

# **Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, April 2, 2014

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Ron Biss, Kjensmo Walker, Margot Imdieke Cross, Bob Anderson, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, Mark Hoisser, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Colin Stemper, Nichole Villavicencio and Patty Thorsen.

**Committee Members Absent:** none.

**Committee Members Excused:** John Schatzlein and James Williams

**Council Staff Present:** David Russell, Andy Streasick, Leslie Kandaras, Pam Steffen (MT), Adam Mehl (MT), John Howley (MT), Ben Rajkowski (MT) and Claire Schleichert from the Office of Equal Opportunity.

**Public Present:** Claudia Fugile, Rosalina Sampson and La Shella Sims from MICAH and George Fantuazza from the Interchange Project.

## **CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Biss called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, April 2, 2014.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

It was moved by Anderson, seconded by Lund to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by McGuire, seconded by Stemper to approve the minutes of the March 5, 2014 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

## **INFORMATION & BUSINESS**

### **1. Legislative Update**

Lesley Kandaras spoke to the TAAC Committee. The major policy deadlines have passed. Bills with a policy impact that have not made it through their various committee stops are dead unless rules are changed to bring them back to life. The focus has started to narrow at the Legislature on those remaining policy bills. Especially on those mini finance issues that are still out there to be resolved. Over the last few weeks the Legislature has been working on various tax bills. They passed one omnibus tax bill a couple of weeks back that included the Metropolitan Council's Regional Transit Capital Bonding Request. They are continuing to look at further tax changes as well as a supplemental appropriation bill and bonding bills.

At this point the House and Senate have taken some action to put together a supplemental appropriations bill. In the House, they have about a \$50 million transportation bill that is for all transportation statewide. Of that \$50 million, about 10.4 million would go to the Metropolitan Council. Of that 10.4 million a little over \$10 million would be for transitway capital expansion for improving bus shelters and providing free transit rides on general election days. The remaining \$250,000 would be allocated to the suburban transit providers. That is in the House. It has gone all the way to the Ways and Means Committee where it is going to be rolled into a broader supplemental budget bill that covers all the committee's bills.

The Senate is a couple of steps behind that. Monday, the Senate Transportation Public Safety Committee met to approve their supplemental finance bill and that also includes funding for the Metropolitan Council. There is about \$18.85 million that would go to the Metropolitan Council and the suburban transit providers. About \$14.5 million of that would go to the Council for transitway expansion. The other \$4.35 million would go to the suburban transit providers.

Also on Monday the committee adopted language related to this committee (TAAC) and light rail vehicle procurement standards. Margot, Colin and others have been working with Metro Transit on that language. The Council is supportive of that amendment and how that has shaped up. That is currently part of that bill. That bill will move to the full Finance Committee then ultimately to the Senate floor.

Yesterday, the House Capital Investment Committee released their bonding bills. This year they have both their general bonding bill with general obligations funds as well as a supplemental general fund bill that will invest \$125 million of general fund money into capital projects. The Metropolitan Council has funding in both of those bills. That includes over \$14 million to the Metropolitan Council for transitway improvement.

A TAAC policy bill made it to the House and Senate floor. It hasn't been taken up for action. That is the TAAC Purview Expansion Bill. In statute TAAC is set up to advise on all transit modes. Take it out of that piece of statute that is about special transportation and align the statute with the way the committee is operating today. They haven't heard when the House and Senate will bring those bills on to the floor.

Chair Biss said they are Senate File 2268 and House File 2751.

In January, Governor Dayton released his recommendation, which was \$10 million for the A-Line, which was the Snelling Bus Rapid Transit Route and \$7 million for the Metro Orange Line to build a station at Lake Street and I-35. Those are the priorities of the Council as well. The way the language is written in both these various bills is the money would be for the existing Transportation Policy Plan. Right now we would follow the Governor's recommendation in terms of how that is prioritized.

In the House, Representative Masin and in the Senate, Senator Carlson introduced companion bills that related to light rail vehicle standards. It had a few different components to it including a role for TAAC to both be consulted and approve light rail vehicle standards. It had some specific standards written into the bill as minimum criteria for future light rail vehicle purchases. It also required the Council to conduct a study determining the cost of retrofitting the vehicles that have been procured but don't meet the standard. The language has been amended in both the House and Senate. The Council is supportive of the amended language.

Indieke Cross said the amended language does a lot of things. It removes the approval or veto power of TAAC. So it says that for future design that TAAC will be involved but it will be a review process but not an approval process. The design criteria is in place and is the heart of the bill. It will require two dedicated wheelchair spaces and companion spaces in all future orders. It removed the report back to the legislature indicating what is going to be done with the current stock, the 59 current vehicles, but the Met Council has made a promise that they will be fixed. We are working through that negotiation now. We are looking at making some changes regarding the removal of the bench seat and the stability bar. We are looking at providing at least one companion seat, maybe more. We are negotiating on that now for the existing 59. But for all future orders the minimum design standards are in place.

