

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

Wednesday, May 7, 2014

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

**Committee Members Absent:** Mark Hoisser

**Committee Members Excused:** None.

**Council Staff Present:** Mary Karlsson, Jonathan Ehrlich, Christine Gabriel, Andy Streasick, Andrew Krueger, Sheila Brown-Williams and Alison Coleman. Katie Roth and Pam Steffen from Metro Transit and Clare Schleichert from Office of Equal Opportunity.

**Public Present:** Claudia Fugile, Rosalina Sampson and La Shella Sims from MICAH.

## **CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Biss called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:36 p.m. on Wednesday, May 07, 2014.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

It was moved by Paulsen, seconded by Stemper to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Lund, seconded by Williams to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2014 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

## **INFORMATION & BUSINESS**

1. **Legislative Update** – This item was not presented.

### **2. Arterial BRT Project Update**

Katie Roth spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the project manager for Metro Transit's Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Program. The first line of that program, which is currently in design, is going to be the A Line. It is on Snelling Avenue and Ford Parkway and 46<sup>th</sup> Street. They are targeting a late 2015 opening for that project. After that they are looking at opening Arterial Bus Rapid Transit on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street in late 2016.

What makes this different from bus? BRT would be up to 25 percent faster than local bus service – without making major changes to the street. Instead of stopping every 1/8 of a mile, stations would be sited about every 1/2 mile. The A Line (BRT) would become the primary route in the corridor, with increased service on evenings and weekends. The A Line would run every 10 minutes and the Route 84 would run every 30 minutes. The Route 84 would also serve off-corridor branches. The BRT will have a station at Snelling and University.

Another way BRT will be different is pre-boarding fare payment much like we have on light rail. Customers will either purchase a ticket at the vending machine at the station with cash or a credit card or tap a Go-To card to pay fares. Metro Transit Police will conduct random on board fare inspections to check for fare compliance.

Another difference is curb extensions at stations. The curb extension provides space for a BRT station and eliminates side-to-side weaving. This keeps the sidewalk fully intact. They are looking at traffic signal priority. During rush hours today, local buses spend about 25 percent of their scheduled time stopped at red lights. With transit signal priority buses can "ask" traffic signals for early or extended green lights to

help buses keep moving. The BRT stops at the far side of the intersection, progressing through the signal before stopping to board passengers.

The A Line itself is about a 10 mile corridor. It starts at Rosedale Transit Center and goes down Snelling Avenue to Ford Parkway. Then turning on Ford Parkway and crosses the Mississippi River and ends at the 46<sup>th</sup> Street Station on the Metro Blue Line. There are about 20 stations planned as part of the project. Construction will happen entirely in the 2015 construction season. They are targeting the line opening for revenue service in the fourth quarter of 2015.

In terms of what the project costs and where the funding is coming from, the project costs \$25 million. About half goes to the stations and technology. About \$4 million goes to design and engineering. About \$7 million goes to the BRT vehicles and about \$1 million goes to transit signal priority. To date they have identified \$15 million of the \$25 million of the project budget. The remaining \$10 million will be going through the bonding bill process at the legislature.

There has been a series of open houses in July 2013, January 2014 and in May 2014 there will be broad outreach and open houses.

She showed what the shelters will look like. Depending on the size of the station, there will be a small shelter, medium shelter or large shelter. They will be designed to be expanded if necessary. All of the parts will be interchangeable. There will be different configurations at each site. The small shelter is 5 feet by 12 feet. It is similar in size to a bus shelter today.

Adjacent to the shelter will be the ticket machines and a fare validator. There will be a clearly marked destination sign of where the service will take you once you leave that place. There will be push button heaters from the roof and much better lighting at these stations. There will be a station marker called a pylon, at all of these stations. It will have the station name, security cameras, real-time "Next Bus" information signage on a screen and annunciator that will be able to speak the information displayed on the screen. There will also be an emergency phone, bike racks, trash receptacle and a bench at the stations. The emergency phone will be in view of the cameras. In the shelters themselves, there will be lean rails. The benches will be outside the shelters. They are budgeting for a full removal of snow from these stations, just like they do with the light rail stations.

Imdieke Cross said she would like to make a motion to go on record in support of a small bench inside the shelters under the heaters. Chair Biss added that it should have a priority seating sign similar to what is on the trains and buses. Paulsen seconded the motion. Walker opposed. **The motion carried.**

Imdieke Cross asked for seating inside the medium and large shelters as well as the small shelters.

