

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

Wednesday, October 3, 2018

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Patty Thorsen, Vice Chair David Fenley, Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Darrell Paulsen, Ken Rodgers, Robert Platz, Kari Sheldon, Heidi Myhre, Diane Graham-Raff, Margot Imdieke Cross, and Richard Rowan.

**Committee Members Absent:** none

**Committee Members Excused:** John Clark.

**Council Staff Present:** Bob Casseday, Dennis Dworshak, Tim Maloy, Doug Cook and Clarissa Schleichert from Metro Transit, David Russell, Sara Maaske and Alison Coleman.

**Public Present:** Claudia Fuglie,

### **CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Thorsen called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:32 p.m. on Wednesday, October 3, 2018.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

It was moved by Bates, seconded by Jasmine to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Graham-Raff, seconded by Bates to approve the minutes of the September 5, 2018 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

### **BUSINESS & INFORMATION**

#### **1. New Farebox Demonstration**

Dennis Dworshak, Manager of Revenue Processing spoke to the TAAC committee. We want to show you the replacement farebox. You have all seen the fareboxes we have on the buses since 1993. This is the most common farebox in the nation. It is the most reliable farebox. We have a team of technicians who maintain these fareboxes every day. They try to keep them going the best we can. We have done a great job. But now the fareboxes have come to an end. We made an attempt to purchase new fareboxes, but they are no longer making them. So, we are looking for a replacement.

We have done our research. We have looked far and wide for a replacement. We found one that we liked so far. We have purchased 10 of them. We installed eight of them on buses. It is about two generations above where we were before. The same farebox. It gives us a big advantage because we use the same fare collection equipment in our garages. Where we take the money out. We use our same probes. The same cash boxes. The same software. We are saving a lot if this farebox does work for us.

About five or six weeks ago we installed eight of these fareboxes on our buses. They are out there in the public right now accepting money and we have had some favorable comments from both the public and from operators. We wanted to present it to the TAAC committee, so you guys can get a chance to look at it. Do some demonstrations. Ask questions and give us your input. So we can go back to the vendor after the end of our 12-week demo.

It looks the same as the other farebox but that is about as far as the similarities are. This is much more advanced than the other farebox. This farebox will actually read bills now. If you put in a large bill \$5.00, \$10.00, \$20.00 it will count it as it is. Not reading them as a \$1.00 bill. It issues transfers and reads transfers with a swipe motion. You can swipe the transfer with it never leaving your hand. Right now, you have to insert

it. We call it dipping it into there. It leaves your hand. It reads it. Then it spits it out. Now there is a one second swipe. There are a lot of advancements that we won't turn on immediately, but we can grow into it. In the future we can read the GoTo cards right on this machine. In the future it can also read barcodes. Which is something we can do with our cell phones if you buy a mobile app. You can put it on there and it can read it. This is for the future that we can grow in to. As of now we just want to replace the existing farebox. This functionality we have right now but only upgrading.

Right now, we have a device called a bus mobile validator. That is going to have a lifespan of five to seven years before we have to replace it. If this works out, we would move into this. It has a dual purpose. It has the ability to beep when you run the card through. It does have the ability to have audible when you put money into it like the \$5.00, \$10.00 or \$20.00 bills.

The bus mobile validator that reads the GoTo cards is on it's second year. It should have another five or six years. If there are more technologies, we will replace it with a newer technology. Nothing is going to change as far as GoTo reading. That is not included in this project. This project is just for the farebox to collect cash.

Bates said what do you think you can recover in lost fares? There are times that the fareboxes are not working and people get on the bus for free. Will we see some financial recovery?

Bob Casseday said we really should. This farebox is less mechanical so there is less damming ability. You can't throw a washer in it and have it stick like the old fareboxes. There is a coin cup at the bottom and it will reject any miscellaneous coins or slugs. If it doesn't like the dollar bills it will kick it back out of the machine. It really should reduce breakdowns and clogs and that type of issues. It is much more cost efficient. If there are things that are not coins, it will not accept it. Right now, with the existing machine, everything just drops right through. This will not. It will count the coins. Everything that is not a coin will drop right out. It does not give change.

