

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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TRANSPORTATION **A**CCESSIBILITY **A**DVISORY **C**OMMITTEE **M**EETING
Wednesday, December 07, 2011

1. Call to Order

At 12:34 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Ron Biss. **Public present:** Ed Hunter from Hennepin County, Karen Hubescher from H.S.I., and Charlene Doll. **Council staff present:** Pam Steffen, from Metro Transit, Council Chair Susan Haigh, David Russell, Paul Colton, and Alison Coleman.

Members Present: Ron Biss, Kim Kang, Christian Knights, Margot Indieke Cross, Wayne Wittman, Bruce Lattu, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, John Lund, Chad McGuire and Nichole Villavicencio.

Members Absent: James Williams and Diogo Reiss. **Members excused:** John Schatzlein, Jerolyn Pofahl and Willie Daniels.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Indieke Cross moved to approve the agenda. Villavicencio seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Approval of November 2, 2011 Minutes

Lattu moved to approve the minutes. Lund seconded the motion. The motion carried.

4. The Interchange Project Overview

Ed Hunter spoke to the TAAC committee about the Interchange Project located directly adjacent to Target Field, the Ford Center and the Hennepin County Energy Recovery Center. The project includes an expanded public plaza off of the ballpark promenade and adjacent to Fifth Street.

The existing infrastructure right now can't handle the number of passengers waiting to board light rail, commuter rail and bus because there is physically not enough space.

The current plan is to build another light rail platform with vertical circulation components beneath the tracks out to the neighborhoods at Fifth Street and Sixth Street. Central Corridor would load on one platform and Hiawatha on the other. The expanded plaza would tie directly into the ballpark promenade to create a seamless connection and a much larger space to handle large crowds. This upper plaza is currently sized at 66,000 square feet.

There will be a vertical circulation connector at one end and also one at Fifth Street that tucks under and up to the upper plaza. Both of those access points are fully ADA compliant with stairs, escalators and elevators.

The design will allow for Southwest and Bottineau in the future to come in in any configuration. They can both come in at grade or at the elevated level. There will be audible messages on approaching trains that will distinguish between the Blue or Green trains.

Mr. Hunter talked about how the people and the crowds will be handled. The non LRT patrons will have a straight path to the vertical circulation element and they will not cross the LRT lines anymore. Metro Transit has endorsed this design.

The queuing area can be cleared in its entirety and be replenished about every 10 minutes. The city's guidelines for public spaces and plaza spaces have been incorporated into the design and have minimum bench requirements. Part of the desire is to activate the space 365 days a year by promoting development in the area.

Metro Transit will continue to have personnel on site to help customers at the ballpark before and after games. There are also plans to add a permanent ticket vending facility.

There will also be a Metro Transit Police office under the plaza so that during the high volume events there will be a security presence.

Metro Transit is in the process of procuring a design build contractor. The schedule is aggressive because of the delays to the environmental assessment. The design and the construction are wrapped together into one contract and with that method the schedule can be advanced and the project complete by 2014.

There is currently \$23.6 million in committed funds. Some of it is federal and some is state bonds. The current project estimate is \$67.7 million. There is a TIGER Grant application in to DOT for \$25 million and the Council will request more state bonding in the fall.

The B ramp is one of Metro Transit's major bus hubs and it is located at the other end of the ballpark towards center field. There are no plans to change that location for bus operations. There are discussions about whether it is appropriate to have select routes stop at the Interchange facility.

5. Metro Transit Updates

Pam Steffen presented to the TAAC committee about snow removal. There are 60 or so sites identified as frequent boarding locations for people with disabilities. Metro Transit is committed to making sure that those sites are cleared off right away after the transit hubs, etc. Pam handed out a list of stops. This list was developed from the number of people using ADA GoTo cards.

Pam said that if members use a certain bus stop a lot and there is a lot of snow at the shelter and it is not on the list and hasn't been addressed in three days customers should call Metro Transit Customer Service and they will make sure it gets cleaned. Customer Service keeps a list every year of the customer calls identifying stops that need to be cleaned outside of the established list.

Pam said it is difficult to coordinate the plowing of the street with the clearing with the curb cuts. Sometimes the stop is not owned by Metro Transit and it is owned by a property owner. The City of Minneapolis is doing a campaign video about who is responsible for snow shoveling the properties and they are really adamant this year about getting property owners and residents to do their part.