She showed a typical bumpout station. They will be extending the curb. The sidewalk is held constant. It is not encroached upon by the shelter or any of the platform space. The platform goes into the space in the roadway that is currently allocated to parking. The station itself fits into that bumpout space. At most locations, local Route 84 and the A Line will both use the same platform. There will be signage as to which location on the platform each bus is boarded. In some cases they will not be able to build a bumpout station. It would be a curbside station.

Currently the Route 84 runs to the 46<sup>th</sup> Street Station at Gate E, which is at the South end of the bus turnaround there. BRT would be moving into the front gates of the station or Gate A, which lines up with the entrance to the platform on the north side of the station. It would have its own gate. It would be marked very similar to the rest of these stations like having the signage and real time information. There is a shared shelter for all of the buses there. It would be in front of the platform to make easy connections to light rail at that space.

The vending machine, the validator and the emergency phone will be within the ADA required height range. MnDOT has been working closely with them to make sure the construction schedules are in sync and constructing everything at the same time. MnDOT is going to be constructing eight of the station platforms that are within their project limits.

For the A Line, the first BRT line on Snelling Avenue, they will be using 40 foot vehicles. They will be using a mix of both 40 foot and 60 foot vehicles as they build out this system. These buses will have a different paint scheme. They will have a brighter overhead sign. The front door will be about the same width. The ramp will continue to be deployed in the flip fashion like it is on our 40 foot buses today. The rear door is

the standard width but we are exploring wider rear doors as well. They are working with the seating configuration inside the bus. If they are going to widen the back door they could be taking away from seating. Metro Transit is looking at various seating arrangements.

The on board “next stop” signs and automated announcements would be a standard feature on the BRT vehicles. They would be pre recording the announcements similarly like they do on light rail.

They are exploring the potential for a rear facing passive mobility device restraint. The passenger would be able to board the bus and secure one’s self without driver assistance. The user would back into a padded back that would be mounted facing the rear of the vehicle and then would be able to bring down an arm to secure the side-to-side motion. This would be optional. There still would be forward facing four point tie down. They are interested in testing this feature on a bus. They are also looking at options for a rear door ramp.

They have four open houses on the concept plan in May. The comments will be assembled at the end of May and then presented as a recommended plan to the Met Council as an action to define what that exact project scope is going forward. That is the time they would be asking the Council to make final decisions about stations at various intersections, so they can move into final design. They would be awarding the construction contract in March of 2015 and in construction during the spring and fall of 2015. They would be open for service in the fourth quarter of 2015.

### **3. 2040 Transportation Policy Plan Update**

Mary Karlsson, Jonathan Ehrlich and Christine Gabriel spoke to the TAAC committee. They will be presenting an update on the status on developing the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP), which is the region’s long range transportation plan. It contains both the policies that govern and the development of transportation in this region as well as the investment plan. They will cover part one of the TPP. Thrive MSP 2040 is the region’s metropolitan development guide. It governs the development in the region and all of the four system plans, being Transportation and Aviation, Wastewater, Parks, and Housing. That is scheduled for adoption at the end of this month.

Starting this month they will start the public comment process for the TPP. They have the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) that advises the Metropolitan Council. So they have to start the TPP with the TAB process before it comes out for public comment. It takes several months to get through the internal process. They expect to have the document out for public comment from July 23 through September 18 of this year. They will take October through November to make revisions based on public comment with final adoption in December of this year.

Ehrlich addressed the concepts of equity and environmental justice. There are two pieces of background that they are bringing together. The background in federal law and federal regulations, both from the civil rights act and both from executive orders regarding environmental justice that are predominantly aimed at both preventing discrimination and preventing disproportionately high and adverse human health or environmental effects of its programs, policies and activities on minority populations and low-income populations.

Thrive MSP 2040 goes beyond that and connects all residents to opportunity and creates viable housing and transportation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of growth and change. First they identify who they are talking about (populations of color and households in poverty). They identify those areas that are greater than the regional average.

Part two is looking at the strategies that are written in the plan and identifying those that specifically advance equity in the region. They did an analysis and identified six categories of strategies that do that. Public engagement, healthy and cohesive communities, transit and pedestrian safety, provision of options, focus on preservation and transit service planning.

They looked at the highway and transit investments. The next steps are a public engagement plan, disparities studies: preservation and maintenance spending, safety outcomes, develop tools for use of equity as prioritization factor (Regional Solicitation), and advance role of transportation in achieving equity by collaboration with public, private and non-profit partners.

Gabriel addressed the key changes to the goals and objectives. This process has been ongoing and they have met with various committees, working groups, the public and staff to refine these goals and objectives.

