



COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee convened in a regular meeting on Monday, June 3, 2013 at 301 W. Second Street, Room #1101, Austin, Texas.

Subcommittee Members in Attendance: Mayor Pro Tem Cole (Chair)
Council Member Morrison
Council Member Riley

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Cole called the Comprehensive Planning and Transportation Committee meeting to order at 2:02 p.m.

1. CITIZEN COMMUNICATION

Frank Harren, spoke briefly on the Urban Rail and placing the downtown portion underground. Mr. Harren stated he has mentioned this item before to Council and since then have receive positive feedback from both the Mayor and Council Member Spelman, as well as the Transit Working Groups, a couple of the Planning Commission members, and the Chair of the Comprehensive Planning Committee. Mr. Harren feels that solving any of our mobility problems depends on a successful urban rail. Vancouver in comparison put their first line in operation in 1985 and now has expanded their systems three times and a fourth expansion under way for 2016 and two more expansions planned beyond that, which should be operational by 2020. Look at the numbers and the plan and how the projection of the 27,000 boarding's a day when it is completed. That doesn't make a dent in our problem. We are starting to get some positive feed but I urge you to try to keep this in mind and get the conversation going because the numbers are there and we have verifiable evidence of what the tunneling will cost thanks to Mayor Pro Tem Cole and others.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

August 5, 2013 – Unanimously approved on a 3-0 vote.

3. PRESENTATION ON TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS FOR PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT REVIEW

Stephen Elkins, Chief Information Officer of Communications and Technology Management (CTM). Mr. Elkins thanked the committee for giving him this opportunity to speak. Before he began his presentation he wanted to make it clear that this item is a high priority for the City Manager and that the City Manager actually pulled together a group of people from around the City regarding the permitting process to look to see where the bottlenecks were and so in turn what is being presented today is what has been presented to the City Manager.

Mr. Elkins introduced Stacey Wuest, Project Manager who will be discussing some parts of the presentation as well regarding her experience of working with some of the departments.

Mr. Elkins, stated he will discuss some of the problems, solution strategy and next steps. Some of the problems that were identified were there was a backlog of Residential plan reviews, long customer wait times at the Permitting Center and there was difficulty in getting answers to questions quickly and easily. So, solutions were staff needed to respond to immediate business and the vision to escalate progress of electronic processes (online applications, payments, plan reviews and permits).

Regarding the Customer Wait Management, the CTM team implemented a text messaging feature which sends the customer a text message when they are 5th in line for service and the other feature ready to launch is visibility of queue on website and mobile devices. Not only will the customer receive the text message but also can review your next place in line by viewing the website. The next steps or the other enhancements are does the Planning and Development Review (PDR) want to replace the system that was built in house for a commercial queuing application. There are several vendors that make these tools and it may have more features than what we are currently doing internally.

On the Business Intelligence side there was very low visibility of where the bottlenecks were for the workflow process. By using the business intelligence it provided information as to where the bottlenecks were so PDR implemented the Residential and Commercial dashboards and looking at enhancing the intelligence dashboards with Microstrategy. A phone tree is being implemented because a lot of incoming calls were unanswered, misrouted or long hold times experience by customers. CTM worked with PDR to redesign automated attendant choices which will improve and clarify choices for callers, implement call groups to improve the response rate. CTM expects to have this in place by June 30, 2013.

Ms. Stacey Wuest, Project Manager discussed the online transactions and the ultimate solution is to try to prevent customers from driving to One Texas Center (OTC) by providing them the opportunity to conduct business online.

One way we are doing this is by implementing “RightFax” which is replacing the paper fax machine process. CTM is expanding the online submittals and escrow payment options so contractors can use their escrow accounts instead of driving to OTC as well.

Council Member Morrison, asked if we have this self-assignment permit process in place what is the point for the permit in the first place if they can assign it themselves?

Greg Guernsey, Director, Planning and Development Review, stated there is a prerequisite that you must have the building permit in hand, showing you have already gone through the review, but there are certain trade’s electrical, mechanical plumbing those can only be pulled once the main building permit has been pulled.

Council Member Morrison, asked what is the point of the plumbing permit if it is just the mark in the sand if the individual permit is not being reviewed?