The fare policy will remain the same. The driver still cannot give change. The machine cannot issue change. This machine has a display on it and it tells the driver what it is accepting. This reads the bill like a pop machine does and so it knows if it is a one or a five. It shows on the display screen. On occasion we do a reimbursement to somebody who overpays on a case by case basis. The operator does have the ability to have courtesy ride coupons where they could compensate you for your ride especially with disability customers that overpaid on the purchase. We can try to reimburse them right on the spot or you can call Customer Relations. We will work with you on that on an individual basis. We can't do it widespread for everybody. It will overtax the system.

Fenley asked if the machine could spit out the larger bill.

Dworshak said no. It will only spit out a crumpled or folded bill it did not like. It will automatically reject it.

Graham-Raff said does it have the ability to print any kind of receipt so that that person would have something that showed that they entered a \$20.00 bill that would help you down the road?

Dworshak said there are no receipt printing abilities. It only prints transfers. It just shows the fare paid not the amount paid. A \$2.00 fare would show \$2.00 on the transfer.

The TAAC committee members went through a demonstration of the new farebox.

## **2. Metro Mobility Statistics**

David Russell spoke to the TAAC committee. The stats were given to me five minutes ago. I didn't get a full blow out of what we have for stats. It is where we are headed again. It is able to break it down more definitively in detail. One of the things we asked is to do the on-time performance statistics. We were able to break it down by agency, by First Transit, by East, South and West. Then we broke it down into categories. For us to be on time, federal law gives us 30 minutes or less to be there to pick you up to be considered on time.

The question was, are you guys on time at 29 minutes every time? That's why it seems like a spectacular performance. We broke it down into zero to five minutes after scheduled pickup. Five to 10 minutes. Ten to 15. Fifteen to 20. Then 20 or more. It is a way to break it down to see how on time we were. These stats are through the third quarter.

For the rides that were on time by zero to five minutes was 44 percent. Five to ten minutes or less was 24 percent. Almost 70 percent of the rides that were considered on time were 10 minutes or less of the scheduled time.

It also shows by agency. A few of them were by provider. There was one provider that was zero to 20 minutes behind. They all fell within the 15 to 20 minutes behind. They all had the same level of performance.

We are getting the on-time pickups and drop offs and more detail on these reports. This information was from the vehicles that are tracked with devices to know where they are at and when they are there. The pickups and drop offs information is being tracked and stored. We are getting this information directly from what is documented on our vehicles.

The on-time information is for pickups, not appointment times. Next time I will come with the appointment times. All the vehicles track where they are at and when they are there. That information gets pulled. Then Pete, the guy that finds that information, goes in and grabs the data that is relevant to what we want him to gather. There is no device that automatically does this. He gathers these numbers from the data. This is information about all rides and all trips. It is also from people who called in with their information.

Rodgers said I do not want to see any statistics, moving forward, that have only percentages. If they have a percentage they also need to have the raw number. The percentages don't mean anything to me. The number is what I am talking about. Each number represents a person and their ride.

Russell said we do have the numbers.

Rodgers said there is an incentive for the drivers to be on time. If they are outside of that window, they lose that cash revenue that a person pays. There is a financial incentive for the providers to be on time when they pick up. Am I still correct with my understanding that there is no financial incentive when a provider is late for an appointment time?

Russell said the incentive is that these performance requirements are federal law. If they are not doing this, they are not meeting the requirements of the federal legislation. I think there is a financial punishment for providers for not doing that. I will have to double check. There is some disincentive for not being on time as well.

Rodgers said in past reports we have been paying some very substantial dollar amount each month for no loads or no shows on the Metro Mobility taxi service. Has that decreased? Has it increased? Has it remained the same?

Russell said I don't know. We haven't done a lot of communication with the taxi providers. We are aware of all of the issues associated with them. This is something I would have to bring to Christine. Could you send me an email of exactly what you are looking for? I can find out for you.

