The following are summary minutes for the meeting of the City of Las Cruces – Transportation-Sustainability-Infrastructure Policy Review Committee on February 2, 2021. The meeting was held remotely via Zoom.

MEMBERS PRESENT:
- Gill Sorg, Chairman
- Johana Bencomo, City Council
- Gabriel Vasquez, City Council
- Peter Ibarbo, South-Central Solid Waste
- Philip Simpson, Southern New Mexico Trails Alliance
- John Moscato, Las Cruces Homebuilders Association
- Mark Gaiser, EMNRD

STAFF PRESENT:
- Andy Hume, Airport Administrator
- Ikani Taumoepeau, Assistant City Manager
- David Weir, Deputy Director Community Development
- Adrienne Widmer, Water Deputy Director
- Delfilah Walsh, Interim Utilities Director
- Lisa Larocque, Sustainability Officer
- Francisco Pallares, Economic Development Deputy Director
- Cynthia Villanueva, Administrative Assistant
- Richard Hanway, Transit Operations Supervisor

OTHERS PRESENT:
- Gregory Shervanick, Public

I. Call to Order: Chairman Sorg called the meeting to order at approximately 8:30.

II. Conflict of Interest: None.

III. Acceptance of the Agenda: No motion or second, but the agenda was accepted.

IV. Minutes for Approval - TSI PRC Meeting of January 5, 2021: Committee Member Bencomo motioned to approve the minutes. The minutes were accepted.

V. Discussion:

a. EL Paseo Corridor District Development Ad Hoc Committee: David Weir gave the presentation. The Ad Hoc Committee was formed by resolution of the City Council to look at the EL Paseo and South Solano corridors to find ways to revitalize them and connect them with additional transportation alternatives; create vital mixed-use corridors. The Ad Hoc
Committee is made up of City Councilors, residents in the area, the school corporation, the Mesilla Valley MPO, South Central Regional Transit District, and various businesses and property owners in the area; a request was made for NMSU representation. Another reason for the committee is to review the existing policies adopted by the City; in particular, the policies and direction provided in Elevate Las Cruces as well as the previous El Paseo Blueprint. A review of the existing zoning standards and overlays is also included.

The adopted schedule began with the initial meeting in December; they were given background information and created a set of boundaries to consider that would impact both corridors. January meeting involved looking at the policies in Elevate Las Cruces and the El Paseo Blueprint, reviewing the existing land uses and zoning, and had discussions for recommendations on zoning strategies for the February meeting. The February meeting will also include the development process of permitting and business registration process and how it impacts the areas. The March meeting will discuss public investment and redevelopment incentives. The April meeting will discuss revitalization strategies and new redevelopment approaches. The desire of the committee is to come up with strategic recommendations to this Committee in May.

At the end of the December meeting, they created a boundary of the area as the process moves forward. A map was shown of this area; it includes the area of the El Paseo Blueprint, a quarter mile of both sides of South Solano, a part of the University district, and a neighborhood to the east between Triviz and the two corridors. There was an overlay with part of the South Mesquite area where Las Esperanzas is involved in. The committee decided to include the group but will not recommend zoning as it’s an existing overlay. The area encompasses Triviz to the east, Lohman to the north, Main Street to the west, and University to the south.

Some policies that were reviewed at the last meeting included the mixed-use corridor place type overlay from Elevate Las Cruces. Primary goals include making the area a mixed-use corridor, increasing the residential density, and making sure there is transportation available. A graphic of those ideas was shown; there are neighborhood areas with mixed-use corridors being proposed. A graphic of the vision from the El Paseo Blueprint was shown; it shows what kind of environment the public wants as there was a lot of public input. A 2017 land use inventory map showing existing conditions was shown. A map showing the zoning was shown.

The past committee meeting had a discussion on what the zoning for the entire area should be. Currently the City’s model is segregated with residential, commercial, and institutional in separate areas. This has been slightly softened with overlay zones that encourage mixed-use or appropriate relationship transitioning from one use to another. There is also an infill area which has incentives to encourage development of vacant and
underutilized parcels. The committee discussed various zoning such as overlay zones, floating zones which is a zoning concept when trying to concentrate on a redevelopment area you adopt specific incentives or zoning standards over that area until it reaches a certain point of development and then move it, Euclidean zoning which is more in the East Mesa with more segregation, and a form-based code which is more in the downtown area with traditional type of development.

The next meeting will include a discussion on the development process; a slide was shown of the basic development process which will need to be slightly modified for the meeting. The main part of discussion will include what the steps and review that will take place are when someone comes in for a building permit. The Fire Department, Community Development Department, and Utilities Department will join the discussion. The discussion will also include a business registration process. The Ad Hoc Committee is informing themselves of the existing conditions, zoning regulations, development processes, and then working on methods to incentivize growth in the areas; ultimately making recommendations to this Committee.

There were comments made of how happy there is movement on this project. Socio-economic data from the city’s ESRI program called Community Fabric shows that the area is a low-income neighborhood with many young families. The program is currently on the City’s share point where everyone can view it. They are currently working on the land use inventory and vacancy rates as well as businesses; they hope to share that soon. They will also look at existing infrastructure, the CIP schedule to see what public investment the City will make in the area, and the policies in the active Transportation Plan. They will look at the transit routes that serve the area within the next two months in order to provide transit connection between the University, Convention Center, and downtown.

