



CITY OF TACOMA SUSTAINABLE TACOMA COMMISSION MEETING NOTES

DATE: June 14, 2011

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT: Jane Moore, Bliss Moore, Phil Coughlan, Jim Gawel, Steve Garrett, Dan Dzyacky, Elaine Ott, Bill Anderson, Ellen Moore

COMMISSION MEMBERS EXCUSED: Dale Anderson, Carol Shiflett

OTHERS PRESENT: Chris Larson, Josh Diekmann, Kristi Lynett, Jetta Antonakos, Lisa Rennie, Bill Smith, Frank Terrill, Ryan Dicks, Bob Mack, Catherine Taylor

▪ **Approval of the May 10, 2011 Meeting Notes**

Noted EOW should state Every Other Week. The May 10, 2011 meeting notes were approved and adopted.

▪ **Review of the June Agenda**

The June agenda was approved.

▪ **Traffic Signal Presentation**

Public Works engineering staff gave a presentation on the benefits of improving the operation of Tacoma's signalized intersections.

- Poor traffic signal timing is estimated to account for 5 to 10% of roadway delays. Benefits of improving signal operation would see
 - Reduction in traffic delay up to 40% and reductions in travel time up to 25%
 - Reduction in fuel consumption of up to 10%
 - Reduction in harmful emissions (carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides, volatile organic compounds) up to 22%
- A pilot project of traffic signal optimization across 1,200 intersections in Los Angeles saw results that were closely in-line with the national averages
 - Travel time reduced 18%
 - Average speed increased 16%
 - Traffic delay reduced 44%
- Items that are included when addressing optimal signal operation
 - Adding capacity (removing bottlenecks) – very expensive and may not be in the character of what the City is currently trying to achieve
 - Coordination and progression – when signals are not talking to one another it may be there is no communication infrastructure in place from one signal to the next, or the controllers (brains of the signal) are old. When signals are allowed to talk to each other, not only do they provide coordination along a corridor but also along the network on a larger scale. The City has been fortunate in partnering with Pierce Transit in them allocating grant funding (\$2M) to allow the City to take on two signal upgrade projects. Eighty downtown signals and all signals on Pacific Avenue from 38th Street to the end of town are being updated with new smarter controllers; these same signals will also be

retimed. Both projects will be completed this summer and will upgrade 100 of the City's 323 signals. Upgrading of the remaining traffic signals will take additional time due to budget constraints. Members requested that department staff develop a scope of work to identify timeline, funding and effort necessary to come up with a plan for completing the upgrade of the remaining signals. And as part of that scope of work, to look for alternative sources of funding other than waiting for the next biennium to occur in the City's budget process.

- Detection – loop detectors (black lines) on the ground at each signal tells the controllers when a vehicle is there. As the pavement deteriorates, the detection is often lost because the loops fail; at any given time about 3-4% of the detectors fail. Cameras are now being used to assist in detecting when vehicles are at the signals so as not to rely on loop detectors that are prone to failure.
- Retiming – signals need to be retimed occasionally as traffic volumes change or growth occurs, to ensure they are allocating the green time in the most efficient manner.
- Staffing – one of the most significant challenges is not having available staff to track the data to base any signal retiming on.
- Tacoma's priorities
 - Collect data through other grant-funded projects
 - With more staff retirements in the near future, it will be important to do continuity planning
 - Supplement a few regular full-time staff with temporary and project positions. This would still leave unmet staffing needs for permanent signal technicians, signal engineers and signal crews

■ Food Policy Recommendations Review

- A stakeholder group (commissioners, city staff and community members) was formed to review a draft of the food policy recommendation. Following their review, STC members made comment and returned to the stakeholders group for approval. The stakeholders group concerns mostly involved what is the definition of healthy foods and how are the departments supposed to know what is healthy. The health department has several definitions of healthy foods and guidelines; there are also lots of models created by other jurisdictions on what they consider healthy food guidelines that the STC might utilize.
- Vending machines - The King County Board of Health has passed healthy vending guidelines, and the County Council of King County is considering a resolution to enact these guidelines. Their Board recommends making more healthy food options available in vending machines.
- Members engaged in roundtable discussion on the reformation of the food policy recommendation for presentation to and acceptance by the Council. Suggestions were to
 - Present the policy as a resolution for Council to consider and pass; or
 - Present the policy as a (numbered) list of policy recommendations that are related; at the same time, recommend specific steps the City could take to encourage locally grown, sustainable healthy food sources.
 - Lump items together, by where they are in the food system (production, processing, distribution, consumption) – food assessment.
 - Point out ghg emission reduction benefits (food miles).
- With the STC's final comments, staff will reformat the food policy recommendation document to include the rationale from the food assessment, and then put these into categories to determine where they can quantify the CO₂. The food policy recommendations will then go to the Senior Management Team for approval in the form of a "collection of policy recommendations," rather than a resolution.