Rodgers said that several months ago, we got reported out about the cost of the programs. They are really looking at them to improve them. A suggestion was made that when someone makes a taxi request with the Met Council, that they be given some basic information about how to cancel their ride if they are not going to take the ride once they have ordered it. So that we don't get stuck with a \$5.00 no load charge for no reason. I use that service practically every day and no one has informed me of any information related to how we try to save Metro Mobility some frivolous money related to that program. So that is not being done. I know that for a fact. I am really curious about the dollars that we are losing by having to pay for a no load ride. The riders are not instructed on how to manage that.

Russell said this no load you are talking about. Are they same day cab rides?

Rodgers said yes.

Chair Thorsen said Christine and I talked. She was concerned. She said that this is work that is charged to her. She was concerned that there would be overlap. Her responsibility. I think that we were to be doing work that she had done. I think that David and I should talk with Christine and clarify this.

Fenley said Metro Mobility was in the process of rewriting the policy. It is a DOD program policy that is being revisited to lessen the no load costs that fall on to the Council. I think that what Ken was getting at is if the people who are using this service have better information, it won't be that persons with disabilities are standing up these rides and the Met Council is paying \$12,000 a month. That we have some way of showing that it is

not the taxi company, seeing someone with a service animal and saying they did not show up and driving off. We know that happens. I think that that was how this got started.

When you do have more robust information. I know that you have a new system that you are using that aggregates in a much prettier and more visually on tables. It hasn't been made accessible yet. That is why you haven't brought the whole package to us.

Chair Thorsen said Christine and I spoke in June. These are still concerns. Where do we sit now? Because these are still issues.

Russell said these are still issues that are concerns for us. But it is still about people not getting rides. There are passengers that could be stranded somewhere because of a poor performance on the taxi cab that contracted with us.

Rodgers said I just need to identify an elephant in the room that is not been spoken about. In terms of working behind the scenes with something that is not currently accessible. We have a state statute that requires things we do as agencies within the state, meet accessibility requirements. If this tool that is being looked at is not currently accessible, the state statute says we should not be purchasing it or using it. It is not our responsibility as agencies to purchase software, or whatever it is, that is not accessible and then try to make it accessible. We shouldn't, by state law, be purchasing that or using it in the first place. It gets back to the fundamental issue of why isn't the state statute being followed if the tool that is being talked about is not accessible?

Bates asked if Chair Thorsen can speak with Christine to come to the next TAAC meeting. Margot has come up with an issue that we really need to address. What is going on with the Penn Avenue project? Have they started negotiations on the next contract?

Russell said I believe they have. I do know they are coming up.

Platz said I would love to see it broken down. Maybe it is already. Are the statistics broken down in agency verses demand and standing order verses call in? Then as far as percentages, to piggyback off of what Ken was saying. I do like percentages. I do like numbers. Also, is it tracked in a fashion that say for example, you hit 99 percent all the time. That is fantastic. Ninety nine percent is a fantastic number. But if you are that one percent every single time, you are not thinking that is fantastic. That one percent would have to move around to be fantastic.

Russell said that we have this information that you guys are asking for. We can get it. We are not going to give it to you until it is accessible. It does cover a lot of those things you are asking for. Numbers verses percentage. Who is being affected. I believe we are even going to see why it is being affected. Is it a high density area? We have more people in vehicles. Whatever the case might be. We are much more critically evaluating what these percentages are and how they are affecting the individual riders.

Jasmine asked about when the passenger is late on his arrival time. Where does the money come out of to reimburse the passenger? Does the provider get penalized?

Russell said I believe the provider pays for that. That may be the only penalty. I think there is more to it than that. I will have to get back to you.

Jasmine said they don't do that unless you call in and complain. If you have already paid and they kept you on and they are 10, 20 minutes past your appointment time, they can't give you your money back. Now we have an issue of who picks up that? The passenger has to call to get their money back.

Russell said the companies we contract with are aware of what is expected of them. A lot of the issues fall down on the individual cab drivers recognizing that this is something that is negotiated at a higher level.