Pam gave an update on Northstar electrical outlets. The director of Northstar estimates that they will have the first one or two cars don in 2011 and it will take another six to eight weeks to get the rest of them done. Pam will follow up with him in February or March. The issue arose because there are electrical outlets on the other levels of the cars except the first level. Pam said they should be close to or adjacent to the wheelchair locations.

Pam also reported on light rail seats and signage. There have been discussions about either installing a spring load mechanism on the seats or having the operator go through and flip up the seats. Neither of

these options are very good. They are considering something consistent with what is on the busses. The front seats and side facing seats have signage that says: “These seats are available for the elderly or the disabled. If necessary these seats flip up.”

Imdieke Cross said she didn’t think the signage would be adequate. She asked to see the actual cost of modifying the seats. If signage is used then there is a five pound weight maximum in code that would apply to lifting the seats. Imdieke Cross said that the real options are to either get the conductor to do them as they walk through at the end of each run to look for lost items and to make sure there are no packages unattended but thinks the spring loaded aspect is the best. **Imdieke Cross made a motion that a change order be produced at this point to require that those additional wheelchair accessible seating locations be truly accessible and that those seats be spring loaded.**

Myhre seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Steffen said it was brought to our attention by a rider of light rail that Metro Transit has a canned message on light rail that says: “Pets are permitted on trains if they are in pet carriers. The only exceptions are service animals assisting customers with disabilities.” The message is played by train operators at the platform if they see someone with an animal. Pam asked members if they felt that that message is offensive in any way.

The committee discussed the issue and Imdieke Cross suggested that Metro Transit just make the announcement that if you have a pet it has to be in a pet carrier and not to mention service animals because service animals are protected by law and individuals who have service animals are protected by law.

Steffen has asked if anybody used a Super Saver magnetic stored value card on a bus and transferred to light rail. Pam said Metro Transit has been trying to convert everybody to the GoTo card. Metro Transit has been using a rail only transfer during the transition that is valid for 12 hours and it is only good as proof of payment on rail. The rail only transfer will be eliminated starting January 1, 2012. Anybody boarding a bus with a Super Saver magnetic fare card transferring will not be able to transfer to rail. The Super Saver magnetic will not be valid proof of payment on rail. Pam said unused Super Saver fare cards can be mailed to Metro Transit Customer Service or brought in and MT can transfer the value to a GoTo card.

Pam said they have a current promotion going where if you buy one weekly pass on a GoTo card you get one free. It started December 5 and it is through December 23.

Pam said that Miller free rides is giving free rides for New Year’s Eve.

There are two promotions for Holidazzle on December 10 and December 17 offering free rides on buses, light rail and the Northstar. You can take the train or bus to the Holidazzle parade and home.

6. Meeting Metropolitan Council Chair

Chair Susan Haigh spoke to the TAAC committee.

The members of the TAAC committee introduced themselves and which districts they represent.

Chair Haigh thanked everyone for serving on the TAAC and mentioned the various things that TAAC has influenced including Central Corridor light rail station improvements, audible information at the stops, the development of Southwest LRT going forward.

Chair Haigh said that it is a priority for her to respond to calls from customers regarding regular route, rail and Metro Mobility with help from staff.

Chair Haigh said she understands that TAAC is the voice of the people and that they are trying to get out in front of issues before they have to get raised on an individual customer complaint level. Chair Haigh asked for specific things or feedback about serving on the committee and member's experience with our transit system.

Members of the committee mentioned some of their interests in transit.

Chair Haigh said during the last legislative session the Met Council received a 40 percent cut in the state general fund appropriation for Metro Transit but that we have tried to respond to those cuts without doing much elimination of route or service. She said that going forward she feels very strongly that transit needs a dedicated source of funding that can help build the 21st Century transit system that the region needs for a good quality of life and for getting people to work.

The Minneapolis Chamber, the St. Paul Chamber, Twin West Chamber have jointly hired someone to advocate on behalf of transit and to work with the Council. There will be a budget request in the state bonding bill this next session for Southwest LRT. The Council is working to build a political constituency to support a greater investment in transit.

7. Member Comment

None.

8. Public Comment

Charlene Doll spoke to the TAAC committee about concerns about pick up times. Sometimes the passengers get missed by the driver and are left behind and stranded. Sometimes the passenger is then listed as a no-show.

Indieke Cross asked to get a report at the next meeting as to the number of no shows verses the number that have been challenged to put some validity behind the statements made before going further.

9. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.