

2023 Transit Stakeholder Group

Transit Services Overview and Discussion

September 25, 2023



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Stakeholder Group Attendance Listing

Stakeholder Group

Representative

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City of Tucson Staff Assistance

City of Tucson Department

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Meeting Summary

The initial meeting of the 2023 Transit Stakeholder Group began with a brief introduction by the co-facilitators: City of Tucson Department of Transportation and Mobility (DTM) Director Sam Credio and Project Manager James Castañeda. All stakeholder members then provided a brief introduction followed by additional agency support staff, Mayor and Council Office staff and other individuals present. Following introductions, Director Credio and Mr. Castañeda walked the audience through a brief presentation to provide foundational data related to transit operations within the City of Tucson. The key objective of this presentation was to outline the goal of this group, which is to leverage the knowledge and insight of working group participants to help guide conversations and ultimately form transit funding recommendations to be shared with Mayor and Council in late 2023. The goals are then delineated into three tiers:

1. Short-term – Recommendation on securing funding for fare-free transit through the remainder of FY2024
2. Mid-term – Recommendation to secure funding for fare-free transit indefinitely
3. Long-term – Recommendation on a sustainable transit funding source

The presentation then provided stakeholder representatives with a high-level overview of some of the key aspects of current transit operations including: types (or modes) of transit services being provided, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and initiation of fare-free transit operations, management structure, ridership trends, historic revenues, current budget plan through the remainder of 2023, summary of the 2016-2017 City Manager’s Transit Stakeholder Group, and some potential funding options. The presentation concluded with an open discussion among participants.

The discussion among participants generated many ideas and additional questions that staff will seek to answer in subsequent meetings. Key highlights of the discussion are summarized below:

- The need to focus not just on the lost revenue attributed to fare-free operations; rather, the group should consider funding options that would not only sustain but expand/improve service provision.
- The recognition that public transit is a lifeline service access to high-quality transit options is imperative and benefits the community as a whole.
- Re-evaluate a key recommendation from the 2016-2017 City Manager’s Stakeholder Group to pursue a Metropolitan Public Transit Authority (MPTA) – specific questions for staff to provide follow-up are outlined in the next section of this report.
- Perhaps transfer the costs associated with transit away from active transit users and towards automobile users, to help cause a shift to increased transit use.

- The need to engage additional community partners, spanning from large employers to small businesses, to help fund this service.
- Policy measures and incentives related to transit-oriented development should be examined as a part of these conversations.

Follow-up Questions and Next Steps

In addition to the key discussion points made by stakeholder members and agency staff, there were a number of requests for additional information needed to inform subsequent conversations. The requests for additional data are categorized and summarized below:

- Information on transit operations in other municipalities including those that are similarly offering fare-free transit and the related funding strategy
 - Specific case studies cited include Valley Metro (Phoenix region) and Kansas City, MO
- Regarding the MPTA option, need data about property tax potential, draft timeframe for implementation, and paratransit considerations
- What options do Mayor and Council have that would not have to go to voters and how much could those options potentially generate
 - For some of those options, what are the legal definitions for “public improvement” and “municipal service”
- For federal grants, more information on the impact of ridership on formula fund allocation
- Clarity on the need to have specific recommendations on system improvements/operations outside the scope of budget discussions
- Information on the previous fare structure and a detailed breakdown of fare revenues (including outside agency contributions) prior to fare-free operations; engagement/contribution strategies for small businesses and data on the current TMC access agreement
 - Provide memo from Mayor and Council Study Session held April 4, 2023
- Additional foundation studies/data including previous transit studies completed by Jarret Walker and City of Tucson/region wide population information

City staff will use the above list to gather and present findings at the next Transit Stakeholder meeting, scheduled to take place on October 9, 2023.