

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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TRANSPORTATION **A**CCESIBILITY **A**DVISORY **C**OMMITTEE **M**EETING
Wednesday, August 1, 2012

1. Call to Order

At 12:35 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Ron Biss. **Public present:** Karen Hubescher from H.S.I., Claudia Fuglie, Colin Stemper, Zach Ellingson, Lisa Hagerich, Becky Hesselmeier, Carlissa Ubersox, Rob Hobson, Scott Koppendrayer and Kevin Cox. **Council staff present:** Pam Steffen, John Siqveland and Steve McLaird from Metro Transit, David Russell, Andy Streasick, Paul Colton and Alison Coleman.

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

2. Approval of the Agenda

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

3. Approval of June 6, 2012 Minutes

Paulsen moved to approve the minutes. Villavicencio seconded the motion. The motion carried.

4. Metro Transit Website Accessibility

John Siqveland spoke to the TAAC committee. The tape missed the first 45 minutes of the meeting.

5. Metro Transit Driver Training

Steve McLaird spoke to the TAAC committee. Metro Transit has about 135 routes. They requested some grant money to hire a consultant to help them identify the stops and to work on the Geocode. It is a very large project. He is putting together a proposal and the bid acceptance should be near the end of this year. They will probably spend most of 2013 doing one route at a time and go through the system and Geocode test it and then start working on it. It will take well over a year to go through the system and get every route Geocoded and ready to go for the enunciators.

The responsibility of the bus operator has greatly increased. They added the GoTo card and they have the radios on there. The fare medium and the structure and the questions that come and the congestion that is here. It all adds to people asking questions. It takes a special person to multi task and still drive the bus safely.

If the driver doesn't call out the stops it isn't a training issue. They all should know by now that they have to do it. McLaird speaks to the drivers when they are hired. There are about 1420 operators. He hasn't talked to every operator. They hire between 100 and 150 new operators per year. McLaird spent

the last three to four years having a conversation with every operator that comes into the system so that if something comes to him in a grievance he can tell the operator that they had a conversation about this before.

When a person gets on the bus and they want to get off at a specific spot they should tell the operator where they want to get off and the operator should call off the stop. If the operator doesn't call the stops a passenger should call the customer service department. When there is a complaint the manager can pull up a video of the inside of the bus. The assistant garage managers handle the discipline part of it. The complaint would go to the assistant manager. Depending on the situation, the manager may look at the video or just talk to the operator.

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. The Customer Service Department is open Monday through Friday, 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. People can contact the Customer Service Department by phone 612-373-3333, option 3. Transit Information is option 2. After hours the Transit Information Center would be happy to take feedback. They don't research any of the feedback. They take the feedback and forward it to the Customer Service Department. Generally speaking a live agent is available from 6:30 a.m. until 9:00 p.m. On the website there is contact us link on every page. People can use the website to contact the Customer Service Department any time of day or night. There is an agency goal to respond to customers within three to seven business days by email or by phone.

Every Friday the garage managers have a discussion with the operators to help them remember to call out the streets.

6. State Fair Park and Ride and Fare Structure Study

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee about the State Fair park and rides. There has been a few changes. They will not be servicing Northtown but will be at the Blaine Sports Center. They offer over 1,000 parking spaces there and they are all contained in one area. They won't be serving Southdale this year. They are going to continue to do the Mall of America and will have service from Best Buy on the weekends. Dunwoody is just going to be on weekends. They always increase the buses on Route 3.

The private contract is handled with the State Fair. They do the park and ride lots that are closer to the State Fair. They are the free shuttles. Lorenz does those. Metro Transit has the second and third ring suburbs along with their regular route service.

Paulsen stated that the State Fair issues should be addressed in May or June instead of August.

Steffen stated that Metro Transit operates from the suburbs and the Route 3, the 84 and the 960. They have nothing to do with the private providers. They have no control over them. That is solely done by the Minnesota State Fair.

Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee about the Fare Structure Study. For the past three years Steffen and other directors from Metro Transit and some Council staff have been meeting about the fares, the fare structure and the fare policies. Some of the policies have been hard to understand. Within the past few months Council member Elkins has convened a stakeholders group that consists of many people in the area. Biss is on the group from TAAC. It all came together about three weeks ago to talk about fares. The role of the stakeholder group is to provide guidance and feedback related to any possible fare policy changes. There are guiding principles that the group is going by.

This group is not about lowering or raising fares. It is about how they can provide a simple fare structure with simple policies that everybody is aware of and how it can be equitable for everyone. It is about eliminating the peak verses the off peak. It is making things simpler. Perhaps local buses should

be one price and express buses should be another price. Farther out buses should be another price. They will be getting external feedback from other cities and counties. It also includes senior's fares.

