

Approved Minutes
Transportation Commission Meeting
Wednesday, March 24, 2021

Time: 6:30 p.m.

Location: Due to Governor Executive Order N-29-20, Transportation Commissioners were able to attend the meeting via teleconference. The City allowed public participation via Zoom. City Hall was NOT open to the public during the meeting.

Legistar Link:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/MeetingDetail.aspx?ID=811333&GUID=861FEF9A-1D51-4AD8-8E6C-EB2F878B1A64&Options=info|&Search=>.

1. Roll Call

Present: Chair Soules and Commissioners Yuen, Kohlstrand, Hans, Rentschler and Weitze.

Absent: Vice Chair Nachtigall

This was Commissioner Rentschler's first meeting and everyone welcomed him.

2. Agenda Changes

None.

3. Staff Communications are as shown in the web link here:

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4855384&GUID=13BD4EBF-0DC4-4FD9-B3A1-B123E9507062&FullText=1>.

Gail Payne, a Senior Transportation Coordinator, discussed the tentative upcoming joint meeting with the Planning Board on May 10 and other scheduled meetings.

4. Announcements / Public Comments

No public comments.

Chair Soules congratulated Commissioner Kohlstrand for her Lifetime Achievement Award with WTS, they had honored her for all her hard work in the Transportation field.

5. Consent Calendar

5A. Draft Minutes Transportation Commission Meeting from Wednesday, July 22, 2020 (Action Item)

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4855385&GUID=AF4ED835-78EE-40E7-AAEA-E0F5814FD2F8&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Kohlstrand moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Yuen seconded. A hand raise vote was taken and the motion passed 6-0.

5B. Draft Minutes Transportation Commission Meeting from Wednesday, January 27, 2021 (Action Item)

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4855386&GUID=A5B2B626-D69B-43BE-AC28-53D36B14D68E&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Kohlstrand moved to approve the minutes and Commissioner Yuen seconded. A hand raise vote was taken and the motion passed 6-0.

6. Regular Agenda Items

6A. Discuss Water Emergency Transportation Authority's Pandemic Recovery Program (Discussion Item)

Kevin Connolly, from WETA (Water Emergency Transportation Authority), introduced this item and gave a presentation. The report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4855387&GUID=ABA17FD9-653F-4496-88DF-C941A16FDBD8&FullText=1>.

Commissioner Clarifying Questions #6A.

Commissioner Weitze wanted to know what kind of hop through ridership was normal, the short hop from Alameda to Oakland.

Mr. Connolly said it was less than 10 per day. That's also because the only option was Oakland to Alameda, not the reverse.

Commissioner Kohlstrand had concerns about the connecting transit service and making sure there were enough parking facilities. She also wanted to know what was the status of the 96 Bus. She

wanted to make sure they were not hampering people using the ferry either because there weren't enough public transit options or parking places.

Mr. Connolly said WETA has had an effective partnership with the City of Alameda and a good partnership with AC Transit. AC Transit was working on a proposal to serve the new Main Street Terminal. He spoke on the drawbacks of the 96 Bus and that the option AC Transit was developing would be better. He did not want to go into much detail, he did not want to "steal their thunder". He was very optimistic and grateful for the work done by AC Transit.

Staff Member Payne discussed how AC Transit was "moving mountains" to make this happen, and they had been under a lot of pressure due to the Pandemic. There is an upcoming meeting where it would be discussed further. For parking, she discussed the new parking lot at Seaplane Lagoon has 400 spaces and that there was more work to do.

Commissioner Weitze asked if the plan was to charge for parking or had it been pushed off.

Lisa Foster, Transportation Planner, said she didn't have a timeline to share. There were plans for paid parking at Alameda Point but as for now, there was no parking fee. It had been put on hold with the Pandemic, but they would move forward with that in the future.

Commissioner Weitze asked if it was unlikely that they would start charging for parking in August.

Staff Member Foster said that would be fair to say.

