

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAACCOMMITTEE

Wednesday March 6, 2019

Committee Members Present: Acting Chair David Fenley, Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Darrell Paulsen, Ken Rodgers, Kari Sheldon, John Clark, Patty Thorsen, Diane Graham-Raff and Richard Rowan.

Committee Members Absent:

Committee Members Excused: Margot Imdieke Cross

Council Staff Present: Berry Farrington, Jan Dietrich, Doug Cook, Yumi Nagaoka and Liz Jones from Metro Transit; Andy Streasick, Sara Maaske, Christine Kuennen, Richard Koop and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Claudia Fuglie and Charlene Doll

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Acting Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:33 p.m. on Wednesday, March 6, 2019.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Rodgers, seconded by Bates to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2019 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. 2019-2022 Downtown St. Paul Bus Stop Facility Improvements

Barry Farrington, Senior Planner in Engineering and Facilities at Metro Transit, and Liz Jones, Community Outreach and Engagement, spoke to the TAAC committee. Jones said we are here today to talk about some improvements that we are working on in downtown St. Paul at the transit shelters this year and through 2022. Specifically, to focus on a couple of areas where we have some flexibility and some opportunity for enhances in some shelters and some design changes. Some placement adjustments. We want to obtain community feedback and some feedback from you folks. We did have a workshop last week where we had a couple of representatives from some businesses in the community attend and give us some preliminary feedback. We will talk a little bit about that coming up.

Farrington said we have a group of nine bus stops with shelters that we are looking to improve in the next couple of years. These program improvements for downtown St. Paul. We selected these bus stops as priorities because these were some of the highest ridership bus stops in downtown St. Paul. Some of the poor conditions in terms of waiting did not even have shelters and with others, the shelters were getting old and there were other concerns.

We have a chance to do some of our project work. Our construction alongside other construction projects that are coming up. Like replacing the sidewalk. Then we only have to tear things up once. When we look at our program of nine bus stops, there are two buckets that each bus stop comes to. There is a bucket of where we just wanted to replace a shelter with one that is similar. As one example, one outside the old Macy's on Wabasha by 7th Place, there was an old advertising shelter. Two years ago, we replaced that one with a more modern shelter.

The other kind of bucket of improvements is a shelter with enhancements. Those enhancements are heaters, lighting from within the shelter, sometimes real time transit information with the audio available as well. And

then seating within the standard bench that is in most of our shelters and maybe seating outside the shelter as well. An example of what is out on the street today is on 6th Street and Cedar where we have a shelter that was custom designed to fit within a pretty narrow sidewalk. It doesn't have as many walls as our typical shelters, but it allows people to pass by with a little more room. That includes the real time signs and the heater and the light. This lists 2019 through 2020 specifically which bus stops we are focusing on and noting which are replacements and which are more enhancements. We have three focused on this year and then two every year after that. It is not a huge project, but it allows us to make steady progress.

This information is also available online. We have a fact sheet along with a map if you want to dive into it later on your own.

For three of these shelter and enhancements locations, One in the 2020 column on 6th and Sibley and two in the 2022 column on Robert Street and 6th Street. Those are bus stops that are right outside our building here. These are places where we are talking about this design workshop and having an opportunity to do more than what is typical for a Metro Transit bus stop. That is because there are places where there are so many people waiting for a bus, getting off the bus and the spaces. They are pretty tight. Then again, those existing shelters are quite old and quite burned out and we can do better.

The bus stops are Robert and 6th, both sides of the street. Then 6th and Sibley. That is outside Mears Park Place Apartments. We have a design workshop. I will let Liz talk about that. We are at a point in these three places where we don't have any designs developed yet. In telling designers here is what we need at a bus stop. Here is the space we think we have to work with. So there is nothing drawn up yet but we are at an early stage in the process.

Jones said from this workshop that we held last week, we had some staff from Metro Transit at various levels of the organization. We had some city staff from various departments. We also had a number of community groups. There were a few representatives from the TAAC. There was a great synergy of different ideas and opinions. We are still working on collecting all the feedback from that event. A couple of accessibility related comments that we heard. Additional benches with arm rests. Making sure that there is enough sheltered area space to fit wheelchairs and mobility devices. The potential to add audio announcements. Wayfinding directional signage. And good lighting.

I wanted to open it up to the folks who did attend and see if there are any comments or anything you want to say about your experience. We had David attend. Doug was there along with Kari and Richard. I just wanted to open it up to your thoughts and then get into some further discussion.