Mr. Guernsey, stated the individual trades for instance an electrical permit must be pulled by a master electrician. Those cannot be pulled by a general contractor because they are not trained as a master electrician. Only certain people can pull those permits and having the Escrow account allows them to pull money out of their actual accounts without coming to the office to handle.

Ms. Wuest, discussed the Electronic Plan Review (EPR) that is already in the works. The PDRD staff has been trained to use online collaboration tool (Adobe Connect). This EPR project will include the online submission of plans, version control and status tracking, electronic markup and comments and integration with the AMANDA system. The next steps are train additional staff to use Adobe Connect, implement markup pilot for select cases and issue RFP for complete solution.

Mr. Elkins, discussed the new website, before the information was difficult to locate and outdated. The update included the new ‘search’ feature to retrieve more relevant contact, embedded top search content on the Development webpage, the Public Information Office is working with PDR to update content, including FAQ’s, contract with 3rd party (sentient) reprioritized to review and analyze PDR pages first. The next steps are to create a separate ‘search’ feature for PDR content and implement changes as 3rd party review results are analyzed. Before this implementation PDR was understaffed now PDR permanent and temporary staff required, computers, monitors, phones and scanners to expedite work, a large format scanner for Residential Review, Network enabled copier/scanner for the Permit Center and the next steps are to install 32 dual and/or large monitors for Permitting and Review staff. As well as upgrade AMANDA Portal to newer technology, launch chase project for select online transactions on new portal, build and issue RFP for

Electronic Plan Review with input from all impacted stakeholder departments, deepen and expand website design changes as results are analyzed from 3rd party review and AMANDA upgrade planned for FY 14.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, thanked staff and stated that Council had a tremendous amount of concern about fast we are processing items out of PDR and Council have passed Resolutions in regards to that affect. Mayor Pro Tem asked about the customer wait time and about how long customer's had to wait and what have we reduced that to?

Mr. Guernsey, stated that the wait period for customers were about 4 to 5 hours. Most of those, if not all of those issues have been addressed and when a customer comes in now, either they have submitted their information through "RightFax" or just pick up.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked Mr. Guernsey about this process and stated she has heard people say that this process is so much easier at the County and is this because the County has less development or do they have particular tools that we don't have and should consider having?

Mr. Guernsey, stated our regulations are different. The City has building permits the County doesn't, and we check for so many other things such as the building design, framing and depending on the location if there are regulations and all of those things add to the development process.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, stated she understands the County has a lot less regulations than the City does. But, in other Cities they have more of a checklist process do you have any comments on that process?

Mr. Guernsey, stated yes. Actually, PDR is in the process of going back and reviewing all the applications. Assistant City Manager Sue Edwards, organized a stakeholders input meeting a couple of months ago for some of our customers (i.e. building, site plan and subdivision). One thing they stated we do not have enough information online or is not easy to retrieve and the applications had outdated information. This is how the process of the updated "search" feature on the website that Mr. Elkins explain came about.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, stated we do understand we have regulations for a reason and that is to protect our environmental values and we appreciate you trying to make the process as simple as possible.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked Mr. Elkins about his statement of the phone tree and the target date of June 30, 2013?

Mr. Elkins stated, right now we are on point. From a CTM standpoint just do the proper testing to ensure there are no bugs or other problems.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked about the Electronic Plan Review and now we have the ability to work across remotely with other departments? How will that help us?

Mr. Guernsey, stated everyone is not located at One Texas Center and having the ability to have those conversations at a desk setting makes it easier for staff to discuss and review the same document at the same time.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked about the website and the contract with the 3rd party (Sentient) and if this has already been executed?

Mr. Elkins, stated yes. The contract has already been executed and all part of the web redesign.

Council Member Riley, thanked staff for the progress on this project. He asked about the vision that staff is working towards tell him they are working towards reducing our dependence on paper. Are we working towards the paperless process?

Mr. Guernsey, stated there maybe some paper documents that legally may have to be recorded. But, some plans may go away and be handled electronically.

Council Member Riley, stated that is good to hear because it seems like it would be a lot easier to deal with these documents online provided you have the right software. Also, it is good to hear you have traveled to see how other peer cities are handling this type of process.

Council Member Riley, asked if staff was familiar with the mypermitnow.org system?