Commissioner Rentschler thanked Mr. Connolly for his presentation and commended WETA for embracing change since now with the Pandemic it was a great time to do it. He urged WETA and the commission to keep an open mind on what the possibilities could be. He thought the bike access at Seaplane Lagoon was better and safer and encouraged the same bike structure that was at the Main Street Ferry terminal. He was not optimistic about the bus but was happy they were trying it. He did not want to see an experiment that doesn't work to become permanent.

Commissioner Yuen discussed the decision to potentially cut AC Transit services and wondered if the influx of Federal dollars from the new stimulus bill earmarked for local transit would translate into support for this new route.

Chair Soules said that was a great question and reminded everyone that AC Transit was not on the call and she did not want to get too far off the agenda topic of WETA service.

Staff Member Payne said that was the trade-off, these types of Federal Stimulus Packages can't provide operations money long term into the future. She discussed how the services have to equal out with the other local jurisdictions serviced by AC Transit.

Chari Soules said that could have discussions at other meetings about how that stimulus money would be used.

Public Comments #6A

Cyndy Johnson, with Bike Walk Alameda, believed the proposed Alameda Main Street to Oakland Short Hop Ferry Service would be a fantastic option for Central and Western Alameda Commuters. She thought this would greatly benefit cyclists who wouldn't have to run the risk of getting bumped off the bus due to lack of bike racks and would encourage more bike commuters. She saw this plan as a win, win, win. She did share some concerns from fares to what services would be offered at certain times. She ended by saying all of Bike Walk Alameda was excited by this proposed plan.

Jim Strehlow discussed a few issues. First, he thought it was a hike to get from Webster Street to the ferry to get to Oakland, therefore riding the ferry would not be an option for him. Secondly, he told about 150 people how he rode the Alameda to San Francisco Ferry to get to the Moscone Center to get his vaccine and he found it to be a very pleasant and fun trip. Thirdly, he was concerned about how WETA tied into the water taxi program of Alameda. He had asked many times for a status report of the water taxi program from Rochelle Wheeler.

Staff Member Payne gave a reminder about the water taxis that the Alameda Landing Waterfront Project was currently in construction and they were required to build the infrastructure for it. That's why it hadn't happened, that project is still in construction.

Rochelle Wheeler, a Senior Transportation Coordinator, said she was able to share more information with Mr. Strehlow. City staff is constantly discussing water taxi options and other matters around water taxis, mainly operating costs.

Commissioner Comments and Discussions for #6A

Commissioner Weitze asked if the city had any plans to look at the intersection of Main Street and Appezato due to a potential increase in traffic. He also urged WETA, in the interest of going big, to initially drop the short hop fare to just a dollar and advertise the hell out of it. He believed it would be a good campaign to "get off the island for just a buck".

Staff Member Payne discussed the funds (Measure BB) for improving bus services, and one of the projects was improving Appenzato Parkway for buses. They were waiting to see what AC Transit does first before starting on that project. That intersection had also been noted as a potentially good location for a roundabout.

Donya Amiri, Principal Engineer with Public Works, discussed how they would be improving signal timing and what adjustments they had already done to that intersection and others. They would also be revisiting the intersections along Ralph Appenzato Memorial Parkway (RAMP) to improve signal timing and for bicycle operations.

Commissioner Kohlstrand was supportive of the proposed reintroduction of the ferry service that was proposed here. She wanted to see a mid-year review to see what the ridership was like and encouraged to have someone from AC Transit present. She believed they needed to take a comprehensive look at how they would provide transit services on the island. She agreed with Commissioner Rentschler's point about it being a "zero-sum game" if they gain something in one area and lose it in another. She continued to be concerned about having limited parking and thought that should be monitored.

Chair Soules talked about her own experiences with being a Bay Farm Ferry user and why driving is easier and more appealing. She was glad they were adding a midday service. She thought a quarterly review would be beneficial to see how the stimulus was being used and she was curious to see the uptake on the Clipper START. Often equity programs are offered but rarely used. She also found the Hop Through App to be very convenient.