■ Co-Chair Discussion

Commissioners were asked if they wanted to continue with having a co-chair. Rather, members were in favor of having a vice-chair which would act as back-up to the chair in his/her absence. It was agreed that the STC rules and regulations would be amended to read: "The Commission shall elect its own Vice-Chair....." Nominations will be accepted by staff via email with vote for vice chair at the next meeting.

▪ **Updates from Commission Subcommittees**

Waste Reduction/Recycling Subcommittee Meeting

- Discussed the pilot programs for diversion of organics and for switching from weekly to every other week garbage collection
- Reviewed what could be done to advocate for root efficiencies – C&D recovery program
 - Make available a C&D waste recycling plan template for contractors, builders and permittees; work with BLUS to incorporate that into a package which would be delivered to the customer
 - Making known, area C&D processor sites, along with their recycling and recovery rates
- Start to assemble information on rate structuring for incentivizing recycling and waste prevention, as well as model ordinances around mandatory recycling.
- Had a conference call with a waste reduction planner in Seattle regarding phonebook opt-in and opt-out programs. The opt-in program, San Francisco model, is where phonebook distribution companies cannot distribute phonebooks unless residents specifically opt-in to the program. Seattle has passed an ordinance for an opt-out program whereby residents, by default, receive the phonebooks unless they opt-out. Seattle's program charges a fee to run their opt-out web/phone system (\$.14). Thus far, 10% of the households have opted-out (130,000 phonebooks)

Transportation/Land Use Subcommittee Meeting

- City planning staff discussed the move to get rid of minimum and maximum parking requirements for businesses in certain zones
- There is a need for a larger anti-idling campaign in Tacoma. Recently, UWT students were engaged in working with local organizations to highlight topics of interest and produce a video around it. The students focused on schools and the dangers of anti-idling; the audience consisted of parents. The PSCAA has large tool kits that can be used for school programs that include anti-idling signs, bumper stickers, etc. Members will want to contact Tacoma schools to work on getting an anti-idling campaign started

▪ **TPU Community Solar Update**

- In 2005, the Legislature passed the Renewable Energy Cost Recovery Incentive Program, which allows the utilities to provide an incentive at a higher tariff for customers who want to produce electricity from solar wind or anaerobic digesters.
- In 2009, the Legislature expanded it to include community solar (standard CSP, company-owned form and utility-owned form). In the end, the bill that proposed expanding the sorts of entities that could have community solar (HB1144) passed the House (96 to 0 vote), but expired in the Senate. There is no change in law for the time being; there is a possibility the bill could be brought back next session
- TPU now has 49 individual solar systems connected to their grid (46 residential, 3 larger systems with Tacoma Community College, Pierce College and Puyallup Tribe Admin. Bldg.) for a total of 156KW of solar. They have also just accepted their first community solar application (Calbag Metals/4.2KW).

▪ **Staff Report**

- The State Department of Commerce has filed a grant application for Department of Ecology's Clean Cities Community Readiness and Planning for Plug-in Electric Vehicles and Charging Infrastructure Grant. Tacoma Power and the City of Tacoma have joined as partners on this grant application.
- A presentation on the Pacific Avenue Streetscape Project will go before the EPW in the next few weeks.
- Members congratulated TPU staff for 1) the acceptance of their first community solar project, 2) making information on community solar available on the website; and 3) being recognized for receiving the BPA Conservation Award.
- Saturday, June 18 – Proctor Farmers Market will host a sustainability theme.

- **Public Comment**

- There was no public comment.

The next meeting of the Sustainable Tacoma Commission will be Tuesday, July 12, 2011, 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m., Tacoma Municipal Building North, 733 Market Street, Room 16.