

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Wednesday, August 18, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Atlas-Ingebretson, Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Sterner, Vento, Wulff

Committee Members Absent:

Lee, Muse, Zeran, Zelle

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Vice Committee Chair Cummings called the regular meeting of the Council's Committee of the Whole to order at 4:01 p.m. on Wednesday, August 18, 2021 on the following roll call vote:

Aye: 13 Atlas-Ingebretson, Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Sterner, Vento, Wulff

Nay: 0

Absent: 4 Lee, Muse, Zeran, Zelle

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council Members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Sterner, seconded by Lilligren to approve the minutes of the August 4, 2021 regular meeting of the Committee of the Whole. **Motion carried** on the following roll call:

Aye: 13 Atlas-Ingebretson, Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Johnson, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Sterner, Vento, Wulff

Nay: 0

Absent: 4 Lee, Muse, Zeran, Zelle

INFORMATION

1. The 50-year History of the Fiscal Disparities Program with Panel Discussion

Deb Detrick, Principal Researcher, Local Planning Assistance, introduced the Fiscal Disparities Program and the presentation and panel discussion for the evening. On July 23, 1971, the MN legislature enacted tax-base sharing program in the seven-county metro area, commonly known as the fiscal disparities program. Through this program, local taxing jurisdictions share part of the growth in commercial and industrial net tax capacity, or tax base.

Paul Gilje, author, and former Associate Director, Citizens League, gave background information about the history of tax-based sharing in the Twin Cities Metropolitan Region. Gilje is also the author of "How Could You Do This? 50 Years of Property-Tax-base Sharing in Minnesota," which was published by the Center for Policy Design.

Tax-base sharing has had influence on other areas; it mainly helped spark discussion of solutions for fiscal disparities rather than action. Many states sent delegations to Minnesota to learn more about the program. The key takeaway from Gilje's book is that tax-base sharing is working. The fiscal disparities program partly and gradually reduces differences in the commercial-industrial tax base across municipalities in the metro area.

Gilje also joined a panel discussion which included Steve Hinze, former Legislative Analyst at the Minnesota House of Representatives; Patricia Nauman, Executive Director for Metro Cities; and Tom Weaver, CEO of Achieve Services and former Regional Administrator for the Metropolitan Council under Governor Tim Pawlenty. Panelists discussed the Council's role in developing tax-base sharing, the actual impacts of fiscal disparities for individual homes and businesses, and Metro Cities' policy on the fiscal disparities program in the metro area. Panelists also discussed why other metro areas haven't replicated the fiscal disparities program.

Council Members had questions and comments about how the fiscal disparities program has changed regional competition, the perspective of the cities with regard to the fiscal disparities program, as well as communicating the fiscal disparities program to the public. Council Members and panelists also discussed why the fiscal disparities program has managed to stay true to its original mission yet local government aid has changed dramatically.

2. Blue Line Extension Update

Sam O'Connell, Assistant Director, Community Affairs, and Dan Soler, Hennepin County, gave an update on the Blue Line Extension (BLRT) project. O'Connell began with a review of the project transition and BLRT milestones. In July 2021 the initial station and LRT alignment visualizations were released, project staff held community open houses, and released the anti-displacement RFP. In August 2021 project staff were holding station and alignment community engagement. Community engagement included working with 14 community organizations that are trusted community partners and four groups focused on communications. The work was collaborative and coordinated across the corridor. Sophia Ginis, Manager, Transit Systems Development Public Involvement, shared information about 2021 engagement. Engagement events and activities included advisory committee meetings, 80 community meetings with approximately 2,000 participants in total, five virtual and four in-person open houses, community and business stakeholder check-ins, an interactive map with approximately 500 comments, a survey with over 2,000 responses, and general comments submitted via online form and email. Ginis also shared the takeaways from the engagement, including feedback on project goals, opportunities, and concerns. Ginis also gave an update on anti-displacement work; project staff are in the process of forming an anti-displacement working group. The working group will include agencies and community partners and will recommend policies and programs to positively impact communities and minimize displacement.

Nick Landwer, Senior Project Manager, shared information about the development of route modification alternatives. Potential routes are based on adopted project principles, conceptual review of LRT right of way and operational needs, applicable project work, and community and stakeholder input. Landwer also shared visualizations of key route points. O'Connell shared information about the upcoming Route Modification Recommendation Report. The initial draft report will be released in November with a 45-day public comment period. The report will include the purpose of the report, the history of BLRT, and the process overview. Route recommendations will be made in the final report. Council Members had questions about the alignment and station design, as well as when the station alignment illustrations will be shared with the public, and the request from the City of Maple Grove to have a spur from this alignment.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:22 p.m.

Bridget Toskey
Recording Secretary