Doug Cook said I thought it was really good. A way to present the information at different tables. We all went around and talked to different individuals. And got feedback. We were able to get a lot of people give feedback to the group. A lot of suggestions they just talked about were some of the suggestions that people made. We talked about a lot of different possibilities. Especially for the ones over on Robert Street across from each other. We had that nice plaza area here and across the street. We talked about safety concerns and using that space wisely. Making it look good. But in my job, I am always stressing accessibility and blind issues. How we make it accessible to them, How are we going to drop our ramps in that space?

Acting Chair David Fenley said I did like the format. It was very user centric. You were listening to people and sketching real time what folks were saying. Taking into consideration everything people were saying. Did any of the other members have any questions or comments at this point?

Darryl Paulsen said we continue to talk about lighting, safety and security. The other thing is the placement of the heaters. We tend to try to get them up and above, so they don't get obstructed. Out of the way so that people tend to destroy things that they can reach. The higher you put it the less heat for people who are sitting in our wheelchairs. Maybe 10 hours a day or sometimes even longer at times. We need those heaters to be at a placement where we can actually get the heat. Maybe incase them. Put a metal grade around them so it deters people from kicking them or putting trash around them. Maybe we will have to look at finding a way to enclose them. Bring them down a little bit lower so that the heat reaches the people that need it.

Farrington said there are steps in this process. We are collecting the feedback from this event. We are meeting with groups such as this to talk a bit more and get additional comments. Our design team is going to be putting together some concrete concepts. So, we will likely have two concept designs for each of the stations. We will send that out to the broader community with surveys and talking to additional folks to see which comes up as the more favorite between the two at each stop.

What we would like to do is to come back before this group in the May or June timeframe and present what the shelters that seem to be favorable to everyone we have talked to and see what additional feedback and refinements we can make on these concepts.

Christopher Bates said can these designs be used at other locations in the seven counties, so we don't have to hire architects again and use the same prints like on Nicollet Mall? The same type of designs over and over again. It would be more cost efficient.

Farrington said that is a comment that my director has been raising as well. We have some locations like here, particular with this building and across the way. The spaces like the plazas. We need a unique design. For example, with this building. Would it be possible to put a canopy right on the building? In these cases, probably these are unique designs. Where the lessons learned can be carried forward. That exact model will not just be manufactured again and placed right on the street. However, it is pushing along a conversation for staff in terms of for our busiest bus stops. Can we develop a standard or shelter components sort of like an A Line station where there is a small, medium and large? Can we do something of that nature, so we are not always doing an original design at our busiest bus stops?

Your comments about the heaters. These are times where we can advance changes in the materials we use. This is a chance to introduce something in one place but role it out.

Bates said what is the cost to the taxpayers for this? To do these upgrades. Or to replace them. Is it cost efficient?

Farrington said we have not come up with a specific cost because we don't know what the design is going to look like yet. Once we have a concept design that is favorable to come up with a cost estimate. Where it can become refined to fit into the budget. Some of the costs are not within the shelter. Hooking it up to the power so the heater can work. There is some civil engineering site work that we are going to be doing in coordination with city and MnDOT projects. It is going to affect the cost. We will share those costs.

Bates said I was in North Minneapolis and I was looking at the graffiti on the bus shelters. What can actually be done? There are some parts of the country that have graffiti free walls. Is there something available? It would add life to those shelters. Is there graffiti free material you can put in these shelters?

Farrington said the thing we do have now is called frit glass. It is meant to be a graffiti deterrent. It was brought into the system. There was a big drop in graffiti on shelters. It is still a problem we face. There is not any material that is graffiti proof. Our public art administrator is looking into other ways to bring public art or something attractive to a shelter that deters graffiti from a different standpoint. People don't sometimes tag art with graffiti because it is someone else's art. So we are exploring other options.

Fenley said there was some discussion about this, given that this is the headquarters for the Metropolitan Council and that stop is a representative of the flagship stop. I don't know if this came up, but I am sure it came up in other discussions. Across the street as well where you have a little more space. What were some of the discussions around that?