They expect to meet two or three more times. They will conclude the stakeholder group and have all of the feedback together by December. The main group, the fare policy committee that meets within Metro Transit and the regional group will combine together to take a look at the feedback to see how they can make some changes to our system and our policy.

By next July they would like to launch something new.

Metro Transit does have customer advocates who go to community centers and teach the elderly how to ride.

Wittman asked about free bus service for seniors.

7. Metro Mobility Two Way Radio

Paul Colton spoke to the TAAC committee. They want Metro Mobility to reduce the amount of air time they use using the emergency radio system. Metro Mobility is on the system since 2002. The Council and Metro Transit have been on it since the late 1990's. They are one of the original partners with MnDOT on the emergency radio system. As it has evolved the board members and the different committee members have said they should look at it for emergency services and do something else with non emergency types of services that need a communication system.

Metro Mobility's goal is to try to reduce their air time. They hired a consultant in May to help give them some direction on options that might help them bring down the air time. They identified five areas. The one they are vetting is the move to automated vehicle locators and mobile data computers on the bus. Most of the information will go through data verses voice. If a ride is cancelled it shows up on the computer screen on the bus. The dispatcher sends it that way.

Working with our reservationists and dispatching vendor on Trapeze software, they have indicated that other areas that have the systems installed have reduced voice air time by as much as 75 percent. This should help provide better and more efficient service.

They need to have redundancies in the system because now they are more reliant on technology, they need to make sure that if the system goes down they can bring it right back up.

Some of the other options they raised with the board is the opportunity to do an overlay system, which would be millions of dollars. If they feel that Metro Mobility is using up too much air time based on the growth of bringing in others into this emergency system, then that needs to be an option they all need to work at.

Some other options are to find additional channels that are out there. It is hard to find channels and when they do become available they get snatched up very quickly. If they could find a channel or two it would help. They already have a very good system in place and by adding a couple of more channels it would help expand that.

The two primary issues that they do have, and they are working with a technical operating committee of the MESP is that they have periphery towers in the counties like Anoka County, Western Hennepin County, Carver and Scott Counties, Dakota County where they came into the system late, within the last five years. Nobody told them that Metro Mobility is a roaming system because of the size of the geographic area. They will be using some of their towers.

It has been a negative experience to see how much air time Metro Mobility uses on their towers. There are concerns when there are busy signals. The busy signals are only from about a second to a fraction of a second. They put a proposal for Metro Mobility together with benchmarks for them to reduce their air time. Metro Mobility believes they can come close to meeting those benchmarks and eventually exceed those benchmarks once they implement a technological solution. The relationship with the technical operating committee is improving as they talk through those issues and the different options. They are working hard to resolve these issues. They will update Chair Biss with future updates on their projects.

Metro Mobility has a meeting with Trapeze in mid-August. They are going to implement a new IVR system (a phone push system or receiving system). It will allow them, with the AVL system, to contact the passenger before the ride and reminds them of their ride and asks them if they want to cancel the ride. Metro Transit is already using this system.

Metro Mobility is in the process of putting together a write up to hire a consultant, a project manager to run the IVR project and the electronic fare project. That will happen this fall. They hope to get under contract with Trapeze and whatever vendor they select for the mobile data computers by the end of the fourth quarter and begin a pilot project with Transit Team in the West Metro in the first quarter of 2013. From there they would move to First Transit, get them outfitted and up and running on the second and third quarter of 2013, in the end when they get through with the counties, they will be fully functional and operational sometime in the middle of 2014.

8. Sub Committee Reports

Chad McGuire spoke to the TAAC committee about the West Bank Construction Correspondence Committee. Heavy construction will finish on the West Bank very soon. The area is still torn up because of other construction. The West Bank CCC has had their final meeting.

Kim Kang spoke to the TAAC committee about Southwest. A lot of members have attended this meeting. There is close to 80 or 90 people at this meeting. Everybody on the committee was supposed to write down five or six priorities. Kang listed accessibility, station designs, ongoing maintenance and safety for people in wheelchairs, snow off of the tracks and platform gaps. They placed everybody's suggestions in a five page document. The last round was to vote on five of those. The meeting will be next week to talk about what was voted on.

Chair Biss attended a board meeting on University Avenue. He said that a lot of what the TAAC advocated for was there. He said that the light changes too soon to get across the street.

9. Member Comment

Paulsen spoke about the tour the TAAC committee took in June of the Union Depot. He said that one of the entrances was ADA compliant (the West side) and the other one was not compliant (the East side). He asked if that could be corrected. The automatic buttons for the doors are three inches too high or three inches too low. That also needs to be addressed.

Chair Biss said that the building is only required to have one accessible entrance. They would have signage to say where the accessible entrance is.

Andy Streasick addressed the issue of a person getting dropped of by Metro Mobility at a park. The passenger can talk to Streasick and he can work it out for them.

10. Public Comment

None.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.