Mr. Connolly thanked the commission and also shared that he had skepticism about the bus transfer to the ferry. He believed that now was the time to test it and was happy to come back and share whatever data they needed. They were open to experimenting and trying new things to see what worked best. He also clarified to Ms. Johnson (public speaker) about the service start, they proposed to start in July for Harbor Bay and deferring the start for Seaplane and Main Street until August to line up with AC Transit. For South San Francisco they were looking to start in October.

6B. Endorse the 10-Year Capital Improvement Program (CIP) and the Two-year CIP Budget (Action Item)

Robert Vance, Supervising Civil Engineer with Public Works, introduced this item and gave a presentation. The staff report and attachments can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4855388&GUID=BB1D41D2-D58B-488F-88F3-CBBB28D144FE&FullText=1>.

Public Comments for #6B.

Jim Strehlow said in regards to Vision Zero he described what he saw daily as he rides his bike around. He saw people ignorant of the laws and people crossing in front of him even though he had the right away. He also described people crossing when he had the green light. He wanted to see more education included in Vision Zero for pedestrians for their damn safety and his safety.

Chair Soules thanked Mr. Strehlow and clarified that Vision Zero did have a good outreach component.

Commissioner Clarifying Questions, Comments, and Discussions for #6B.

Commissioner Weitze wanted clarification on why Urban Forest and Landscape Maintenance was recommended even though it had a low score.

Staff Member Payne reminded everyone that the map was out of date, this had been mentioned in the Staff Report.

Staff Member Vance described why Urban Forest and Landscape Maintenance was included, it was because it does share funding with some of the Transportation projects. It has to be funded somehow, there are street trees that need to be maintained for safety and aesthetic reasons.

Commissioner Weitze was curious about the equity of paving management. This was a very broad category and with equity in mind, certain parts of Alameda were in desperate need of being repaved, and certain parts of Alameda were doing well.

Staff Member Vance discussed the equity score of the projects and how they could use similar criteria that Oakland used to put more of an equity focus on how they spend pavement funds. It was something that could be incorporated into these projects since they were citywide.

Commissioner Weitze said he hoped they would be more focused on parts that had not been paved in a while.

Staff Member Vance said these projects had traditionally been condition-based, the pavement management in the past had typically followed the sewer replacement program. The funding available for pavement was almost a 1:1 with sewer, the city would rehab 3 miles of sewer per year and then pave 3 miles of sewer per year. That limited the choice for pavement, but if there were more funding for pavement there would be more choices where it could go.

Chair Soules recommended a past Transportation Commission meeting to Commissioner Weitze where pavement funding was further discussed. She agreed that looking at this through an equity lens was important but the timing and conditions of when pavement needs to be replaced was a big deal for the Capital Budget.

Commissioner Weitze said what he was worried about the new Main Street neighborhood, on the estuary side of Site A, would be overlooked since developers keep backing out.

Commissioner Kohlstrand asked about the dedicated grant funding column and that it didn't fit with the "123" criteria. She pointed out where he had stepped out of the form.

Staff Member Vance said she was correct and that he would have to take a look at that.

Chair Soules explained what they had been trying to achieve and explain the rating system.

Commissioner Kohlstrand believed they had come a long way in terms of a more rigorous system of evaluation. She wanted to see feasibility included, really thinking about is this something that could be implemented right now. She also observed that with Urban Forest and Landscape Maintenance and other maintenance projects and wondered if there should be some sort of split of funds. She saw that there was not a lot of differentiation among the scores and wondered if they were capturing all the right goals. She noted that the recommendations for moving ahead do not align with the scores and thought that needed to be rethought. She pointed out ways they could improve transit services, she felt that it was being pushed to the bottom of the list.

Staff Member Payne described how the ranking process worked and how they had had this problem before. She pointed out an oversight that paratransit money funds benches and bus shelters and bus stops in general.