Jasmine asked about a task force who would work with our various issues and report back to the TAAC committee.

Chair Thorsen said she spoke with Christine Kuennen and she was concerned about overlap with the work that she is doing. I am going to revisit that to convey the real concern that exists so that things work properly.

Fenley said this committee has to be kept in the loop as to what she is doing. Whether she comes in to us and we tell her that she needs to do it this way or that way. Or it is done through a subcommittee. We need to be updated.

Chair Thorsen said ideally, she will come prepared. If there are legitimate issues that she needs accurate information on she may want to get back to us.

Russell said if you have specific questions, you should speak with her in advance, so she can have the information when she comes to the meeting.

Bates said if we have questions for Christine, could we send them to Russell 10 days before the meeting and he will give them to Christine?

Russell said definitely.

Graham-Raff said for November, I would like to have the agency contract transition that is just starting out. An update on any challenges.

### **3. TAAC ByLaws**

Chair Patty Thorsen spoke to the TAAC committee.

**Bates moved** that we put the TAAC ByLaws before the committee for discussion back on the table. I have three amendments that I would like to add to them for discussion. They will be submitted to Alison in written form for approval in November. They are to be first on November's agenda. Christine will be second on the agenda.

**Paulsen seconded the motion.**

Fenley added a friendly amendment that the ByLaws not be first on the November agenda.

Bates said he will accept the friendly amendment.

**The motion carried.**

The following are the amendments to the TAAC ByLaws.

Article 1 pg. 2 #2 -after the word services. New sentence-The chair shall call at least three public hearings, or commonly referred to as "listening sessions", per calendar year."

pg. 2- Article 2

at the end of pt. 4 - New sentence-Members of AD HOC committees have the option of participating by phone.

pg. 5- Article 6. 1. All providers of Metro Mobility services-transit companies and taxi companies-must appear and make a presentation at least once a year before the TAAC committee.

There is only one taxi company that contracts with Metro Mobility.

Chair Thorsen said on Wednesday, October 24, from 10:00 a.m. until 12:00 noon, at the Wilder Center on 451 North Lexington Parkway, we will have the Fall Conversation. Claudia Fuentes, who organizes these, will be meeting with Christine on October 15. I asked her before today's meeting about an agenda for that meeting. She is going to get back to me. When I find that information out, I will share it with you. They rotate the times and locations of the meetings because they recognize that not everybody can get to each meeting at each time.

**Bates motioned** to table the ByLaws until the November meeting. **Paulsen seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **1. Blue Line**

Ken Rodgers said the subcommittee is still meeting. However, I received a notice that our cover meeting was being postponed. The Blue Line Extension has hit a snag. The snag is that the BNSF Railway, which we need part of that land to run the Blue Line Extension, is refusing to engage. Right now, with the Blue Line, until that negotiation can be completed and underway, we are stuck. We are at 90 percent engineering. Everything is ready to go. They had to reapply to the feds for the next year round. Our funding is still in place. Everything is a go. We are just waiting on the BNSF to begin negotiations. People believe

that it will happen at some point. But until they are ready to sit at the table, we are month-to-month. We have not met in several months. We are not meeting in October either.

Bates said we are having the same problem with the Green Line right now.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## **MEMBER COMMENT**

Paulsen said I have a comment. I also serve as the co-chair to the Gold Line. This is the BRT going from the Union Depot all the way to Woodbury. They have a number of listening sessions and open houses over the last 60 days. I have attended 15 to 20 different events. I am trying to keep the committee informed. This is a very crucial time. Most projects are going through the environmental phase and getting vetted with the public and government over the next two years. They really need to hear from people that use the service. Especially from people that have accessibility and mobility challenges. To advocate for other folks within the system.

The BRT operates similar to BRT. It has similar platforms. It will have similar service. The thing with BRT is we have more flexibility. We can change routes. It costs about the same when it is all said and done.

Chair Thorsen said you can send the information to both me and Alison.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary