

TRAFFIC & TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

January 10, 2022

A meeting of the Traffic & Transportation Committee was held this date beginning at 2:01 p.m., by video conference.

Notice of this meeting was sent to all local news media.

PRESENT

Committee Members: Councilmember Seekings (Chair), Councilmember Brady, Councilwoman Jackson, and Mayor Tecklenburg (joined at 2:08 p.m.)

Also Present: Velvett Simmons, Andrea Derungs, Andrew Dickson, Robert Somerville, Gary Cooper, Councilmember Shahid, Robert Summerfield, Meg Thompson, Tom O'Brien, Edmund Most, Jason Kronsberg, Stirling Halversen, Mallary Scheer, Julia Copeland, Tracy McKee, Rick Jerue, Councilmember Appel, and Stephen Maddy

1. Invocation

The meeting was opened with a moment of silence led by Councilmember Seekings.

2. Approval of Minutes

On a motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Brady, the Committee voted unanimously to approve the minutes from the September 27th, 2021 meeting.

3. Update: Ashley River Pedestrian Bridge

Mr. Michael Darby, project manager for the Ashley River Pedestrian Bridge, said that, in September, they submitted 30% design plans to SCDOT for approval and received categorical exclusion through FHWA. At that time, the City advertised for qualifications from design/build teams. They had hoped to receive 3-5 statements of qualifications, but they only received 2. In November, the team short-listed both of the design/build teams that submitted packages. They reached out to some of the contractors they had expected to propose and discovered they had not done so because they had thought the project would be closer to \$40 million. It was currently budgeted at \$26.25 million. At that point, the project team reevaluated the project cost using a risk-based approach and found an expected overall cost of \$41 million. The biggest cost issue they found was price escalation due to current market conditions, so they examined what they could do to reduce the scope of the project while still meeting the purpose of the project. They looked at reducing the width of the bridge from 20ft. to 14ft. and reducing the path width from 12ft. to 10ft. They also looked at altering the previous design from one wishbone tower to two steel towers on either end with cables going down to support it. In December, they moved into detailed modeling of the revised structure and a new cost estimate. By reducing the width and looking at some detailed seismic design requirements, they came up with a savings of \$9 million, which brought the project down to \$28-32.8 million. They also submitted the U.S. Army Corps permit in December, which they anticipated receiving approval for in February. Once they received that, they would be able to submit to the U.S. Coast Guard for their review and approval. Currently, they were coordinating with SCDOT and

FHWA on the seismic design requirements for the project. SCDOT's standard for seismic was a 2,500 year event. They were trying to get approval for a 1,000 year seismic event because, by making that switch, it would save \$2.5-3 million. Mr. Darby said they were also updating the 30% plans with the new base design and would submit OCRM permits for review. In February, they would be working on the draft RFP and getting those to SCDOT and FHWA for review. In March and April, they would review the draft RFP and get it to the design/build teams. From May-July, the design/build teams would review the RFP and meet with the City to get any questions answered. In August, they would issue the final RFP to the design/build teams. At that point, the project would hit the federal requirement for obligating the project for construction. That date for the project was September 30th, so meeting it in August would give them some extra time in case anything came up. In the 3rd and 4th quarters of 2022, they would receive technical cost proposals from the design/build teams and City Council would approve a construction contract. In the first quarter of 2023, they would issue a notice to proceed to the design/build team, and the rest of the year would be design efforts by the design/build team and possibly constructing some of the intersection improvements. All of 2024 and 2025 would be construction of the bridge. Mr. Kronsberg said that once they issued the RFP, the two short-listed teams would conduct a considerable amount of work to further along the design in order to get to a bid number. They were provided with a 30% drawing set, so they had to undertake quite a bit of work.

Councilwoman Jackson thanked everyone for their work on the project. She clarified that the price adjustment had to do with the design alterations and the seismic requirement and that they wouldn't see any additional savings once those had been approved. She asked if there were any hiccups in the approvals they had already received since there had been design changes. Mr. Darby said they were past those hurdles, but if the design/build teams came up with a design significantly different than what was currently permitted by FHWA for categorical exclusion, they could have to go through that evaluation again. However, even if they had to do that, it was a minor piece of the puzzle and wouldn't affect the schedule. Mayor Tecklenburg thanked everyone for their work on the project and for keeping it on schedule. He said although the path would not end up being as wide as they originally planned, it would still be wider than the path that went over the Ravenel Bridge. It would be a safe and great addition to the City. He said when he was in D.C. next week, he planned to meet with folks at the Federal Highway Administration about augmenting the budget. Councilmember Shahid asked what impact reducing the width of the bridge would have. Mayor Tecklenburg said that, functionally, nothing had changed. Mr. Darby said 14ft. wide was comfortable, and it gave 2ft. off the rail for bicyclists, which was the standard. Councilmember Shahid said the Ravenel Bridge was more of a recreational bridge, whereas this bridge would see heavier traffic as a commuter bridge. Councilmember Seekings confirmed that it provided enough access for handicap use. Councilmember Appel said he couldn't be more excited about the project and offered any support he could provide. Councilmember Seekings asked if they had any thoughts about making up the difference in funding. Mayor Tecklenburg said he planned to ask FHWA for more money, but it was also in the Horizon TIF District, so that could also be a source of funding, if needed. Councilmember Seekings clarified that it was a delta of \$6 million.