There was discussion if they are taking the Urban Heat Island report into account, recommendations for trees, native plants, shade, etcetera. It will be discussed by the Ad Hoc Committee beginning next month as it’s part of the infrastructure investment and policy. During the creation of the El Paseo Blueprint there was a safety audit of the street as well as green infrastructure that made recommendations for providing increased landscaping and sustainability; an example is Gomez Park in the area which is a multi-use area between drainage and park use. There was discussion on the active Transportation Plan. Public Works Department is making a concerted effort to make connections to close the pedestrian gaps. There are 20 projects which were recommended and the City adopted into their CIP program. They intend to identify if any of those are in the area and if they can help support the projects.

There was discussion about need for additional trees and shade in response to urban heat island effect; to close gaps for pedestrian and
bicycling transportation; chargers as vehicles evolve to be electrical and the incentives offered by El Paso Electric’s transportation electrification plan. There was a question of the available space of inventory for development in terms of commercial, residential, or light industrial. They are currently gathering that information now but do not have a specific answer at this time. The Community Development Department did an update of the infill background roughly five years ago that had some information on that. However, they are gathering the updated information of vacancy rates and hope to have it by the February meeting.

There was discussion of looking at other similar municipalities that have done this before; University and parts of El Paso were mentioned. El Paso downtown has an aesthetic theme identifying them as a region. The Ad Hoc Committee intends to look at branding and ways to incentivize it; neighborhood organization or committee formation. A couple models being looked at within the City include the downtown with Main Street and the University district. Other models that will be taken into account is El Paso and Albuquerque efforts. One of the reason the Ad Hoc Committee was created was to find the economic driver to use to bring investors into the area. There were comments about the area near Whole Foods in Mesa with the walking routes and bus stations. They hope this project will become just as wonderful. Chair Sorg commented on various tours he took on the El Paso transportation, San Diego, and La Jolla where they gained many good ideas. There were comments on how everyone is excited to see El Paseo Corridor coming to fruition.

The original plan is to have updates from the Ad Hoc Committee on a quarterly basis. The next updates will be scheduled for May and August. Mr. Weir suggested the updates be in June for the recommendations as the Ad Hoc Committee meets after this one does. There was discussion of preferences of when to have the updates; decided to keep the update in May so that the Ad Hoc Committee can have input before their meeting.

VI. Future Discussion/Task Listing: The list below are items that currently have research being done. The next two months will include discussions on the New Mexico Green Building Codes and the Code Revisions which is currently being conducted by Community Development; it is early in the process so it would only be an update. There was discussion on what the Committee would like to see next as discussions in March and April. Chair Sorg would like an update on Code Revisions for both March and April meetings. Committee Member Bencomo would like to see items that lead to strong policies rather than just updates. She suggested revisiting the Plastic Bag Ordinance now that stores are opening more and allowing reusable bags again. There was agreement on revisiting the Plastic Bag Ordinance to give people time to prepare for the change.

Committee Member Bencomo commented that she has been talking with EFO about park impact fees. She would like to have a discussion about those and if they can be improved through code. Chair Sorg agreed with her suggestion. Mr.
Hume commented that any items discussed in this PRC should have a policy as an end result; whether an ordinance, plan, or something else. Mr. Hume will check to see if this is the correct PRC to discuss the park impact fees. Mr. Ikani Taumoepeau commented that in order to be effective on this PRC and keep momentum moving forward future discussion items need to not simply sit and collect dust. The suggestion of discussion items for next meeting is the New Mexico Green Building Codes, one of the Code Revisions, and the Plastic Bag Ordinance.

Lisa LaRocque commented that the reason for so many future discussion items is because it's a three-part Committee with transportation, sustainability, and infrastructure. Elevate policies that are short term priorities and overlapped for all three areas related to policy were added to the list; overlay and infrastructure as well as natural drainage and arroyos. Staff could look at potential policy directions for these items prior to discussions in order to help move things along. The Plastic Bag Ordinance draft is written and is currently waiting for the green light once the pandemic calms down. The early phase will not incur penalties, but it is unsure that people are able to use their own bags. There was discussion of adopting it for a future date so people have time to prepare and the pandemic will hopefully be over. There were comments to revisit the Ordinance again before adoption. A suggestion was made to send a copy of the draft to the Committee and next meeting they can go over what they like and don't like to discuss.

The March meeting will include the Plastic Bag Ordinance to move forward to City Council. Mr. Bartholomew would not be available for the March meeting but could come in April to give a Code Revisions update. There was a suggestion to talk with him prior to the meeting to determine how he sees the role of this Committee involved in those revisions. Mr. Hume asked the Committee to think about the other five items as he will talk with Community Development, Public Works, and Utilities to find who would address the last five items on the list.

a. New Mexico Green Building Codes:
b. Plastic Bag Ordinance:
c. Transit Service:
d. Code Revisions:
   1. Comprehensive update of Land Development Code, including Infill Development Policy Plan, and Overlay District; Implement cluster residential development:
   2. Amend municipal street design requirements and incorporate context-based street designs:
   3. Design standard flexibility to make provision of attainable housing more financially feasible:
   e. Establish a street connectivity index and minimum connectivity requirements for new neighborhoods:
   f. Explore the feasibility of implementing a stormwater utility free to recoup costs to manage stormwater:
   g. Provide incentives for development sites that are already served by water and wastewater infrastructure:
h. Establish standards for arroyo development buffers to protect the natural drainageways from encroachment:

i. Continue to pursue safe routes to school, transportation alternatives, and other funding to encourage active transportation:

VII. Next Meeting - March 2, 2021.

VIII. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:25 a.m.

Chairman Sorg

Approved:________________________