobile dependency and increase bike/ped paths, we can see the real-life scenario as we add them up.

Staff advised that the use of scooters is being measured and there are some issues with parking and travelling along with them. In our mobility hubs, we do consider scooters and where they can be located to optimize usefulness. Looking at the census numbers, we have been on a bike user decline, so we need to ensure that we work back to where we were or exceed that. The buildings in our downtown have become higher density and most surface lots have been developed up.

Chair Salais agreed that we need to optimize our ROW usage and that maybe the removal (or reduction) of car travel lanes for other road users is necessary in our city. He stated that employers offering incentives to use other modes is a good idea to lessen the need for parking on site. He noted that there are people who would take transit if employers did not require them to drive. He noted that some employers want their employees to drive sometimes to move things, and sometimes for the flexibility of traveling for meetings etc.

Chair Salais asked if drones count as aviation elements or if we leave them out in the General Plan.

Commissioner David Sokolowski noted that there is also the idea of autonomous drone types, which might need to be considered as something to prepare for in the Plan. The FAA is creating advanced air traffic management systems for advanced urban air mobility.

Staff noted that the FAA regulates drones, so we can leave it out from the General Plan. We do have some restrictions on where they can fly but for the most part it is FAA that regulates them. Staff noted that it would be difficult for us to put topics like this into our plan because the city does not have the regulatory ability to control them.

Chair Salais suggested that we could be more restrictive than the State or Federal government by possibly limiting drone flight paths or heights.

Staff advised that regulatory items do not fall into the General Plan. However, we can add language to encourage regulations for autonomous air vehicles.

Chair Salais and David Sokolowski stated that autonomous vehicles are already here, and we need higher expertise to not chase the issue. Staff noted this topic might be better suited in the Transportation Master Plan. Ms. Till stated this will come quickly as the tech culture growth is exponential.

Vice Chair Till brought up the subject of ground cover/surfacing. She stated that a lot of grass turf is being replaced by rocks. She suggested looking for alternatives like wood chips, that are better than rocks. This pertains to streetscapes and private property, but she suggested that maybe it has a place in the circulation chapter. She encouraged better landscape practices.

Staff noted this definitely has a place in the sustainability chapter in working to mitigate urban heat and extreme heat. The Transportation Master Plan includes discussion on pavement quality index (PQI). This applies for car

lanes and bike lanes. Bikes respond to imperfections in the surface of the pavement much more intensely than cars. We use the universal standard on this. Roads must drop below a certain PQI (Pavement Quality Index) before they are prioritized by the City or county for resurfacing.

Commissioner Coughlin stated that we have an opportunity to add autonomous vehicles to the Travelways Strategy 1:3, where it mentions ways to incorporate alternative modes of transportation.

Commissioner Schmidt asked what we are doing to improve safety of pedestrians on sidewalks and paths.

Staff advised that we have a short ADA section in the Community Design element which provides safety to pedestrians and people with disabilities. In our transportation surveys we ask for specific spots to identify problems so we can solve them. This is a demanding task, and is typically funded by grants. Right now, we have plans for improvements on Roosevelt Street to add sidewalks. If there are small fixes that we can do, we can relay them to the head of transportation maintenance, and they may be fixed. We also have a Vision Zero plan to help reduce pedestrian and vehicle casualties and serious injuries to zero.

Vice Chair Till noted that separated sidewalks may help for ADA, but there are issues with curb boxes present in townhome developments where pedestrian paths become wavy and hard to traverse. She stated that many cars are parked on the curb itself. Square curbs can help to prevent this, but they are not ADA friendly.

Commissioner Sokolowski asked if this is the place to talk vehicle miles traveled and suggested that we should set a goal to reduce these.

7) **Questions & Discussion**

None

8) **Community Working Group, and City Staff Announcements**

Staff advised the Commission about the General Plan 2050 public event to be held at the Tempe History Museum on January 19, 2023. There will also be several other public outreach events, including those at Arts in the Parks.

Staff advised the Commission that future CWG meetings will no longer be held in the Desert Willow Program Room but will now be held in the Arizona Cypress Program Room (adjoining the current room).

Meeting adjourned at 7:02 pm.

Prepared by: Staff

Reviewed by: Ambika Adhikari, Principal Planner