-Meeting Summary-
North Nevada Transit Connectivity Study
Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) Meeting #4
December 14, 2020

Attendees

Technical Advisory Committee Members:

Craig Blewitt, Mountain Metro Transit
Elena Nunez, Colorado Springs Utilities
Chelsea Gaylord, City Economic Development
Bob Cope, City Economic Development
Carl Schueler, City Comprehensive Planning
Page Saulsbury, City Comprehensive Planning
Ryan Tefertiller, City Urban Planning
Meggan Herington, City Planning
Jillian Jaeger, City Office of Innovation
Steve Posey, City Community Development
Joshua Pace, City Office of Innovation
Ryan Phipps, City Engineering
Tim Roberts, City Traffic Engineering
Jay Anderson, City Communications
John Liosatos, PPACG
Kristin Kenyon, FTA

Project Team:

Brian Vitulli, Mountain Metro Transit Project Manager
Rick Nau, Kimley-Horn Project Manager
Kyle McLaughlin, Kimley-Horn
Chris Joannes, Kimley-Horn
Amy Garinger, Kimley-Horn

Key Takeaways and Action Items

- This project will conclude in 2020, but many of the pieces of it will be transitioned to the ConnectCOS transportation master plan effort, where a systems-level analysis will help make final decisions on the locally preferred alternative transit mode and alignment for the corridor. Currently, both Nevada Avenue and Weber Street are identified as feasible alignments.
- From this study, the preferred transit mode is BRT Light, but the report will document that any transit or other transportation investments made within the corridor should not preclude implementation of streetcar in the future if the City chooses to do so
- A phased implementation of the project is recommended, especially since many of the transit investments north of Jackson Street are contingent upon bigger City investments, such as the reconstruction of North Nevada Avenue and the potential acquisition of the BNSF railroad right-of-way.
- Estimated project costs were developed for investments included in Phase 1 (see notes for description of phases) for both the Nevada Ave and Weber Street alignments; the costs ranged from approximately $30-$35 million.

Meeting Notes

1. Project Status and Overview

- Reminder that the goal of this project was to support the North Nevada Redevelopment area by identifying a recommended enhanced transit option between UCCS and Downtown.

- Final TAC and Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings will be held on 12/14/2020 and final Public Meeting will be held on 12/16/2020
    - City Communications is making sure that all information about the meeting and the project is prominently displayed on the City website. The public meeting notice has been posted since 12/03/2020.
- This project will be completed by 12/31/2020, but there will be some subsequent activities that will be transitioned to be part of the ConnectCOS process to update the City's Transportation Master Plan, which is currently ongoing

2. Existing Conditions Overview

- Population and job growth projections
    - Projections for 2045 and came from the PPACG small area forecast. These were used because they are the forecasts that would be required by the FTA if small starts funds are requested.
    - It is understood that the projections developed by the City specifically for the North Nevada Redevelopment area project much more population and job growth in the corridor, and thus using the PPACG projections might underplay the actual projected growth.
        - This is especially true near Downtown where there are active redevelopment projects that will be adding at least 1,500 residential units
        - Suggest including a note that the City projects high growth than what is reflected in the PPACG model, especially in the Downtown area
- Ridership forecasts
    - Utilized pre-COVID ridership and growth numbers
    - Utilized three different methodologies to account for sensitives of a single methodology
    - Ridership is projected to be 3,000-5,000 riders per day, which justifies either BRT Light or Streetcar
        - BRT 'Light' vs 'Heavy' indicates the level of infrastructure investment, not the size or weight of the vehicles
        - Streetcar is viable and may provide more immediate development incentives, but it also costs at least two times as much to implement, including the need for overhead power infrastructure and in-ground rail tracks
    - Traffic studies on Nevada Avenue show that it is feasible to remove a lane to dedicate it to transit north of Uintah Street without degrading traffic operations to an unreasonable level
        - Dedicating a lane of traffic on Nevada Ave south of Uintah is not feasible given traffic volumes – ConnectCOS will consider the best approach to supporting transit travel along the corridor using a systems approach
        - Previous City Traffic Engineer provided direction that Nevada Ave could not be reduced to one lane along any portion
        - Need to consider impacts to the planned bike lanes on Weber and whether it is wise to advocate for their removal in favor of transit – a lot of work has been done to create the plan for bike lanes
        - Discussing road dieting along the corridor should be treated as a sensitive topic with many conflicting views and answers

3. Recommended Transit Mode

- BRT Light is recommended as the preferred mode for a few reasons:
    - Lower capital cost

  - Lower operating cost
  - More flexibility to implement the system over time (Streetcar requires full infrastructure deployment along the whole corridor at one time)
- It was out of the realm of this study to do an economic impact assessment of streetcar versus BRT for the corridor, but the national body of knowledge has shown that streetcar does tend to incentivize more investment then BRT, but it comes as a much higher cost
- ConnectCOS will consider the most appropriate mode based on a City-wide approach to enhanced transit
  - It may be in the City's interest to pursue the bigger capital investment in streetcar and see if they can find a funding partner that will help with funding – this has been something the City has been doing more of recently for very large projects
  - An example might be if UCCS puts major investment into a downtown campus and it becomes a higher priority for them to partner with the City to provide connectivity between their campuses
- This study will include language that says that any investments the City makes in BRT in the nearer-term should not preclude transition or conversion to streetcar at a later time if the City decides

4. Recommended Transit Alignment

- North of Fillmore, there is only a single alignment alternative, which is along Nevada Ave up to Eagle Rock Road. South of Fillmore into Downtown is where there are multiple alternatives
- In our last TAC meeting, it was decided that both Nevada Ave and Weber Street were feasible, and both alignments are being recommended for further study through ConnectCOS to understand how improvements or changes to each of these corridors would impact the larger transportation network in the City

5. Station Locations

- Preliminary station sighting for both alternatives was done based on FTA criteria and proximity to other transit modes and major trip generators, however, more specifics on station locations will need to be developed during a later design phase
  - Note that there will be some security-related restrictions that will impact station sighting near the power plant

6. Project Phasing and Cost Estimates

- A phasing plan is recommended for implementation of the project.
  - Phase 1 will include full BRT implementation south of Jackson Street (dedicated transit lanes, BRT stations, on-board fare collection, intersection operational enhancements for transit, etc.) and considerations for operational enhancements at intersections north of Jackson.
    - Investment north of Jackson and the RIRR is dependent on the reconstruction of Nevada Ave, so the project could not reasonably identify cost estimates
  - Phase 2 would correspond with the Nevada Ave reconstruction and would implement full BRT from Jackson to Eagle Rock Rd
  - Phase 3 would correspond with the City's purchase of the BNSF railroad right-of-way to create a dedicated transit guideway
- Estimated costs for alignment alternatives were provided for the Phase 1 stage only
  - Estimates only consider BRT Light as the mode, but do consider needs for both Nevada Avenue and Weber Street alternatives

- It is out of the feasible scope for this project to provide cost estimates for two alignments and two modes (i.e. BRT and streetcar)
- However, based on national examples, the cheapest streetcar system was constructed at $10M/mile (equating to a cost of $50M), with most systems costing somewhere between $20M/mile and $30M/mile.

- Weber would require widening to provide a dedicated transit lane and retain existing on-street parking
  - Cost estimates include need for full reconstruction of Weber to address the failing subbase
  - It is assumed widening would occur on one side of the roadway and new curb and gutter would be required
  - There will need to be more detailed analysis of the corridor to understand the exact dimensions for the cross sections to see how all uses can most effectively be accommodated