Staff Member Vance said some of the planning projects are and aren't included in the Capital Budget. He explained the criteria for the different categories.

Chair Soules said that tweaking the actual criteria to make them more appropriate for capital vs maintenance would be worth looking at. She explained how these criteria worked great but many other factors need to be recognized. It was a very nuanced system that could always be refined.

Commissioner Yuen agreed with what Commissioner Kohlstrand had said in terms of considering the feasibility and that some of the scorings do not align with projects that were moving ahead.

She wondered if the scoring was discerning enough and suggested having a 1-5 scoring instead. She thought the table was very clear but wanted more clarity for scoring and the recommendations.

Staff Member Vance said that version was included in the staff report.

Chair Soules suggested having a few slides where it clearly shows what the process will look like since it will morph over time, which would help the city understand it more.

Commissioner Rentschler acknowledged the great work by Public Works and how they were constantly being asked to do more with money they don't have, there would always be tradeoffs. He saw policies like safety and complete streets with the same projects. He discussed all the benefits of roundabouts and how that can be beneficial for different policies. He encouraged how good design was important and didn't want to see the same cookie-cutter mistakes made.

Chair Soules said that the staff had come a long way in developing these tools and they were not perfect or easy and continual feedback was expected.

Commissioner Kohlstrand gave a thought on the tradeoff of roundabouts and traffic signals. She clarified that the staff was not recommending putting anything about roundabouts in the capital budget, it got a no recommendation, and traffic signal systems got a yes. She wondered if there was any room for modification so that in the traffic system they could find the ability to introduce roundabouts. She wanted to see a study to learn where the roundabouts would be most appropriate.

Staff Member Vance said roundabouts were being considered within funded capital projects so they don't have to wait for everything else. He said the roundabout study was continuing and as that developed it was something that could be funded later under future capital budgets. For traffic signals there were two categories, one was rehabilitation and maintenance and the other is for traffic signal modifications/modernization. Roundabouts would be more equivalent to modernization and part of the study is to help coordinate those future investments.

Commissioner Rentschler said solving a problem with a problem is the problem, the traffic signals were the problem. He discussed how traffic signals have always caused these issues and how the rest of the state and the country were moving towards roundabouts. He urged creative thinking on the part of Public Works to stop chasing high maintenance, high-cost signals. He pointed out that Caltrans's website had a page dedicated to education about the benefits of roundabouts.

Chair Soules checked if there were any other public comments and asked if anyone was ready to make a motion.

Commissioner Kohlstrand said she was prepared to make a motion to endorse the program with a caveat that there would be a greater investment in roundabouts. She wanted the commission to express its interest in a different way of thinking without completely disrupting the improvement process.

Commissioner Rentschler said he would second that with the knowledge that his fellow commissioners had already put a lot of work into this. He wanted to support something that acknowledged the situation they were in but also to have a citizen's voice be heard on this subject.

Chair Soules said the last meeting was very educational on roundabouts and not public review on any particular intersection. She asked Staff Member Payne if this was one path forward, in the 10-year CIP to revisit mobility elements and goals related to specific intersections to identify where roundabouts or traffic signals would be most beneficial.

Staff Member Payne said that was something they were already in the process of doing. They were doing a city-wide roundabout analysis. She then discussed the last meeting where roundabouts had been heavily discussed to inform Commissioner Rentschler and explained the next step in the process.

Staff Member Vance said this information helps as they start refining the 10-year CIP and to see what is important.

Chair Soules wanted to know if this would lead to an assessment of whether or not a signal vs a roundabout would be more appropriate. She did not want to take on each roundabout separately or project by project. She discussed how the study would help them with that decision.

Commissioner Kohlstrand made a motion to endorse the 2-year CIP with the caveat that the Transportation Commission recommends greater investment in roundabouts compared to traffic signals. Commissioner Rentschler seconded the motion. A roll call vote was taken and the motion passed 6-0.