Mr. Guernsey, stated staff has looked at this system and it is a good process if you have something newly formed and not trying to adopt or change but we are not necessarily in that league. But, I did send some staff out of town to other cities to review that process.

Council Member Riley, asked about the stakeholders process and if that was still ongoing?

Mr. Guernsey stated, the first initial meeting was to discuss where we are at this point and some of the concerns our customers had. The second meeting was brainstorming and coming up with new ideas and what we could do now to improve the process.

Council Member Riley, asked about online transactions/online payment in general?

Mr. Elkins, stated the City just recently signed a contract with Chase Bank in February, 2013 to be the City's online transactional vendor. At this point there are still a lot of negotiations still going on and now we are at the early stages of trying to do a pilot with a smaller group on how to do online payments. Right now the only online payments you can do are with the electrical utility and Municipal Court, point of sale or paying with a check. Once this is complete toward the end of 2013 or the beginning of 2014 we will probably be ready to look at PDR as a candidate for the online payment.

Council Member Riley, stated so at this point we still have people who have to stand in line, hand in a check to make a payment or bring a credit card? That is getting hard for citizens to understand because every other business has had the online transaction process for a long time so why doesn't the City of Austin have this process? Can you give me a target date when we can expect this to happen?

Mr. Elkins, stated at this point he can't give a target date but if given more time can provide Council with a better answer.

Council Member Riley, stated he would give him more time because he would like a specific answer regarding this question.

Council Member Riley, stated as we move forward with these various solutions that it is very important that we keep some type of stakeholder process in place. Continue using them as a soundboard, how the new system is working out, what other suggestions they may have.

Mr. Guernsey, stated yes we are keeping that process in place.

Council Member Morrison, stated it seemed she heard a little frustration in Council Member Riley's voice about the online transaction and wanted to share that she shares that same frustration. That the City of Austin should be onboard with technology in the terms of the way we conduct business. But, we are moving ahead to put in the best state of the art systems there are.

Council Member Morrison, asked if the Electronic Plan Review is it just about working with plans in electronic form or is it talking about a guided workflow?

Mr. Guernsey, stated we are getting to the point where you will be able to have in place where you can see the different reviewer's comments. It will be a collaborate work space and the designer will be about to review these comments in advance.

Council Member Morrison, asked Mr. Guernsey if he were contemplating any tools that maybe able to analyze top level information of what has already been submitted.

Mr. Guernsey, stated he doesn't recall going in depth with CTM regarding those types of tools, but have discussed those tools through the geographic information system as to what checklist goes with what tools.

Council Member Morrison, stated the last time she spoke with Mr. Guernsey there was a discussion about the good folks from KPMG who were bringing in some of their specialist in plan review. Did you get some feedback from those people or did that actually happened?

Mr. Guernsey, stated they are coming in on Wednesday and spend the morning with PDR going floor by floor to see how PDR interacts with the customer.

Council Member Morrison, stated she is interested to know what Mr. Guernsey learns from them and if he could provide some type of feedback?

Mr. Guernsey, stated he will share that information with Council.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, thanked staff for the presentation and reminded Mr. Elkins we need online payments.

4. UPDATE ON INTERIM IMPROVEMENTS AT U.S. 290 FROM 1826 TO JOE TANNER ROAD – THE “Y” AT OAK HILL

Mr. Rob Spillar, Director, Transportation Department stated that the Comprehensive Transportation Committee (CPT) had requested that the Transportation Department begin attending the CPT meetings discuss any transportation projects within the community or what the City of Austin may be participating in and The “Y” at Oak Hill is one of those projects.

Mr. Gary Schatz, P.E., PTOE, Assistant Director, Transportation Department, stated this project represents just a mild stone within our industry. For a while the City of Austin have been the only agency that was looked to, to bring all of the money and make it happen and this is a partnership between the City, the County and TxDot and what can we do to address the congestion.

It is critical that whatever we do today with TxDot remains in the right of way. At this time we have tried to divide this project into different phases, phase 1, US 290 from FM 1826 to west of SH 71, the solutions here are adding additional left turn lanes, wider shoulders for bicyclists and pedestrians, pedestrian facilities at signalized intersections and utility

relocation and upgrades. The construction is anticipated to last about 14 months from May 2013 to July 2014.