Farrington said sure. The nature for the bus stop that is on this side of Robert Street. What we are hearing is something that is possible could utilize the overhang of the building. Pulling the shelter off of the curb. Some of the comments were that it doesn't feel safe, having the shelter so close to the curb. It is encouraging people to wait closer to traffic. That doesn't feel safe. So that is one option here. Another is to think about lighting in general outside this building. How does the shelter contribute to better lighting? A comment I heard was this is our headquarters and our flagship. We don't want our shelter too fancy. It would look like we treated ourselves better than others. Part of the discussion at this bus stop. We have a lot of people coming here from a lot of different modes. We have Metro Mobility. We have the bus. Of course, pedestrians. People driving up and try to make sure we are not competing for space for Metro Mobility. That was one of the topics that we talked about and as we learn more about this building and how things operate. My understanding was that Metro Mobility has it's pull in spot. Then the driver of the Metro Mobility vehicle is either escorting or watching people come right in the door. So that direct site line and closest path from the Metro Mobility vehicle to the front door is of high importance.

At our workshop I also heard other community stakeholders talk about the plazas and how it would be nice to have transit shelters part of a closet and how that was not going to fit with the Metro Mobility path if the shelter is in the closet. So if it fits O.K. and we do have time I would be curious to hear from the committee about Metro Mobility experiences coming from this building and how would that work if the transit shelter was closer

to the plaza? What is important in terms of getting from the Metro Mobility vehicle to the door that I didn't capture?

Paulsen said the one thing I can say. I do take Metro Mobility to this building probably once a week. If they do have a shelter or a shelter design that would indicate to the Metro driver that this is the door or this is the spot. I think that will signal to everybody that those vehicles have precedence in that little cutout spot. At the same time, I think that that would give you the opportunity to make your shoulder a little longer and a little more nicer without having to say we treated ourselves a little bit better. Because of the corporate offices. You also have that space across the street where the old phone used to be. If you concentrate on that space, you could make a powerful statement. As to what the Met Council has it's priority in as it relates to transit and paratransit. You have a huge opportunity here to include some public art and some public displays of some other things that would tell your story a little bit better. When you are looking for money and people saying what the Met Council spends their money on. You have a huge opportunity to display that.

Fenley said one of the designers was talking about somehow connecting either side of the street through design. Through the way that things look and the way that sidelines act and also building some stuff on that side and some public art on this side. Somehow you talked about that as well to mitigate graffiti.

Thorsen said could you possibly have a Metro Mobility logo to say this is a Metro Mobility stop?

Kuennen said to somehow label that space at the bus stop and to designate it specifically for snow removal and snow clearing. That tends to be a place where snow piles up. Folks who need that space cleared don't get that space cleared. Maybe it is a priority thing. Maybe not.

Paulsen said that when he was in San Diego he talked with some people. They talked about branding and state government. They wanted to brand their system so that the system looked more cohesive. I like the idea of branding. We do that already through our trains and some of our stops. If you do total branding, I am worried people would get disoriented at night or have low vision issues. That branding is so similar that you can't tell it apart. As far as the signage and the designated stop, using the Metro Mobility logo is a huge thing we can look at. That would help some of the drivers. Especially some of the agency drivers that went from the agency side to the demand side. They are still playing off of the spots where they used to drop off during the agency side. If we have that designated spot or that Metro Mobility logo, that would tell the driver and the client "This is where you are supposed to be when I pick you up and I drop you off." That would also tell anybody that uses side doors after hours, that they need to make sure that that designated door spot remains open as long as there are meetings.

2. Metro Mobility Update

Andy Streasick, Customer Service Manager, Metro Mobility, spoke to the TAAC committee. I have talked to Judd, Director of our Public Affairs about getting somebody to come and do legislative updates on a monthly basis. It is probably going to be Brooke Bordson. That is not yet decided.

For the legislative update I will talk about one piece of legislation. It started out this year attempting to expand the Metro Mobility service area down into Lakeville. It seems likely that that was going to pass. We are still preparing for that. If we get the money to go along with it and can do that without jeopardizing the rest of our service, we would be absolutely providing service to as much of the area as we possibly can. That Lakeville bill did get expanded to include Ramsey, Maple Plain, Forest Lake and Columbus. So it now matches a bill that has been brought up the previous two sessions before this. It was shot down because of the cost involved. That is not to say that it will happen again. The current bill also has language to make the requirement dynamic to make the link to the taxing district so that if different communities would come in to the taxing district that they would receive paratransit service.

At the Metro Mobility Service Center, as long as we can afford to do it, without jeopardizing our current service, we would be all for that. It is not a new concept. It has been around for awhile. The current service area is based on the 2006 Transportation Taxing District. By Minnesota statute it was a frozen 2006 that we use the templates. As new communities come into the taxing district, they do not receive service. That is what that bill is looking to adjust.