6C. Discuss Smart City Master Plan Overview (Discussion Item).

Staff Member Payne introduced this item and gave a presentation, Staff Member Amiri also presented. Attachments and staff report can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4855389&GUID=C2EE96F5-1065-42FC-891B-2D68855AC1E6&FullText=1>.

Board Clarifying questions and comments #6C.

Commissioner Weitz asked if the theory behind this was that the structure would get put in but then private companies would then run the actual access. He wondered how that would work for equitable internet access since private companies could charge whatever they wanted.

Staff Member Payne said that was correct, the city does not plan on being a service provider. The asset as a city would be the infrastructure and to be able to put this super-fast fiber into the ground the city could then leverage that asset to lower rates or public wifi access.

Commissioner Yuen wanted to know more about the impact on transportation infrastructure. She wanted to hear about changes and benefits that could be seen as part of this.

Staff Member Payne said that they could have a better emergency response for the Fire Department and with the same technology AC Transit could use their signal detection, all of this would be wrapped into what the fiber could provide. She also noted that driverless cars were just around the corner and they would also use this type of technology.

Staff Member Amiri also discussed how this would all tie together and the process of updating the conduits.

Chair Soules discussed the frustration and expense of trying to deploy new technology on old infrastructure. She was excited that Alameda was doing this and saw it as a public agency function to invest in this type of infrastructure.

Commissioner Kohlstrand thanked Chair Soules for her insight and wanted to make sure they captured the equity part of this. She asked about overhead wires that are currently going through backyards and wanted to know if there were opportunities for undergrounding utilities at the same time as they were installing this fiber.

Staff Member Payne said that was a project for Alameda Municipal Power (AMP) and they were currently in the process of undergrounding different corridors. They would be working with AMP because it is all related.

Commissioner Yuen brought up the comment about the lack of knowledge around Smart Cites and new mobility options and how in the future this could be an educational item for the commission. She said she would love to learn more about this and the importance of new technologies.

Staff Member Payne said she could look into when someone from Iteris could come. She added that fiber would be the backbone part of the infrastructure and this would be the expensive part and it won't be completed overnight.

Chair Soules compared this to the electrical on your home, which is the heaviest investment but you are better off in the long run. She saw this as helping the community to embrace new technology. She also seconded getting an information item on the agenda for a future meeting to learn more about what the fiber cables will do for Alameda.

Staff Member Amiri added that with the CIP that they discussed earlier the fiber cables will tie into that as well.

Public Comments for #6C.

Jim Strehlow said that with technology improvements in the city there is also an increase in remote computer hacking opportunities into the city's services. He wanted to see security reviews on all such projects. He also discouraged putting everything into electrical cabinets due to accidents. He believed that roundabouts would slow down police, fire, and ambulance services. He wanted to hear from those parties on their opinion on roundabouts. He believed that the solution was to better educate people and not waste money on roundabouts.

6D. Review and Comment on the General Plan Schedule of Planning Board Public Hearings (Discussion Item).

Staff Member Payne introduced this item on behalf of Andrew Thomas, Director of Planning Building and Transportation. The staff report can be found at

<https://alameda.legistar.com/LegislationDetail.aspx?ID=4855390&GUID=6F196672-B114-463B-9E5D-7984C3E15500&FullText=1>.

Chair Soules thanked everyone for their time on this.

There was no discussion or comments on the schedule.

7. Announcements / Public Comments

Jim Strehlow had three issues. First, he wanted a residential loading zone for each street so that Amazon and other delivery trucks don't block traffic as they do every day. Secondly, Orion Street

has different demographics, North was residential and South was commercial, when changes for Orion Street were discussed he wanted this difference noted. Lastly, he wanted the commission to promote “Bike to Wherever Day,” which would be on May 21st.

Chair Soules promoted the website alameda2040.org to get people excited and involved with the General Plan.

8. Adjournment

Chair Soules adjourned the meeting at 9:01 p.m.