Construction for phase 2 of the project, US 290 west of SH 71 to east of Joe Tanner will consist of continuous flow intersections, sidewalks in select locations, wider shoulders for bicyclists and pedestrians, pedestrian facilities at signalized intersections, westbound signal at Joe Tanner removed and utility relocation and upgrades. This construction is anticipated to last about 19 months. The continuous flow intersection movements that are being addressed are the straight through's, left and right turns and these movements are managed by 3 traffic lights.

Council Member Morrison, questioned the video demonstration that if the white vehicle had to stop while the other vehicle was making the left turn?

Mr. Schatz stated before the vehicle he was riding in could proceed across the intersection to make the left turn the white vehicle did have a red light. The time it takes to cross the intersection is about 4 to 5 hundred feet, these lights will reduce the conflict time by 40% which will allow more simultaneous movement.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, stated actually we are reducing the conflict time and easing congestion by 40%?

Mr. Schatz stated, yes.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, thanked the staff for the presentation and asked if staff had gone out and discussed this process with stakeholders?

Mr. Schatz stated, staff has have several meetings with the Oak Hill Neighborhood Association and the lunch meetings with the Oak Hill Business Community regarding what is now referred to as the Oak Hill Parkway.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, questioned the partnership between the City and the County was this difficult to manage and how did it work?

Mr. Spillar stated, the partnership has been working really well and what he meant by the word usual was that the City had gotten out of the practice of partnering with others when it comes to big infrastructure projects. As a region we had gotten to the point that if the city, county or state was working on a project that particular institute would fund their own project.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, asked about Phase I reducing the conflict time and congestion? Could staff put an estimate time on that as well?

Mr. Spillar, stated when you look at this project as a whole the 40% reduction is due to both Phase 1 and 2 being impact together.

Council Member Morrison, thanked staff for this presentation and the bottom line is this is about a \$5 million investment with 10 years of millions of people saving a lot of time and is this is a cost benefit.

Council Member Riley, thanked staff and stated that the “Y” had been in need of some attention for a long period of time and this is very welcomed.

5. DISCUSS THE LOCATION AND PROTECTION REQUIREMENTS FOR STORAGE AND USE OF HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, stated she requested this presentation because of what happened in West, Texas and to make sure the City of Austin didn’t have any of issues going on here.

Mr. Carl Wren, Consulting Engineer, Austin Fire Department and Ron Buys, Lead Engineer for Hazardous Material and Chemical Safety. Mr. Wren, provided the committee with background information pertaining to the Fire Code. The first adoption of consensus fire code was in 1974 with basic on-site protections for Hazmat. The (1973 Uniform Fire Code) was pretty simple compared today’s code which consist of flammable and combustible liquids, flammable finishes, LPG, compressed gases and explosives.

Mr. Ron Buys explained the 1985 City Hazardous Material Ordinance of permit requirements for reporting on-site chemicals. In 1989 expansion of Hazmat provisions in the consensus 1988 uniform fire code for on-site protections of hazmat permitting, Toxic/oxidizer/corrosives, and semiconductor production provisions added. In the early 1990’s a concern was raised about the east Austin Tank Farms and where they were located. These concerns resulted in changes of local amendments, ordinances and fire codes and at the national level as well. During 2000 – 2002 there were a chain of incidents that happened nationally such as Oklahoma City bombing, 9/11 terrorist events and illegal drug labs of which the result of those incidents caused a change local which resulted in the removal of hazmat storages locally because of their locations.

In 2003 the Pipeline Safety Ordinance was passed due to buildings that were close to pipelines. These reviews such as site permit, building permit and AFD hazmat permit reviews were to ensure on-site code compliance. The off-site review that may look like a risk at this point the Fire Chief is notified of which there is a section in the fire code that allows the Chief to take action if they foresee a problem.

Council Member Morrison, thanked staff and stated the information was very interesting. If someone wants to come in and do a new single-family subdivision are we checking to see if it is close to a hazardous site?

Mr. Buys, stated only if the zoning people notify them, that is when they would look at it. Mr. Wren added that the AFD is not a primary contributor to the zoning. At times the departments may recognize a particular problem or a potential problem and those departments will contact AFD to check into it.

Council Member Morrison, asked if staff would know why a red flag would be raised in a reviewer's mind?

Mr. Wren, stated if you have businesses in Limited Industrial Services (LI) that handle industrial applications and you wanted to site a residential area sometimes they are asked if it's a good idea.

Council Member Morrison, asked so the flag raised in a reviewer's mind is if you are near LI zoning?

Mr. Wren, stated the big users are not hard to spot.

Council Member Morrison, asked if there are some users that are not within Hazmat?

Mr. Buys, stated there are about 2300 locations right now that are permitted.

Council Member Morrison, stated if there is a little bit of Hazmat that doesn't require LI zoning? But, does require permitting by AFD?

Mr. Wren stated no to the first part of the question and yes to permitting part.

Council Member Morrison, asked if those permits were located in AMANDA?

Mr. Buys, stated they are located within the Fire departments record management system. This is a separate system that keeps track of that information. They are only identified in AMANDA as the building and site plans.

Council Member Morrison, asked if there was any factory in Austin that has the potential to allow what happened in West, Texas?

Mr. Buys, stated right after the occurrence in West they did go through their records to look for that. The chemicals that were used or highly regulated at West were those type of chemicals that were of concern during the Oklahoma City bombing. So, after the Oklahoma City bombing the Federal

Government came in and began regulating and found that 14 locations around the state t did manufacture chemicals like West did. At one time the COA did have locations that provided agriculture chemicals but those we got rid of after the Oklahoma City bombing.

Mr. Wren, stated we do have one major landscaping company that maintains a lot of fertilizer but it's not the ammonium nitrate chemical.

Council Member Morrison, stated that even though we may have enforcement and monitoring regulations in place how are we enforcing these?

Mr. Buys, stated about 1991 when the City began to get quite a few locations AFD had to prioritize those locations in categories of high, medium and low risk. The high and medium categories AFD would identify and would try to do an inspection of those on an annual basis. The lower priority ones inspections are every three years.

Council Member Morrison, asked if they was anything in the system that would raise a red flag if staff was continually getting behind with these inspections?

Mr. Wren, stated AFD does have a way to track it that information. It is not our intent to let it fall behind but there has been times when it has.

Council Member Morrison, asked about the Hazmat that travels through the city is that completely federally regulated? How do we handle it?

Mr. Buys, stated there is not a lot that we can do locally because it is all under the federal. The only regulation we have with transportation is once you bring it on the scene we have authorization to do something but once it is on the road that is more federally regulated. There is a process that we must go through to have the materials routed through the state.

Council Member Morrison, asked if we were going through that process and now that we have Interstate 130 is this something the stated is considering?

Mr. Buys, stated no and he is not aware of the state considering it.

Council Member Morrison, asked staff that with all of their experience is there anything in the code that they would like to have to get ahead?

Mr. Buys, stated for Austin we are the furthest ahead or at lease pretty close.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, thanked staff for bringing this presentation forward. As discussed about the previous attempts for hazmat route but did not work out because there were no alternative routes. Now, that we have US 130 would

that be the type of route that CAMPO would have to approve before it was approved by TxDot?

Mr Buys, stated his understanding is that most of them that designated in the state comes through the city. As far as CAMPO he doesn't know what the exact regulations are today, but would think that a regional plan would be welcomed.

Mayor Pro Tem Cole, stated we can certainly consider having that topic as a CAMPO agenda item and following up with Council Member Morrison with some type of resolution.

Council Member Riley, thanked staff for the presentation and for all of the work they do.

Council Member Riley, stated he will be very interested in working with his colleagues on an initiative for the hazardous material route for Austin.

Council Member Riley, asked if AFD has anything to do with household hazardous waste?

Mr. Buys stated not really, that is more the solid waste or environmental groups.

Mr. Wren, stated the fire code does apply if you start having large quantities of industrial in your house. You are not supposed to do that. But, as far as pesticides or gasoline for your lawn mower we don't regulate that.

Council Member Riley, asked what about the cities collector sites for waste?

Mr. Buys, stated yes the fire code requirements apply to them as well and they all have hazmat permits with AFD and are subject to regular inspections.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Cole adjourned the meeting with no objection at 3:50 p.m.