They are adding a section at the beginning of this plan called "How to use this plan". It is a tiered approach to information. If you want a brief overall view of this system to go to part one. For more detail go to part two. If you want more detail go to part three or the Appendix.

Part one is the big story of transportation in the region and how it has evolved over the last 10 years. They summarize key elements of Parts two and three. They provide a context and direction that relates back to Thrive and why they are using the language they are using and setting out the goals and objectives that they have.

There is some new content to the Part 1 Changes. They added two new challenges to the Challenges and Opportunities:

1. Land use and development patterns impact our stewardship of the transportation system.
9. Technology advancements have some disruptive effects on the transportation system.

Those two came about as a result of conversations that they had with the committees, with the public and amongst the staff as well. They go on to describe the transportation relationship to Thrive MSP 2040 community designations and what is the response to the community designations. There is a summary of investment prioritization factors, investment plan summaries and Equity and Environmental justice.

Other changes that are still to come. They are going to add greater detail for other modes, including bicycle and pedestrian. This plan differs from the last plan in that there is a lot more detail about the bike/ped element of the system. That is one issue that has come up in the public meetings quite a lot.

Page 62 contains a table that includes the full summary of planned transportation investments, as identified in this transportation plan. It is called the Regional Transportation Planned Investment Summary. It is what they expect the revenues to be. The Increased Revenue Scenario that is if they had additional funding that is what their priorities would be. From now to 2040 based on what they think their revenues would be they would be spending \$11 billion on highways, \$31 billion on transit and \$42 billion on the local transportation system (sidewalks, trails and local streets). Most of the transit system uses the road system.

They have 52 strategies that support the six goals and 22 objectives that they have. One of the strategies is that the Council will work with other regional transportation partners to ensure that they have adequate funding to advocate for the funding in the region. Putting that into action is state policy.

#### **4. Metro Mobility Restructuring Plan**

Andrew Krueger spoke to the TAAC committee. They came to TAAC in November to talk about the first ever Civil Rights audit that was done on the Metro Mobility service. There were 37 deficiencies that were cited by the Federal Transit Administration. Most of them were minor language changes that needed to be made to the service guide or letters. There are three that are major and needs changes to how Metro Mobility operates. The first one is to change the No Show Policy. The second one is to change the 90 minute on-board time. The third one is the unattended transfers. That one leads to 2015 service area alignment to deal with the unattended transfers.

##### **a. New No Show Policy**

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. According to the feds, each Metro Mobility trip or each ADA paratransit trip is a separate civil right.

The current practice of automatically cancelling a return trip in the case of a no show is non compliant. Metro Mobility can no longer cancel a return trip. They are going to put out a newsletter to every active rider via email and phone messages, rider alerts, sending out letters to the agencies. They are looking at placing an article in Access Press. For cancels at the door the driver can ask the person if they want to cancel the return trip at that time. They are talking to providers to see how they can make that work best. They are going to do everything they can to avoid sending that return bus. When they are putting together letters they will include County Human Services Offices for every county that has Metro Mobility service.

What they are calling a no show has to be modified. The feds told the Metro Mobility staff that the definition of a no show is overly broad and constitutes double-jeopardy. Two things are counted as a no show: if the bus shows up to pick up a customer and they don't have their fare, and they are not transported as a result of that, it is currently being coded as a cancel at the door. If they don't transport someone as a result of not having a photo ID, that is called a cancel at the door. They can refuse transport but cannot call that a no show. There are regular riders who don't pay for their return rides. The general rule is to not leave anyone stranded. Metro Mobility will eventually send out a letter saying that since they regularly don't pay their provider, they will be denied transport until they pay what they owe, even if it is a return trip.

The suspension that Metro Mobility has currently been doing has been determined by the feds to be unreasonable or overly harsh. The feds have also advised that the warning and suspension letters should not be worded in an overly harsh or agitating fashion. You get three no shows in a rolling 30 day period. That is going to generate a warning letter that says if you get a fourth one, you are going to be suspended for 30 days. If you get a fourth one, that is going to start a suspension. The first two of those suspensions that you earn in a rolling 365 day period are 30 days a piece. If you get suspended twice in a year, those are both 30 day suspensions. If you do a third suspension in that period you go up to 45 days, fourth one is 60 days and the fifth one is 90 days. We have been told by the feds to change this. There will be a 30 day amnesty period after initiating the change.

The first suspension will be two weeks or 14 days. The second suspension will be 28 days. The next one will be 42 days. They will cap it at that. Right now people get two week notice of suspension. They are going to up that to 21 days. The feds want them to base the suspension on the percentage of no shows, not the amount of no shows. The new process is if the customer no shows four or more trips in a 30 day period and more than four percent of their scheduled trips they get a suspension.

