METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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TRANSPORTATION ACCESSIBILITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING
Wednesday, November 7, 2012

1. Call to Order

At 12:35 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Biss. **Public present**: Claudia Fuglie and Kristin Jorenby from MnDOT, Anna Flintoft from the City of Minneapolis and LaSaella Sims. **Council staff present:** Jan Dietrich and Claire Schleichert from Metro Transit, Jessica Hill from Central Corridor Project Office, Paul Colton and Alison Coleman.

Members Present: Ron Biss, John Schatzlein, Kim Kang, Kjensmo Walker, Margot Imdieke Cross, Wayne Wittman, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, Chad McGuire, Nichole Villavicencio and Willie Daniels. **Members Absent**: James Williams, Bruce Lattu and.Jerolyn Pofahl,. **Members excused:** John Lund.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Wittman moved to approve the agenda. Daniels seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Approval of October 3, 2012 Minutes

Schatzlein moved to approve the minutes. McGuire seconded the motion. The motion carried.

4. Wayfinding Measures

Kristin Jorenby spoke to the TAAC committee. She works for MnDOT and is doing a project on wayfinding measures and how those or lack of them affects people with disabilities' ability to use fixed route transit. She asked the committee what things exist now and what they would like to see in the future that would enable everyone to use more fixed route transit. The wayfinding measures are visual, audio and/or tactile measures that help people disseminate where they are and where they are going. Currently they have signs that say this is a bus stop or street name signs. In the audio and tactile area they have the accessible pedestrian signals.

Suggestions from the TAAC committee:

- There are systems that provide directions to people for navigating. They are especially designed for people with visual impairments. There is one called "Click and Go". The guy who invented the system lives in St. Paul. He does auditory mapping.
- There are other systems in early phases where you would have smart phone applications that provide a mixture of GPS data with auditory feedback so you could navigate systems without sight. It would tell you which way to go.
- Standardization is very helpful. If pedestrian signal buttons are in different locations at intersections and if there is no audible beacon people may not be able to find the button. If people learn the relationship between the tactile warning strip and the accessible pedestrian signal it is helpful for people to navigate.

- Put Braille on bus stop signs so people can read the routes that stop at that stop.
- Snow removal is the biggest issue in the winter time. Especially for bus stops at a corner.
- Bus drivers should call out streets. People cannot always understand the driver.
- There are phone apps that let you know with GPS where you are. It beeps. It is not standard.
- At the age of 65 people should be given free public transportation for a month so they have the opportunity and the incentive to become familiar with the bus system and how it works so that when they are 85 and can't drive anymore they can make the adjustment to public transit.
- There should be some uniformity at the bus stops and that people know where to go to get the information they are looking for. Have the buttons and signs at the same place at every bus stop.
- There needs to be some redundancy in the messaging so that it is accessible to everyone.
- The font size for the elevated signage should be larger so people who are relying on their vision for wayfinding can access that. There needs to be more contrast in background and lettering.
- Think about having more pictures that represent more items like a bus or a train for people who have issues like autism.
- The buttons that are pushed for crossing the street cannot always be accessed by people in wheelchairs. They should be standardized.
- The corners should be routinely checked as part of the general maintenance process.
- There is video technology that is in the development stage. There is going to be video detection of people to activate certain signals. If someone is slowly going through a crosswalk and gets half way and can't activate the cross signal after that the video technology will sense that they are there and give them another walk signal.
- There needs to be curb cuts in all crosswalks and in the middle of the roadway.
- Make all bus stops in the suburbs accessible.

5. Nicollet-Central Transit Alternatives Study

Anna Flintoft spoke to the TAAC committee. She works for the City of Minneapolis Public Works Department. The city is leading an alternatives analysis study of transit improvements on Nicollet Avenue and Central Avenue through Minneapolis and into parts of Columbia Heights. They are at the beginning of a yearlong study process. They are trying to let people know about the process and make sure they are getting as much input as possible.

The corridor extends from 46th Street and Nicollet near the existing BRT station on I-35W. Then it runs north on Nicollet Avenue through the K-Mart site at Lake Street and then into downtown on Nicollet Mall over the river and then connecting with the Central Avenue corridor running north on Central Avenue to the existing transit center at Columbia Heights at 41st Avenue NE.

In 2007 the city did a study called the "Street Car Feasibility Study" where they looked at 14 of the busiest bus corridors in Minneapolis. They asked the question "If you were to implement modern streetcars in these corridors which corridors would be the best streetcar corridors?" They were looking at both increasing transit ridership as well as economic development potential. Streetcars have been shown in other cities to attract more riders (like light rail). The seven corridors that were recommended for a long term network of implementation includes: Central Avenue in Northeast, Nicollet Avenue, Chicago Avenue and Hennepin Avenue in South Minneapolis, the Midtown Greenway Corridor, West Broadway and Washington Avenue North in North Minneapolis and then the 4th and University corridor in Southeast Minneapolis.

The city council prioritized the Nicollet Avenue and Central Avenue corridor as the best place to start implementation of this long term network. They did secure a $900,000 federal grant with a $300,000

local match to do this study. The study they are doing is an alternatives analysis. It is similar to the process that the region goes through for most transit corridors.

Metro Transit has also studied arterial BRT in these corridors. Metro Transit has prioritized arterial BRT on Nicollet Avenue and Central Avenue. The corridor they are doing right now is not specific to any mode. It is a mode neutral study. They are going to be looking at both bus options and rail options. The outcome of the study is to identify a locally preferred alternative which would be an alignment and a mode and a starter segment as well. It needs to be adopted by the Metropolitan Council into the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan. The study will include an evaluation of the costs and benefits and impacts of different alternative improvements. They do expect to be looking at modern streetcars and enhanced bus which is similar to arterial BRT. They do expect for a streetcar mode that they would need to be looking at a shorter starter segment within this nine mile corridor.