## **2. Interchange Project/Target Field Transit Station Update**

George Fantuazza spoke to the TAAC Committee. He is an architect that has been working on the Interchange for four years. He works with Ed Hunter to deliver the project to Hennepin County. They are almost finished with the project. The signage for loading the trains will be up to Metro Transit. They are putting snow melt on all of the plaza. They are using waste heat from the garbage plant burning process to melt snow and ice from the plaza, walkways, loading platforms, paths and stairs. The snow will melt and that water will be put back into the plant to be reused by the Mississippi Watershed Management Organization, which is one of the funding partners.

It is a parking ramp, plaza, office building, LRT station, gathering space and amphitheater. The plaza has a green lawn with a video screen where there could be movie nights, community concerts, pre-game events, etc. The project has three elevators. It is a typical LRT station. All of the shelters are in place with a wind shield and heaters. They are under a 300 foot aluminum roof structure. If you are westbound you would go to the north platform. If you are eastbound you would go to the south platform.

In the cascade seating area the first row is accessible seating and companion seating.

The 2030 Council Regional Plan has a two hub process. One is the Union Depot and the other is the Interchange at the Target Field Station. The reason for the Interchange is that it is at the northwest corner of the ballpark. The Northstar starts there. At the time, Hiawatha ended there. It was inadequate to get people on

the trains. Now all pedestrians never have to cross train tracks. Cars are kept separate. The project supports redevelopment. They are going to be the current endpoint for the Green Line. All trains will come to this station. They built storage tracks for train storage during an event. They have accessible loading areas for the trains. When other trains come on line they will be able to plug in to the system without shutting anything down. It will be operational. Right now there are 238 trains in downtown Minneapolis, arrivals and departures. With the Central Corridor Green Line that will double. There will be trains every 3½ minutes during rush hour. The project costs \$79.3 million. It came from many different funds.

### **3. ADA Circular C 4710.1 Draft**

Kjensmo Walker spoke to the TAAC Committee. This is a document that the FTA is seeking public comment on. She will talk about the FTA circular, organization of the circular, summarize the contents, why the FTA is seeking comments and some recommendations that Walker has.

They have released a draft: Chapter 4, Vehicle acquisition has been published in October 2012. Included in this draft are chapters 1, 2, 5 and 8. In future drafts they will talk about chapters 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11 and 12.

The introduction (Chapter 1) talks about the goals of the circular, which are to help transit agencies meet their obligations by outlining the regulations, describing good practices and presenting the information in an easy-to-use format.

The circular does not alter, amend, supersede or otherwise affect the DOT ADA regulations themselves or replace or reduce the need for detailed information in the regulations. The circular addresses public transit agencies that have contract service or subcontract service. The Anoka Traveler has subcontract service with Metro Mobility and subcontracts some of their service with MV. These contractors and subcontractors, while they are not necessarily a FTA grantee, they still apply under these FTA rules. Metro Mobility has to make sure of compliance with their contractors and subcontractors.

Chapter 2 talks about non discrimination. It talks about the rights and responsibilities of all people with disabilities and without disabilities. It would be discriminating to prohibit a person with a disability from serving as a PCA for another person with a disability. Transit agencies cannot prohibit riders from riding if they perceive to smell bad or take too long to board the bus. It is important that individuals assess their own level of risk. All individuals have the right to decide the level of risk they are willing to take to travel independently. Transit agencies cannot require an individual with a disability to use designated priority seats, but the agency must make priority seating available.

Transit agencies may refuse service to an individual with disabilities because that individual engages in violent, seriously disruptive, or illegal conduct. Metro Mobility does not permanently ban anyone from their service because of these things. An individual must have the opportunity to correct the situation and resume service.

Transit agencies must allow riders who use wheelchairs to board and ride accessible vehicles. Transit agencies may not require specific features as a condition of transportation. Agencies may not deny service based on the condition of the mobility device. Where necessary or upon request, drivers must assist riders who use manual wheelchairs on and off lift platforms, and/or up and down ramps. Drivers are not required to assume the controls of power wheelchairs. Lifts and elevators must be operational at all times. When a feature is not working, transit agencies must take reasonable steps to accommodate individuals with disabilities who would otherwise use the feature until it has been repaired. If a rider wants to use a lift the driver must honor that request.

Light rail and rapid rail cars must provide at least two areas for users of mobility aids, but designated securement areas are not required. Transit agencies cannot refuse service on the ground that their wheelchair cannot be secured or restrained satisfactorily. Drivers are to do the best they can to secure wheelchairs with the available securement system. The drivers are required to be courteous and respectful to the riders.

Transit agencies must permit service animals. Transit agencies must make information available to individuals with disabilities concerning transportation services.

