

# MINUTES

# 21<sup>st</sup> Century Transportation Task Force

May 27, 2008  
11:30 AM – 1:30 PM  
9<sup>th</sup> Floor Council Committee Room

**Type of meeting:**

**Tenth Task Force Meeting**

**Attendees:**

Councilor Isaac Benton, Mike Skaggs (absent), Claude Luisada, Claude Morelli, Moises Gonzalez (absent), Jeffrey Peterson, Antonio Sandoval (absent), Terry Keene (absent), Gary Bodman (absent), Nevin Harwick, Alex Romero, Bert Thomas, Bob Murphy (absent), Brent Wilson (absent), Chris Blewett (absent), Clovis Acosta (absent), Dale Lockett, Joanne McEntire, Joel Wooldridge (absent), JW Madison, Martin Sandoval, Ralph Cipriani, Frank Burcham (absent), Gus Grace (absent)

**Resource Persons:**

Michael Riordan, Mike Smith, Keith Perry, Pat Montoya, Jamie Welles (IPC), Donna Baca, Kara Shair-Rosenfield

**Observers:**

John Perry

## AGENDA TOPICS

**Welcome**

**Councilor Benton**

**Discussion:** Councilor Benton called the meeting to order.

**Approval of Agenda and Minutes**

**Councilor Benton**

**Discussion:** Councilor Benton moved to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously. Councilor Benton moved to approve the minutes from the 5-13-08 meeting. Claude Morelli and Ralph Cipriani asked that the minutes be amended to more accurately capture statements they had made at the end of the last meeting. They offered specific language to replace statements in the draft minutes. The motion to approve the minutes, as amended, was seconded and passed unanimously.

## General Discussion: Recap of Saturday meeting

**Discussion:** Task Force members who attended the Saturday working group meeting presented what they worked on to the rest of the group. Councilor Benton began by reviewing the work that Group 1, which focused on the “Roadways” section of the outline, completed at the Saturday meeting. Most of the changes Group 1 made to the outline dealt with tweaking language/wordsmithing and adding Policy Statements regarding reducing the cost of maintenance and including improvements to trails and bikeways as part of “roadway improvements.” Task Force members had the opportunity to ask questions about the changes Group 1 made and suggest additional edits to the draft outline. (Those additional changes are tracked in the latest version of the draft outline, called “5.27.08.TF Meeting Draft Outline Edits”.)

Claude Morelli then presented what Group 2, which focused on the “Transit” section of the outline, came up with. Group 2 felt that what was in the outline related to transit was not sufficient, and their time was spent talking about a number of issues related to transit, including the organizational structure of ABQ Ride and funding. The first recommendation from Group 2 was to create a new Roman numeral II under Part 2 that would be a section just on Transit, then renumber the other sections accordingly (i.e., Modern Streetcar would become III, etc.). Claude reviewed the specific recommendations they came up with and issues that were identified (the following comes from the document called “5.17.08.Group 2 Notes”):

### **Pivotal Role of ABQ Ride**

- Transit integral part of future transportation system (role will increase in future)
- Transit needed to:
  1. Provide options to increasingly expensive auto use
  2. Provide access for low income, elderly, disabled
  3. Advance cause of lowering greenhouse emissions
  4. Provide adequate mobility capacity in increasingly congested corridors

### **ABQ Ride Organization**

- Professionalize leadership and staff; effectiveness
- Expand staff
- Improve employee morale
- Transparency / information sharing
- Decision making based on goals and performance standards
- Benchmarking / Comparing to other best systems (achieve Tucson performance)
- TQM
- Customer-focused transit / *Improved public safety* (text in italics added at the 5.27.08 meeting at the recommendation of Alex Romero)
- Run ABQ Ride like a business
- ABQ Ride is “healthy”
- ABQ Ride becomes a separate “authority” – ¼ Cent revenue remains dedicated, but supplemented with other dedicated revenue sources.

### **Funding**

- Stability / dedicated funding source(s)
  - Operations and maintenance
  - Capital
  - Planning and Predictability (can't be a whim of Council and/or Mayor)
- ¼ Cent revenue at least remains even on inflation-adjusted basis. But ¼ Cent not sufficient to fund even existing services. Need for other funding sources in addition to ¼ cent.
- Recommend: ABQ Ride's % of ¼ Cent revenue – go from 20% to 75% of ¼ Cent.