Some of the modes they will be looking at are arterial BRT, modern streetcar, BRT that is in a dedicated busway, as well as light rail. The arterial BRT and modern streetcar options operate in mixed traffic. The dedicated busway and light rail options have their own lanes and their own tracks. LRT and BRT that is in a dedicated busway are going to fall out and they will do more detailed study of arterial BRT and modern streetcar because there is limited right of way in these corridors.

Modern streetcar is a mode of operation in Seattle and Portland, Oregon and other parts of the country. It is being implemented in at least 10 different cities across the country right now. It is about the size of an articulated bus. In Seattle and Portland the vehicle is 67 feet long. A light rail vehicle is 94 feet long. It is just a single train. Cars can drive on the tracks. The station spacing is more closely spaced (1/4 mile apart). They tend to operate in downtowns or dense activity centers where there is a lot of people making short trips and traveling for shopping, etc.

The modern streetcar has a raised curb so it has a near level boarding. The tracks are in the drive lane and a parking lane next to the tracks in the drive lane where the sidewalk is extended into the parking lane with a raised curb. The vehicles have four doors, two wider doors in the center and two narrower doors at the end. Some of the streetcar systems have center platforms in a median island in the middle of the street. Streetcars do have doors on both sides of the vehicle.

The arterial BRT stations are intended to be similar to the modern streetcar. Metro Transit has been planning with the arterial transitway corridor study curb extensions into the parking lane, off board fare payment and ticket vending machines, real time information signs and enhanced shelters.

They expect to be looking at a lot more detail at conventional bus, arterial BRT and modern streetcars. The stops spacing on modern streetcar would be ¼ mile or 1/3 mile. Streetcars are electric vehicles. They do have single overhead wires. The cost of the modern streetcar is more than the bus options but less than light rail.

In January they will have a second round of public open houses to present the results of the initial screening, to narrow the number of modes and to focus on the alignment. Then in the spring they will be doing detailed evaluation projecting ridership, estimating capital costs, looking at traffic impacts and parking impacts.

There was one round of public engagement in the fall. They expect to have three more rounds of public engagements, including open houses in January and the spring and then in the summer. They hope to have the project's results and a recommendation for the locally preferred alternative in the summer. That would go to the Minneapolis City Council and then they would make a recommendation to the Metropolitan Council.

St. Paul is doing a streetcar feasibility study right now. They are a few years behind Minneapolis.

6. CCLRT Construction Update

Shoua Lee spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Acting Manager of Public Involvement with the Central Corridor Light Rail Project. She gave a powerpoint overview of where they are at with construction. They will be done with most of the heavy construction at the end of this year and doing most of the system's electrical work next year.

The Central Corridor route is 18 new stations on 11 miles for the entire alignment. A lot of the new stations are ½ mile apart. It will go through most of the big activity centers like the University of Minnesota, the Midway Center, the downtowns and the capitol area. They are also making bus connection improvements by adding additional lines on to the Central Corridor to bring people north and south into the area.

In September they got to 80 percent complete with construction. She showed construction pictures of the Operations Maintenance Facility (OMF). It is the house for all the light rail vehicles. It is located in Lowertown by the Farmers Market.

The Union Depot Station is one of the first stations to be complete. It was completed in July.

There were a total of 4,312 construction workers as of September 30, 2012.

The station layouts are consistent.

The intersection improvements are tactile edges, sidewalk ramps, audible tones, vibrating signal crossing buttons and a visual and audio countdown clock.

Rick Carey spoke to the TAAC committee about the light rail vehicles. He is the project manager for the vehicle procurement. Production is in full swing in the facility in Sacramento. There are 10 vehicles currently in production. Two of the vehicles have been shipped here. They should start to receive two vehicles every two weeks starting in late March 2013 through April 2014. There will be a total of 59 vehicles.

The two vehicles that are here are currently in the testing phase. There is an inspector who is looking over the vehicles every day as they go through different stages of production. They designed the vehicles to meet the environment of the area. They did a lot of corrosion resistant issues. They implemented a lot of the things that were requested. They maintain the minimum of 2¼ inch gap between the vehicle and the platform. They load the vehicle to simulate passenger load and make sure it accelerates and brakes in a safe manner. It meets all of their technical specifications.

He worked with the vendor for a seat that is in the up position. The seat has a 28 pound pull to pull it down so even the elderly could use it. It stays in the up position until someone pulls it down.

Each car has passenger emergency intercoms. They are accessible to anybody in a wheel chair. There is also Braille on those. They are located next to the accessible seating. The height of the button meets ADA requirements. The vehicles are housed at the Hiawatha facility.

7. Member Comment

Chair Biss spoke to the TAAC committee. A few meetings ago Mr. Paulson raised an issue about Amtrak going into the Union Depot because of platform height issues. There was a regulation that came out that had to be a 15 inch high platform. They were able to bypass having to redo that because it was already under construction at 15 inches. They will continue to use either the lifts on the accessible train car or the platform for transferring.

On December 8 they are scheduling the opening of the Union Depot. Metro Transit will start running there on that date. Jefferson Line will start using it in January 2013. The issues Amtrak will have to resolve is track switching to get the train in and out of there.

Imdieke Cross discussed the problems she had with the lifts, the portable ramp and the equipment on Amtrak.

8. Public Comment

None.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.