Chapter 8 addresses paratransit service. Transit agencies must provide service comparable to the level of service provided to individuals without disabilities who use the fixed route system. It addresses service area, response time, fares, operating without regard to trip purpose, hours and days of service and absence of capacity constraints.

The transit agency shall take all practicable steps to prevent political boundaries from becoming barriers to the travel of individuals with disabilities. These include but are not limited to coordination plans, reciprocity agreements and memoranda of understanding. In the next contract period, these political boundaries are going to be eliminated. Every seat on Metro Mobility will be a one seat ride. The people who do have to have a two seat ride are less than one percent of all trips.

When riders call to reserve a trip, they may request a departure time or an arrival time. The pickup window should be 30 minutes. The agency may not require an individual to schedule a trip more than one hour after or before the individuals' desired departure time. Once you have made the reservation it cannot be changed. The prioritization of one trip over another (example work over shopping) is prohibited. When reservationists accept trip requests, they may not ask riders to disclose the purpose of their trip.

There are fare-free zones. This is something they are working on with Nicollet Mall. The  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile rule applies in a fare-free zone. If you go from Target field to the old Metrodome site those are both  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile from Nicollet Mall. But it is not in the free ride corridor. The fare free zone needs to be a comparable trip.

The paratransit provider may charge up to twice the full, non-discounted fixed route fare for each one way trip on complementary paratransit. PCA's accompanying paratransit riders may not be charged a fare but companion riders may be charged the same fare as the individual with a disability.

The FTA seeks comments on these four chapters: the scope and content, areas which need more clarification or explanation, topics that are overlooked and areas where regulatory requirements are not clearly distinguished. The FTA is also seeking examples of local practices that have proven effective. They are also looking for suggestions on which issues should be addressed in future chapters.

Locally, the transit agency and advocates are working through difficult issues: priority seating for light rail vehicles, preventing political boundaries from becoming barriers to the travel of individuals with disabilities and defining comparable free-fare zone for trips to Nicollet Mall.

Comments should be addressed to the FTA. The comment period ends April 21. You can go to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov) and search FTA 2014-0003 and follow online instructions.

#### **4. Metro Transit Website Redesign**

Adam Mehl spoke to the TAAC Committee. He works as a Market Development Specialist at Metro Transit. He has been redesigning Metro Transit's website. They are doing some testing on usability with screen readers and visually impaired folks. They are going to be installing Google Search. He recommends that people who use screen readers go to the mobile site which is [www.metrotransit.org/mobile](http://www.metrotransit.org/mobile). It is very different from the desktop site. It is much more text heavy, which is good for a screen reader but it is also a negative in that much of the information that is on the desktop site is not available on the mobile site. Meaning that certain events and news and information are hard to find if someone is using the screen reader. For folks that are not using a screen reader that is a challenge because if they are looking on their mobile device they don't have that same information. If they are on Facebook and they click through on a post it will take them to a mobile site which won't actually let them get to the link that they actually clicked on because the mobile site is a totally different site than metrotransit.org. The mobile site is going to be done away with. They moved to responsive design. So that means that people with screen readers will be able to access the full site now and be able to access all of the information pages that are available on the desktop on a mobile site via screen reader. They are working with their developers to make sure the screen readers work well. They did some testing yesterday. They signed up for a tool that is called Site Improve that scans the site every five days for issues. That includes broken links, misspellings and runs a screen reader test that highlights issues that are popping up that they are not aware of. The Trip Planner is run by Trapeze.

#### **5. Rider Alerts**

John Howley and Ben Rajkowski spoke to the TAAC Committee. They work for Metro Transit in the Transit Information department. They have a new application they are testing called Rider Alerts. It will deliver detour and service alert information more efficiently to customers. You can go to the Metro Transit website and plan your trip and the detours will be attached to the Trip Planner. You can also call the transit information center and speak to a representative. You subscribe to your route. You can choose to receive detour information and

service disruption information by text or email. The information automatically gets pushed to you every 15 minutes as it is initiated.

You create an account by clicking on the “Create an Account” link in the top right side of the web page. You will be asked to supply a user name, email address and set up a password. Then click on “Create an Account”. Then you can login into the “My Metro Transit” link that will be next to the welcome box on the upper right side of the screen. When you click on to the “My Metro Transit” link there is a dashboard where you can set up My Routes and Rider Alerts. There is a box there. When you get there, you will see an add button and a drop down button with all the routes that they have. If you want to sign up for rider alerts click on “add”. Right below that is get email alerts or texts. Once you do that you will be brought to a screen to give your information. You can choose email or text. You will be sent a link and you click on the link to get your information. If you don’t have a smart phone the best way is to get the information by email. If you choose text, you will need to give them your phone number and phone provider. You click update and then you go back to your dashboard and there you choose a route(s). Any alerts that are connected to those routes will be sent to you via email or text.

### **MEMBER COMMENT**

None.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

Alison Coleman

Recording Secretary