### **Service Design / Concept**

- Raise status of riding buses
- Clean vehicles (well-maintained)
- Clean vehicles (non-polluting – paint green)
- Hierarchy of service:
  - Rapid Ride
  - Local bus (transit centers)
  - Neighborhood circulator (transit centers)
- Connecting / Integrating with other transit systems in region
- ABQ Ride backbone of transit in region
- Local retirees drive the local circulators

### **Educate Public**

- Economic benefit of transit
  - Families spend less on gas so can spend more money on other things
- Health benefits (have data)

Task Force members had the opportunity to ask questions about and comment on what Group 2 presented. Joanne McEntire asked about the format of Group 2's work and how it relates to the existing outline from which the group has been working. Ralph Cipriani mentioned that he had turned Group 2's notes into a working draft document called "The Future of Public Transportation in Albuquerque – Observations and Recommendations" (which was handed out at the meeting). Councilor Benton pointed out that the "observations" and "recommendations" could probably be easily formatted to be consistent with the way the draft outline is formatted.

The Task Force decided to break out into the two groups again to continue refining language in the two sections they had been working on. Group 1 came up with one additional edit to the draft outline, which is also tracked in the lasted version of the outline.

**Discussion:** The group spent the final 15-20 minutes of the meeting discussing the modern streetcar proposal and commenting on the three presentations that Leland Consulting Group had made.

**Claude Luisada:** I listened carefully to the rather long dissertation by the consultant and was appalled when they suggested taking 25-50% of ¼ cent tax to pay for streetcar. Right there is a major question of how you fund it, even if you could justify it. Other things that don't make sense: streetcar lines in downtown areas make sense if you have large numbers of people going down there; Transit Dept. has numbers that show that downtown is not the largest or even second largest employment area, and streetcar won't make it a larger employer. I get upset because people tend to focus on streetcar as being a circulator on rails – still standard-gauge track. I could really see a lightrail line more than a streetcar line as a spine all the way east to west (98<sup>th</sup> to Tramway) – that would work – it would be very expensive. That could get a lot of people to ride and help spur economic development. A streetcar line, over a relatively short distance, could help improve real estate values for one or two blocks off the line. Seems to be a small payoff. Relatively few people actually benefit. I was struck by the fact that consultant said that you can't get money for streetcar, but you can get it for lightrail, from the federal government.

**Martin Sandoval:** In looking at this holistically, we need to go back to the question of who is our target audience. Who are we trying to attract to ride transit? How are we going to connect people to employment centers and other destinations? Is streetcar going to achieve that? I don't know that it will, especially without enhanced north-south transit lines to tie in to a streetcar line.

**JW Madison:** Several things – Rails Inc. comes from the idea that we took a wrong turn in transportation about 60 years ago and that we need to return to rail, move away from automobiles. If Chris Blewett was here, part of his notion on the streetcar is that you've got to start some place, and this is probably the place to start. Rails Inc. has said we would like to see from Coors all the way to Tramway as the project line. Streetcar comes under the heading of "it's a good place to start" and Central is the place to start doing that.

**Claude Morelli:** We haven't talked about the technological differences between streetcar and lightrail. If you could design a streetcar that operated like a lightrail (with exclusive ROW), you could address some of the problematic issue, like time savings. I heard that you can't put more than a couple streetcars together. (Michael Riordan jumped in and explained that they had designed the streetcar for 5-, 10-, and 15-minute headway scenarios, so the number of cars that would need to be put together would depend on the desired headway time.) Lightrail has a lot more capability than streetcar. I was looking at ridership numbers that Leland came up with, and I have a problem with them. The streetcar was set up to divert trips off of the Route 66 line. If you're going to do streetcar, think about it like Little Rock or other places that have done small streetcar lines for tourism and get development around to pay for it.

**JW Madison:** If we create a system that is either too long or too short, what's the point? Neither one will fly. My outfit (Rails Inc.) prefers lightrail. We can get in just as much trouble trying to be too thrifty in upfront costs as opposed to biting the bullet and going ahead to pay for something with long-term benefits.