The current process is the customer service specialist initiates the suspension and sends the letter. If the customer wants to question the suspension he/she calls the customer service specialist. They can have Andy or Andrew pull the call to see if they tried to cancel the ride. If the manager cannot find the call, the customer can have a no show appeal with an independent panel. The feds say they can't do it that way.

Now the contract providers will send out the letters. It is their staff's responsibility to do the initial investigation. Then the customer can call the customer service specialist. The Metro Mobility staff can then investigate the situation. If they cannot reach a resolution then it will still go to the independent panel. Myhre moved to accept the new no show policy. Anderson seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

#### **b. Maximum Time on Board**

The maximum on board time current rule is the ride cannot exceed 90 minutes. The federal guidance is the maximum on board time must be comparable to regular route service. Ninety percent of the trips are under 15 miles. The solution is one mile is up to 34 minutes, five miles is up to 50 minutes, 10 miles is up to 70 minutes and 15 miles is up to 90 minutes. As a result of this change 90 percent of the rides will have a shorter maximum on board time. The max time will be a total one way trip. That will also include transfers. The maximum sum total for a transfer ride would be 150 minutes or less. The providers must coordinate with each other to make sure the ride is less than 150 minutes. Williams moved to accept the new Maximum Time on Board policy. Thorsen seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

#### **c. Metro Mobility Transfer Policy**

Andrew Krueger spoke to the TAAC committee. What an unattended transfer is in the current system when someone is picked up in Burnsville going to Bloomington. They are taken to the Burnsville Transit Station and dropped off and they can wait for up to half an hour for the next provider to pick them up. The feds have said that that is an unattended transfer and that is not acceptable. That means that somebody has to be attended at all times. There is an implied origin to destination attendance. So that somebody from one of the companies is with that passenger at all times. We have looked at this and there are three options:

1. Attended transfer with current model with the current five providers. This would have decreased efficiency with an increased cost.
2. Expand buffer zone and attended transfers. This would cause increased confusion and increased costs.
3. Restructure service area to eliminate transfers. This would provide increased customer service, reduce customer confusion and create geographic equity. This is the preferred option.

Walker moved to accept the new transfer policy. McGuire seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

#### **d. Metro Mobility Operating Alignment**

Andrew Krueger spoke to the TAAC committee. Currently Metro Mobility has five contractors. They are split between competitive bid (Transit Team and First Transit) and sole source (Anoka Traveler, DARTS and SmartLink in Scott and Carver Counties). Transit Team and First Transit have 74 percent of the service area or 759.4 square miles. The county contractors have 26 percent of the service area or 268.5 square miles. The average cost including fuel for Transit Team and First Transit is \$53.87 per hour. The county cost is \$60.68 per hour.

They are proposing moving to three zones: Metro East, which is 35 percent of the service area, Metro West, which is 35 percent of the service area and Metro South, which is 30 percent of the service area. They want to maximize the trips that stay in the same zone. In over 65 percent of the trips the providers stay within the same zone. That adds up to 85 percent of the rides when you add the next community over. This ensures federal compliance. Every ride would be a single seat ride. If they go to this three contractor model there will no longer be transfers.

They are planning going out for bid this summer. They will do the request for service in July or August of this year. Metro South will probably be implemented in May 2015. The East Metro and West Metro will be implemented later in the summer near the end of August. The current contracts expire in June 30, 2015.

Williams moved to approve the new operating alignment. Anderson seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

#### **MEMBER COMMENT**

Krueger spoke to the TAAC committee. The downtown fare zone has already been implemented. The free rides on Nicollet Mall are finalized. They are proposing back to the FTA a corridor along Nicollet Mall that will offer free rides. They started at  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile and started working their way in so that they would have an equitable corridor around Nicollet Mall where it made sense to provide free rides. What they have come up with is a  $2\frac{1}{2}$  or 3 block corridor surrounding Nicollet Mall to propose to the FTA. That would be implemented in September.

They are looking at last quarter of this year or first quarter of 2015 to implement the GoTo card on Metro Mobility. They are piloting that with the Anoka County Traveler. They are 30 days off from signing off for the pilot project. Once they give Cubic the go ahead it will be up to 120 days just to get the devices in. They are looking at fourth quarter of this year or first quarter of next year to implement GoTo on Metro Mobility. They are going to phase in the GoTo and new ID cards next spring.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 3:28 p.m.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary