



POLICY AND SERVICES COMMITTEE FINAL MINUTES

Special Meeting
May 7, 2019

The Policy and Services Committee of the City of Palo Alto met on this date in the Community Meeting Room at 6:09 P.M.

Present: Kniss, Kou

Absent: Tanaka

Oral Communications

None.

Agenda Items

1. Recommend the City Council Approve the 2019 Workplan to Address the Council Priority "Transportation and Traffic".

Chair Kniss remarked that this discussion would also include rail and transportation. Since she was recused of any Rail Project discussions, she said that it was going to be a very general discussion.

Chantal Cotton Gaines, Assistant to the City Manager gave a brief introduction of her team before she started the presentation to the Policy and Service Committee (Committee). She reported that the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 Proposed Budget included the birth of the Office of Transportation Department instead of having transportation as a division of the Planning and Community Environment Department. The Workplan assumed that City Council (Council) was going to approve two additional employee positions.

Chair Kniss requested to know what the two new positions would be called.

Ms. Gaines planned on answering that question in her presentation. Three main goals that were being proposed for the FY 2020 Workplan were to: 1) provide; 2) design; and 3) implement transportation services that met or exceeded the expectations of citizens, ensured that services were delivered efficiently, that they continued to improve, and that they increased the professional capacity of the members of the Office of Transportation. She reviewed several activities that were already approved and in progress,

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including Safe Routes to School and the update of the Transportation Impact Fee (TIF). Two programs that were approved but being reevaluated were the Bike Boulevard Implementation Program and follow-up report, and the Embarcadero and El Camino Read Enhanced Bikeway Project. Several big initiatives included grade separation, the evaluation and revision of the Residential Preferential Parking Permit (RPP) Program, the institution of a revised community engagement process for transportation projects, and to consider data collection opportunities to increase automated collection systems. There was a request for two new employee positions in the Budget, Parking Manager and Senior Engineer Manager. Two vacant areas in the department were the Chief Transportation Official and Senior Transportation Planner. Staff's recommendation was for the Committee to recommend the Workplan to the Council for approval.

Chair Kniss inquired when the prior Chief Transportation Official left.

Ms. Gaines answered October, 2018.

Chair Kniss asked why it was difficult to find a new Chief Transportation Official.

Ed Shikada, City Manager noted it was the cost of living, the commute, competition against recruitment in surrounding counties and there were a lot of large, challenging projects for a new employee to take on.

Council Member Kou acknowledged that creating the Office of Transportation was a smart move. She inquired why Staff was not using data that was published by the California Office of Transportation Safety, which compared other Cities to Palo Alto (City). Using benchmark data, measurement goal systems, State data sources and accident rates was a good way to set the benchmark.

Mr. Shikada inquired if there was a specific type of data that Council Member Kou was concerned about.

Chair Kniss emphasized that it was important to recognize all modes of transportation accidents, not just cars. She emphasized that the City needed to express to the community that all accidents, little or big, had to be reported so that the City could have accurate data.

Mr. Shikada remarked that Staff understood the need to market to the community about reporting accidents. In terms of Council Member Kou's comment about benchmarking; he noted that the benchmark would really be more project-specific.

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Council Member Kou was excited to hear an update on Ross Road. She wanted the report on the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) to be included into the Committee and Council reports; she also wanted any statewide metrics that the Council could compare it to. She requested that Level of Service (LOS) not be removed completely from the report but be used as a supplement to Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT).

Ms. Gaines said Staff's recommendation was to keep LOS.

Wayne Tanda, Principal Consultant disclosed that California was pushing jurisdictions to use the VMT model when compiling Environmental Impact Reports (EIR). LOS was still extensively used by many local jurisdictions in order to review local impacts.

Council Member Kou requested clarification on the LOS system and the process for labeling an intersection with a letter.

Mr. Tanda confirmed if the intersection exceeded the appointed letter or target quality that was set by the community, the City would then seek the appropriate mitigation.

Council Member Kou noted that the mission for the Office of Transportation could be simplified and the purpose statement could be removed. She advised that goal number three should be moved to goal number one. Goal number one needed to include language about all modes of transportation that were going to be included. She wanted language that stated how to improve flow and safety on all streets, not just major ones. Safety was of great concern but information about it needed to include language in the Workplan regarding circulation and the flow of traffic. She requested information about "enforcement" and "education" be included in the Workplan and that it have better-defined rules on where scooters and bikes could ride. A resident stakeholder group was able to provide good insight and help flush out the Workplan.

Chair Kniss suggested Council Member Kou bring up her resident stakeholder group idea to the full Council.

Ms. Gaines clarified that Staff would be implementing the Workplan through FY 2019 and FY 2020. It was best if the Committee voiced all their ideas earlier rather than later.

Mr. Shikada commented that since many parts of the Workplan were being implemented in parallel, he requested the Committee consider when they wanted the Workplan to be presented to Council.

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Chair Kniss was concerned about scooters and bikes riding on the sidewalks. She requested the rules be defined in the Workplan.

Michelle Flaherty, Deputy City Manager exclaimed that some rules were being handled at the State level.

Council Member Kou felt the City should have their own basic rules until the States were available.

Ms. Gaines relayed that Staff was actively looking at other Bike and Scooter Share Programs and were building the City's guidelines around those successful programs for now.

Chair Kniss asked if the City's shuttle service could be included in the Workplan.

Ms. Gaines explained that the City was doing a new Request for Proposal (RFP) to obtain a new shuttle contract and would be bringing that to Council with a request to extend the shuttle program for six more months.

Council Member Kou requested that Staff give a report on the Regional Transportation Management Association (TMA).

Ms. Flaherty reported that Joint Venture Silicon Valley was starting the Manzanita Talks and the City was being represented at those talks.

Council Member Kou inquired how the City's own TMA was progressing.

Ms. Flaherty declared that the TMA presented to the Finance Committee in May, 2019 and they requested an increase in the level of funding from the City. That request was going to be reviewed during the budget hearings and the majority of funding was coming from the City.

Chair Kniss inquired what the City's TMA looked like when compared to surrounding Cities.

Ms. Gaines responded that the transportation team saw the TMA as part of the ecosystem for transportation alternatives through Single Occupancy Vehicles (SOV).

Ms. Flaherty noted that there were a lot of different funding mechanisms and components to TMAs. Staff was reviewing programs from surrounding cities to see what type of program would be most beneficial to Palo Alto's own TMA.

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Chair Kniss commented that a TMA for the City may be more successfully done in the Stanford Research Park versus the Downtown area due to the park having many large employers.

Ms. Flaherty related that the Downtown TMA was averaging the removal of 333 cars per month but the TMA was not able to sustain that effort based on current funding levels.

Council Member Kou specified that the TDM Ordinance should be included into the Workplan.

Ms. Gaines mentioned that the TDM Ordinance was revised and she felt it was stronger than the previous version.

Chair Kniss emphasized that more realistic performance metrics needed to be added to the TDM Ordinance.

Ms. Flaherty reminded the Committee that there were data points that were just impossible to gather.

Council Member Kou commented that since the Chief Transportation Office separated from the City, it was best to wait to bring the Workplan to the full Council until that position was filled.

Chair Kniss agreed and asked if the parking system was going to come forward.

Mr. Tanda confirmed that the Parking System Contract would be presented to Council in June, 2019.

Mr. Shikada pointed out that the red light/green light parking availability signage that was a part of the Hamilton Parking Garage was put on hold and Staff was being redirected to focus on the parking system.

Mr. Tanda noted that the parking system was called "Parking Occupancy Availability System."

Chair Kniss asked if there was a tentative date the Parking Occupancy Availability System was going to be in place.

Mr. Tanda was not able to respond. Dixon, the consulting team working on the Parking Occupancy Availability System was going to present to Council in June, 2019 and they would have more information.

Mr. Shikada had to make sure that the City had the Staff capacity to run the program.

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Chair Kniss wanted to know what Staff's plans were for Middlefield North.

Ms. Gaines responded that Staff planned on presenting an Information Item on their findings which would disclose which materials were to be installed.

Chair Kniss questioned what the "Emergency Now Preemption Project" was.

Rafael Rius, Traffic Engineering Lead explained that it enabled emergency vehicles to receive traffic signal priority when they were in route.

Council Member Kou wanted to know what Staff was envisioning in terms of instituting or revising the community engagement process for transportation projects.

Ms. Gaines explained Staff implemented the lessons learned from prior projects and they reviewed where better access points were in terms of when the community would be involved.

Mr. Tanda added that Staff wanted to present a system that was just for community engagement to the Council.

Council Member Kou expressed appreciation to Staff with regard to community engagement with Crescent Park.

Mr. Rius reported that the next steps for Crescent Park were to present the stakeholder's ideas to the Planning and Transportation Commission (PTC) and to finalize concepts for a pilot project.

Ms. Gaines thought that putting in temporary materials for the public to try on the road was a successful way to receive community feedback.

Chair Kniss requested that Staff look into their findings on making University Avenue two lanes in the afternoon and two lanes in in the morning.

Mr. Rius believed the congestion was really as a result of the Woodland Avenue and University Avenue intersection.

Ms. Gaines added that Staff reviewed signal timing along University Avenue to help move traffic along more smoothly on that corridor.

Council Member Kou expressed that there was a State bill being proposed where Caltrain would review all traffic signals around their crossings.

Ms. Gaines underlined that the East Palo Alto Bike and Pedestrian Bridge would soon open and that was going to help with congestion.

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Council Member Kou asked if Staff worked with neighboring cities on signal timing.

Mr. Rius concurred.

MOTION: Council Member Kou moved, seconded by Chair Kniss to bring this recommendation to Council in August 2019 as an Action Item and recommend approval of the 2019 Workplan to address the Council Priority "Transportation and Traffic."

MOTION PASSED: 2-0 Tanaka Absent

Ms. Flaherty said the Committee would be reviewing audits at their June, 2019 meeting.

Ms. Gaines noted that the Transportation Parking Funds was one of those audits.

Adjournment: This meeting was adjourned at 7:38 P.M.