Bates said why are we using 2006? Why not use the 2010 census?

Streasick said Metro Mobility is in a unique situation. We predated the ADA by a couple of decades. By the time the ADA spelled out exactly what we needed to do as a transit provider, the footprint that it gave with a ¾

of a mile buffer around where fixed route was going, would have cut our existing service area by almost a third. We didn't think that was in the spirit of landmark civil rights legislation to restrict our service by a third. We just kept doing what we were doing. That service area has pretty much been untouched by the 1980's. We just kept doing that. A few years back, under the Pawlenty administration, when we were looking at some of the costs involved with the service, there were some feelers put out to maybe turn Metro Mobility into a pure ADA paratransit. And cut out that extra third of service. The senior community and disability communities did a great job of letting legislators know what kind of negative impact that would have. What Metro Mobility had just been doing since the passage of the ADA just based on a policy level and codified by state law, and locked in that 2006 footprint. That was essentially the service area that we had served historically. They wanted to lock that in while maintaining some protections against spiraling costs that a growing transportation taxing district would have entailed.

Bates said we have had such population shifts. So, isn't something that is 13 years old need to be updated?

Fenley said I think where the disconnect lays is that rather than being locked into the ¾ mile from fixed route, like the ADA mandates. We chose a different metric to base our area on. Now that that is changing, it gives us a choice, do we expand further based on the previous metric now that more areas are being brought into the taxing district? Clearly, we are not going to go to the ADA mandated district because that would involve shrinking by a lot. Do we continue to expand, or do we let the taxing district from 2006 hang and let ADA grow into that?

At the same rate you could look at it as decades ahead of the curve. Where we have a different metric where we are basing our plan on. Because the ADA says it has to be smaller. We are much larger.

Bates said we are going to be expanding to Lakeville and Forest Lake. Maybe we have to take a look at that. That should change the taxing district because we are adding all of these communities to it.

Fenley said should there be better regular route service to these communities as well? I would say yes. That would essentially solve our problem.

Streasick said if regular route service, including all day LRT, goes out to these communities, those are going to become ADA service from a paratransit perspective. So regardless of what would happen with this existing legislation, federal law says we got regular route non-express service. Bus or rail going out there. Metro Mobility is going to provide that service. What this is really impacting is our non-ADA service. Portions that get put on standby when they book rides. That is what they are talking about expanding.

Bates said the reason I am asking is I have to make a presentation for the Excelsior City Council. We are going to petition a study from Metro Transit. A feasibility study to run a shuttle between all the small communities out there. That don't have regular bus service. They would be proposed to run between our cities and the Minnetonka station. In the long run it could be beneficial to Metro Mobility because we wouldn't have to use Metro Mobility to the extent that we might use it. Where I live it is express only. There is nothing else. Our population is getting older out there. There might be a financial benefit to Metro Mobility.

Fenley said the bigger picture is to look at regular route out there so you could have it be an ADA service.

Bates said we did have ADA service out there because the Rout 12 bus ran out there. Then budget cuts cut out that service. Now it is only express. There is more clamoring to get some kind of regular bus service.

Fenley said it is a valid point. Which metric you go with. Which plan do you get behind? I would say regular route and get as much ADA service as possible. In the meantime, we have a bill that is looking to loop in taxing districts into the non-ADA service. Expanding ADA service is great. We do have to deal with costs, too. That is the reason those bills didn't make it out of the last two sessions. Because of costs.

Graham-Raff said working in the aging services realm, we are having this same conversation with the Minnesota Department of Health and DHS about how do we keep older adults in these outer areas? Aging in place. So that the state does not end up paying through one of the waiver programs because of people ending up in nursing homes much more. If we are not crossing those silos. The transportation is over here, and health is over there. They are not really talking to each other. A key component to keeping the taxpayers from paying \$80,000 a year to take care of these people. Is this transportation service that is readily available, so people can get to their doctors and other places? We are missing something at a statewide taxpayer level.

Fenley said that is one of the fundamental drawbacks of people's vision when it comes to public transportation is they don't look at the overall impact on other things that bring into the economic discussion like the cost of someone not aging in place.