**Ralph Cipriani:** The key word you just said was "system." The only system we have is ABQ Ride – humble, deficient, community system. What's being proposed for the streetcar is a line, a segment, a first step for a ¼ of a billion dollars. I would be in the ground for two hundred years before it became an actual system. I wish we could go back o 1945, but we can't. The land use, unfortunately, is based on the

automobile. In Brazil and Mexico and Spain, buses are incredible systems. They're popular and successful, and they can't get enough routes out there. If designed properly, buses can be just as attractive.

**Joanne McEntire:** I was struck, as usual, by the presentation. There was a strong emphasis that the streetcar would really encourage redevelopment potential that is laying low these days along the corridor. I was also struck by the notion that this would interrupt Route 66 service – that is in the realm of the absurd. The money doesn't matter, but to create the additional burden on Route 66 users – this is the card that needs to be examined more closely. Lightrail could be considered more closely since it wouldn't require interruption in service. Alignment is an issue because of the potential for new development and redevelopment. Would it be possible to look at starting clear at one end of Central and building from there, rather than putting the streetcar first in the middle section of Central? Lastly, outline, Roman numeral III – we should consider looking at the “proposed streetcar (2006)” vs. something we have not yet brought to the table, something that might be more palatable to voters.

**Councilor Benton:** We do have to comment on the existing streetcar proposal. I would just like to say that I don't know of anyone who is riding from one end of the 66 line to the other. But I agree that when you're talking about having to change modes, that becomes a problem.

**Claude Morelli:** Looking at ABQ Ride data, of the people who get on in SW area, almost all of them go to Alvarado Transportation Center and then transfer to another line. We could be making an already hard life even harder for working people. Rethink the concept of the streetcar – is it something you market to current transit riders vs. people who are in town as visitors?

**Michael Riordan:** There were two proposals regarding what to do with existing transit service on Central: 1) discontinue 66, 2) keep 66 and move Rapid Ride to Lomas. Those weren't written in stone. There is also a marketing issue to consider – first segment has to be pretty spectacular to get ridership to increase. Getting to San Mateo terminus is important because it's the major north-south connection.

**Dale Lockett:** I'm interested in the role of visitors to the city and their connection to transportation. Vitality of the core and a thriving downtown, one that appeals to both locals and visitors, are critical. Redevelopment along lightrail or streetcar line will definitely happen. What it provides, more than anything else, is a revitalized downtown area. Right now, locals are not coming into downtown. If downtown wants to improve, public transportation has got to be part of the equation. Being able to take visitor impact (\$2 billion annually) and give visitors more ways/places to spend money would mean that tourism dollars could be spread over a greater area of Albuquerque. It could also increase the quality of life for Albuquerqueans at the same time. However, as much as I'm passionate for the streetcar, I can't see taking away from needs for street maintenance, ABQ Ride, etc.. There's got to be more than a winner and a loser.

**JW Madison:** We've arrived at a point in history when pretty much everybody agrees we need better public transportation. The question is by what mode. What moves people further with fewer gallons of gas and kilowatts of energy? We ought to start thinking about those biggest-bang-for-the-buck kinds of issues. We could get in trouble with the voters for proposing something that's not enough.

**Councilor Benton:** In the outline, we said the whole thing about the streetcar proposal is that it's not just about transit. It's a piece of an urban organism that could really draw people in and help redistribute the

population.

**Joanne McEntire:** Where are the City's Economic Development funds in the list of potential funding sources? Both the City and State's ED funds?

**Councilor Benton:** The State was going to fund the extension down Yale Blvd. to the Sunport, so that could be considered an economic development investment.

Time ran out, so the discussion about what to do about the modern streetcar will continue at the next meeting. Michael Riordan said that he will also have information that was requested by the Task Force related to costs and number of lane miles rehabbed/maintained to share at the next meeting.

	<b>Scheduling of Next Meeting; Adjourn</b>	
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**Discussion:** There was discussion about having the next meeting during the lunch hour again. Staff will contact all members to make sure that a lunchtime meeting will work for a majority of people. The meeting adjourned at 1:30 PM.