4. Discussion: Parklets On-Street Dining

Councilmember Seekings said parklets came about as a result of COVID and increasing access to the outdoors and opportunities for businesses to serve food and drink. He said there were 2 businesses that

had taken advantage of it. One was constructed on a street that was owned and controlled by the City, and the other was on a street that was not. He said it would be impossible to have permanent parklets unless they were on City-owned streets. He asked what the expense associated with the City maintaining a street was vs. the State or County maintaining it. Mayor Tecklenburg said they didn't keep track of that, but the DOT had figures on it. Councilmember Seekings said that the idea had been that this program would sunset at the same time as COVID. However, that wasn't the situation they were in. He said it had been popular and seemed to have worked, so as they looked to the future and making the program permanent, it would be helpful to have an understanding of what it would cost to take back a portion of a City street. He asked if they thought it would be a huge maintenance burden. Mayor Tecklenburg said he liked the notion of parklets, but the DOT had made it clear that this had been an emergency matter and that parklets would not be allowed permanently on their streets. He had asked the Planning Department to come up with a set of guidelines by which they would consider a parklet on a City street, which would have to include a fee and support from the nearby property owners and neighborhood. In the meantime, the City had asked both restaurants to remove the parklets. Personally, he said it was hard to justify taking back a street unless the property owner was willing to pay a high enough fee or there was a more compelling reason to take it back, such as when they took back Murray Blvd. for completion of the Low Battery Seawall.

5. Discussion: Nonconsensual Tow Ordinance

Ms. Halversen said the City had been recently notified of some predatory towing practices where vehicles were being towed within several minutes of their time expiring, even if the owner showed up. The Legal Department had researched some options and found that the City of North Myrtle Beach had recently addressed the same issue by changing their ordinance to require a police officer to be present before a towing company could take a vehicle away. They thought that was a good solution to help legitimize the process, and the Mayor had suggested using a parking enforcement officer rather than a police officer. However, during off hours, police would be able to step in.

Councilmember Seekings asked if any specific incident gave rise to this. Mayor Tecklenburg said he regularly received letters from people who had been towed five minutes after their time had expired, and then they had to go through the process of finding where their car went, paying fees, etc. He said oftentimes a property owner didn't get any towing fees, they just wanted their parking revenue, so they gave the towing companies carte blanche. Mr. Somerville said this was a constant complaint he received, too. Councilmember Seekings said there were two different categories they were talking about – one where people paid to be on a private lot and come back a few minutes late and another where people parked on a purely private lot without paying to be there. He said it seemed like the first scenario would be best addressed through the business licensing process rather than through an ordinance. He said he thought they were creating a big, bureaucratic scenario in which no one would win. He asked how many POs they had. Mr. Somerville said they were budgeted for 34 and currently had 24 on staff. Councilmember Seeking asked how many were deployed on the Peninsula. Mr. Somerville said that probably 12 were on the Peninsula. Councilwoman Jackson said Councilmember Seekings posed an interesting solution, but she wondered how they would enforce the business license. She said that seemed like a subjective process that would be hard to continue over time. She also said her impression from Ms. Halversen's presentation was that they were talking about people who paid in good faith but ran late. She

thought those lots would be easier to regulate. Mayor Tecklenburg said that was a good distinction, and most of the complaints he received pertained to paying lots. Councilmember Seekings said the scenario he was thinking of was when a business owned a private lot, they posted that it was for customers only and didn't charge a fee, but non-customers parked there. He asked what they would do in that scenario. He asked Ms. Halversen to think on those different scenarios and come back to the Committee to report.

6. Bike Share – Neutron Holding DBA Lime

Mr. Somerville said they received 6 applications when the bike share program went out to bid in August. They had presentations in October and November from the applicants and ultimately selected Neutron Holding DBA Lime. He said Lime was very excited to come to Charleston and was already looking at garage location and space to kick off their launch. The current contract would end in February. Councilmember Brady asked if they would retain any of the branding from the previous vendor. Councilmember Seekings said they had received a prototype that incorporated the light blue color the bikes currently had with a lime streak in it. He asked Mr. Somerville to share that prototype with the Committee members.

7. Executive Session in accordance with Section 30-4-70(a)(2) of the South Carolina Code to receive legal advice regarding pedicab token process, if needed.

On a motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Brady, the Committee voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 2:52 p.m.

The Committee came out of Executive Session at 3:07 p.m. No action was taken.

On a motion of Councilwoman Jackson, seconded by Councilmember Brady, the Committee voted unanimously to instruct Legal to adjust the ordinance so they could do a re-bidding of the pedicab tokens.

Having no further business, the Committee adjourned at 3:08 p.m.

Andrea Derungs
Clerk of Council's Office