Rodgers said this brings up an interesting question. Do we have someone that could present to us from the Metro Transit side that could help us identify the process they use to identify expanded fixed route and drill down to what the general costs are for an expansion? I imagine it is partly dependent on the ridership expectation. There has to be a baseline cost to adding a fixed route. I would like to have a presentation about that. How they determine how they add fixed route.

Cook said I will talk to someone at Metro Transit and see what I can do.

Fenley said with regular route you get Metro Mobility. More reliable Metro Mobility service with regular route. Should part of these bills be let's get regular route out there instead of just bringing in Metro Mobility? I would imagine the regulators might scoff a little more at the increase costs there. That is the discussion they should be having.

3. Discuss Budget & Policy Changes to Metro Mobility

Andy Streasick, Customer Service Manager, Metro Mobility, spoke to the TAAC committee. This was floating around before the Governor announced his budget. It is part of the Governor's proposed budget package. The idea is to take Metro Mobility's paratransit funding and remove it from the larger transportation bills. The thought behind that is twofold. One, it protects fixed route public transit because Metro Mobility, by Council practices, is first in at the budget pools. So we come in and gobble up whatever we need and then whatever is left, by way of a budget increase, that is what fixed route gets.

That model has been certainly appropriate. But it has made it difficult for fixed route services to accurately forecast what they are going to get. It is important for me to keep in mind that most folks with disabilities do use fixed route as a way to get around in the region. Most people with disabilities in the region who use public transit, do take some city bus and rail. So it is important that we protect those.

The other part though is that it does protect Metro Mobility. Recent experiences with some political lightning rods related to transportation bills have showed us that there is no guarantee necessarily that a transportation bill is going to pass. Separating Metro Mobility's funding out that way does allow legislators to pass funding for Metro Mobility separate from addressing some of the more contentious issues associated with a broader transportation bill.

The legislature has never shown any kind of an interest in starving Metro Mobility. We project out what we think our costs are going to go up. Sometimes it is a little bit higher. Sometimes it is a little bit lower. In years where it was lower, fixed route could rely on getting more of that money out of the broader pool when it was along the higher side of our projected budget increase. All of a sudden that fixed route money was thinking what they might be able to get was gone. It is not the case that we, being paratransit, Metro Mobility that Metro Mobility is going to be undercut or underfunded as part of this.

Our staff does a good job of pitching a budget that is on the safe side. We recognize the kind of growth that we have experienced. We recognize that we are just short of getting into the meat of the silver tsunami of baby boomers acquiring age related disabilities. We are aware of the state's vigorous Olmstead responsibilities and dedication and what that means in terms of keeping people in the community in the most integrated settings and what that means for mobility within the disability community.

We are asking for and are being given, adequate money to run paratransit. This is just about predictability and reliability.

The existing structure where we are all coming out of one pot is inherently zero sum. We have X amount of money in this funding package. Metro Mobility takes what it takes, and the rest goes to fixed route. If one chose to look at it this way, you could see some competition in the existing model between Metro Mobility and fixed route transit services. That's not appropriate for precisely the reasons laid out here. The shift separating Metro Mobility from the broader package, could be argued that it eliminates that competition. Rather than Metro Mobility being more robust being funded. Meaning that fixed route is going to get less. This provides the opportunity for both services be properly funded and know what they are given without being played off against each other.

Bates said hasn't our budget been pretty much the same the last few years? That was one of the reasons we had to increase the fares because of the lack of inflation increase in the budget every year.

Streasick said there have been modest increases. Certainly, the Council hasn't received the types of increases that we have asked for in the last couple of years. That is part of the decision to meet the increase in fares in addition to the fact that we have gone a long time without a fare increase.

Clark said from people I talked with, the funding from the Legislature is not adequate for current needs. It is a battle between service, which you have done a good job with incremental services. Then the issue with productivity.

Streasick said to my knowledge, any will to try to curtail Metro Mobility based on productivity numbers. There have been some attempts to look at cost effectiveness in what we do. Without fail, when people have looked at what Metro Mobility does compared to other paratransit providers in other parts of the country. They have come away with a knowledge that we are very impressive in terms of our responsibility to the taxpayer. What our subsidy per ride is. And what we are able to provide with the ADA footprint. I would expect that to continue. Your statement that we are not where we need to be, is certainly true.

I think I totally understand that viewpoint as a person with a disability. I would say that even in the current environment. The other bill that we talked about. Posing some significant expansions, Metro Mobility would show that there is more of an appetite from the Legislature to expand Metro Mobility and pay for it than there is to make cuts for it at this time. Whether or not there is an appetite to expand to actually for that to pass, we will see. We are trying to prepare for it and make plans for it if that happens.

Paulsen said to Andy's point about pulling this funding and giving us separate funding. It is a way for the Governor to prioritize Metro Mobility and to protect Metro Mobility. It doesn't say that he is going to expand Metro Mobility. It says that he understands the need to protect it. The way that we protect it is to pull it out of the general fund. Because every administration, every two years, we go up for a budget battle or we go for a funding increase. We don't get it. We get a small increase in operations once in awhile to cover some of the operational costs. But it is usually not to expand service. This is a win, win for us. It also will create some test measures and some outcome measures that we can look at. To see if Metro Mobility is truly being responsible for the dollars they have been given. Over the next four to eight years you will see that Metro Mobility has been responsible and has been managing those dollars very well.

I look at this as a way that our committee (TAAC) to go out and promote the positivity of Metro Mobility. And what that service means. It is a good way to get involved as well on a public stage. About something that we care about.

Bates said I move that the TAAC committee fully support Governor Walz's proposed 2019 budget recommendations for Metro Mobility. Thorsen seconded the motion.

Rodgers said I support the motion, but I want to give a caveat and a caution. It is real easy to want to go to that place of providing a rationale as to why the governor is doing this. Whether or not that is true or not is we don't know. I want to caution people not to look too much into it. It is no secret that there has been a structural financial problem with the way the funding has been handled. With Metro Transit, fixed route and paratransit. We have known that for years because of a structural problem. This gets brought up every legislative session. The last task force that was charged to this. And I truly believe that task force was created in a sideways way to trip up Metro Mobility. They thought that they were going to catch us not spending our dollars correctly. Not being frugal. Not spending taxpayer dollars in a prudent way.

What we discovered. I sat in on that task force. What we discovered was the opposite. Metro Mobility is handling the funding in the most appropriate way. Much better than our peers that we were compared to across the nation. Can we do better? Absolutely. Are there ways to introduce different types of programs? Absolutely. I don't think that was the question. I just want to caution people. I think we have a governor who finely understands we have a structural problem with the funding. And is willing to do something about that. To try to fix that. I want us to be careful. Not to read too much into it. We do need to capitalize on that fact that in my mind, people with disabilities through the Metro Mobility program are finally going to be given our due. And are being supported and prioritized. We haven't been prioritized in a very long time. Through structural budget changes.

I support the motion. I think we need to be ringing this bell loud and clear. We need to let the governor know that this is something we support. And we are behind this. But I just don't want us to get false concepts into why this is being done. I want us to be realistic and honest about it. And go from there.

I don't know that everybody gets this. Metro Mobility, having its own funding bucket. The state doesn't get to curtail service from Metro Mobility from ADA service area by cutting the budget. That is not a possibility. This is a federally mandated program. We have to fund this program to the ADA level. If it costs us more, then the legislature is going to have to come up with those dollars. Without doing that, the state would risk losing federal dollars in all sorts of other transit related places. They are not about to do that. By pulling this budget away from the general budget, isn't going to curtail Metro Mobility's need.

What I do get concerned about is expanding the non-ADA area, which will cause more standby and denied rides. Legally, if the funding issue gets to be tight and it is going to pit the non-ADA area versus the ADA area against each other. That is never good. There are some cautionary things we need to be aware of. Again, I support this resolution.

Jasmine said I am concerned with splitting this. I live in the non-ADA area. And have been part of when hours get shortened or threatened to be changed or areas get threatened. I am very well aware when things get tight or if we didn't have the right support. Once you pit non-ADA against ADA, non-ADA loses. I am very cautious and watchful. There are no guarantees. This governor may be great but what happens down the road?

Fenley said this could allow things to shrink to ADA. If the political will was there. There is also the argument for having accessibility and then removing it too. In the ADA there is a level of accessibility that has been achieved and is expected. If you take that away, then you could potentially be violating people's rights as well. We don't want to get to that.

Clark said Metro Mobility could end up in the crosshairs of the legislature.

Bates said I want to speak to my motion. If you listen to the words, I said proposed 2019. I am in a non-ADA area. That is what TAAC is supposed to do. Step up to the plate for people who have transportation issues. People with disabilities and transportation. Well let's step up to the plate. It is time to do it. We have a governor willing to start.

Fenley said all in favor for the motion.

Rodgers said I just wanted to add one piece. That is one of the reasons why I asked for someone to look into having someone present to us how Metro Transit adds routes. Because I think that is the direction we need to be promoting to get rid of these non-ADA areas. There is a high concentration of individuals with disabilities who live in a particular non-ADA area. We need to fight like hell to try and get some fixed route out there, so they can become an ADA area. That is why I want some facts around what does Metro Transit do to look at adding routes? That is my rationale to have that presentation.

The motion carried.

Streasick said policy wise there are some things that I wanted to point out. One is change. We have posted our customer conduct policy online. In the name of transparency. I have had my own internal benchmarks in place for what happens and what we expect of providers and of customers. You get suspended X amount of time if you belt your driver. You get suspended X amount of time if you smoke on the bus. You get suspended X amount of time if you steal from another passenger. This really spells out this stuff with examples. The customers know this coming in what is expected of them. The bigger issue is what they can expect by way of repercussions and what kind of behavior we expect on the bus.

The other thing I wanted to make sure and mention today is the Sirius and Delight contracts. Those peak demand overflow contracts. It ends at the end of this month. The Council is not renewing those. Year to date we have cut down on denials almost 30 percent. We feel like we have got room to work with the two providers that do have any denials. To reduce those further by maximizing those existing resources. We are going to work with them that way. We have 12 customers who really take in the vast majority of trips on Sirius and Delight. We are reaching out to those folks with a letter that went out yesterday. Just explaining it so they don't get taken by surprise when they find out this service is gone. We are working with the providers to use a more systemic, sensible approach to reduce denials for those non-ADA rides.

Bates said I have used their service over holidays like Christmas. Is there any way we can use them for this in the future?

Streasick said no. That wasn't the intended usage. The providers give everybody time off at Christmas and then not be able to provide service. The PDO is peak. Peak is not Christmas and Thanksgiving. Peak is Monday through Friday, during the rush hours. That is when we thought that there was as a real need. That holiday stuff we would say "how about paying some big fat holiday bonuses to get drivers out on the street, making some money." We have a ton of drivers that don't celebrate Christmas. That is a nice opportunity for them to get a little extra money.

Paulsen said a couple of other things I noticed in the Governor's budget. It is a \$1.5 billion transit package. It is good. Some of the things I saw in the budget. He proposes 10 separate BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) lines. We know where about six of them are. The four other ones we will look at. A couple of other investments, he does some innovative stuff where he actually proposes being more green. Let's be all environmentally conscious by 2040. He does that by proposing that we buy 20 more electric buses. We just bought our first electric bus. It went off the line at New Flyer in Saint Cloud a couple of weeks ago. That will not be fully operational until mid-May or June. We will get about 12 months out of that before we have to come back to the Met Council and the Legislature to see whether or not we are going to buy more electric buses.

I think we could play a really good part in public awareness in bringing disability to the table in transit.

4. Metro Mobility Stats

Andy Streasick, Customer Service Manager, Metro Mobility, spoke to the TAAC committee. I would like this to be a two-way discussion in terms of as I get back into the role of liaison and look at sending stuff out. We are working with Ken in developing a good accessible dashboard. I would like to find out what sort of information you want from stats other than what I am going to give today. You are going to get hit with a bunch of numbers. Just as I played with the dashboard a little bit. I am going to give you all of 2018 system-wide. I am going to break it down by provider also. In terms of our key performance indicators. And then motivated by something Ken has talked about in the past. I am going to talk a little bit about the percentages within percentages. Who doesn't get counted in that five percent. When we have 95 percent on time, how does that five percent break down? What are those people's experiences? How late are we when we are late? How long are those rides when they are long? I will talk a little bit about that.

So 2018 system-wide our on time performance was where we would like to see it. It was 95.3 percent. Our appointment time was 91.2 percent. Our onboard time success was 94.2 percent.

I also broke that down from ADA verses non-ADA. Our on-time performance was 95.2 for the ADA. Appointment time 91.4 percent for the ADA. Onboard time was 93.6 for the ADA IN 2018.

For the non-ADA service area in 2018, 95.6 percent was the on-time performance, 90.6 was the appointment time performance and 95.3 percent was the successful onboard time performance for non-ADA in 2018.

We actually end up with five providers if I look at 2018. Because of the agency contract transition. So if I start with First Transit Agency for the portion of 2018 when they had that service, they did 99.1 percent success for on time performance for agency, 93.4 percent with on board time success, and 78.4 percent with appointment time success.

I need to call out that 78.4 because it was something that we have built into the agency contract that needed addressing. Drivers under that agency contract were getting their, in essentially having to wait until facilities opened to drop people off under that agency contract. In a lot of cases, if a place opens up at 8:00 and the driver got there at 7:45, they are hanging out with the folks on the bus for 15 minutes and then they start and individually bringing people off the bus. Agency contracts are different. You have eight to 12 people on the bus. By the time those last people are off, if you can't start bringing the first ones off up until 9:00, which is the appointment time, everybody other than the first person on the bus is going to have a blown appointment time because of the way we have that set up. They were opening at the appointment time. We got rid of that. You will see those numbers increase.

Transit Team Agency, for example, for their portion of 2018, had a 93.8 appointment time, 98.8 on time performance and 88.4 percent onboard time. That is part of a new contract with the onboard time. They were working with their metrics. They are doing better now into this year because they have gotten their sea legs that way.

For 2018, if we look at the east zone, First Transit East, they did 94.5 percent on time performance, 95.9 on the onboard time success and 92.8 percent on the appointment times.

If we look at Transit Team, the West Zone that is 95.9 on time performance, 90.1 performance time and 93.8 onboard times.

It was the South Zone that 91 percent even for appointment times, 93.4 percent for onboard times and 92.2 percent for on time performance for 2018.

Then for 2018 again I drilled down and looked at what about that five to 10 percent that are falling below the threshold. How poorly are we doing when we do drop the ball? When we look at on-time performance, we had about 283,000 late rides for 2018. Rides that didn't do what they needed to do in terms of on-time performance. Of those 42.9 percent were within zero to five minutes outside of the window. So we were late by less than a minute to four minutes and 59 seconds.

Then 23.5 percent of those were within five and 10 minutes late and 19.8 percent were between 10 and 20 minutes late. That leaves about 6.6 percent that were 30 minutes or more late.

Then when I look at onboard times we had 304,000 rides where there was an onboard time violation for the 2018 calendar year. Then 29.7 percent of those were less than five minutes over the max onboard time, 21.6 percent were between five and 10 minutes over the max onboard time. And 25.6 percent were between 10 and 20 minutes over the max onboard time. Twelve point four percent were between 20 and 30 minutes over the max onboard time. This leaves 10.6 percent that were half an hour or more over the max onboard time.

When I look at appointment times for calendar year 2018, we had 153,000 violations of appointment times. Twenty-six point one percent were within zero and five minutes late on their appointment times, 24.7 percent were between five and 10 minutes, 27.3 percent were within 10 and 20 minutes and 11.7 percent were within 20 and 30 minutes. Finally, 10.3 percent were half an hour either late or early on their appointments.

The on-time performance, those were all free. For the other two metrics, those are free too, but we refunded those. So the provider is collecting the fare. We put the refund on the GoTo card from the service center. The service center staff are handling that now. I can go back and look at the GoTo cards and make sure the money got put on them.

Bates asked what kind of lost revenue do we have because the rides are free because we are not there within that 30-minute window?

You are looking at 283,000 rides. We would need to look at the breakdown as to how many were in the peak and the off peak to get a hard number. If you would take our average ride cost, you would be looking at approximately \$3.80 each.

It would be incorrect to look at that as lost taxpayer revenue or Met Council revenue.

Bates said I was looking at what the providers would lose.

Streasick said Transit Team loses X amount when these rides are late. I was giving our old average before the fare increase. If you take \$4.10 and multiply that by the 283,000 that would be what we were talking about.

In 2019, for today. Given all the numbers I just gave you. Systemwide so far how we are doing for 2019, February being the fare that it is, these numbers are not the greatest right now. We have 90.1 on-time performance so far, 92.5 onboard time success so far and 83.5 appointment time so far this year. That is what I have so far.

What would you like to see beyond what I just gave you?

Jasmine said I have some questions on the stats you just gave. These are stats with the missed appointment late times that are automatically flagged, right? They don't have to call them in. They are automatically flagged when the appointment time is missed? The second one is can an appointment time be removed from an already set appointment time? If I call and set an appointment time for tomorrow and I am on the bus and I am going to be late, can they just remove the appointment time? I have been told by riders that Metro has told them they were removing the appointment times or did remove their appointment times.

Streasick said the answer to your first question is yes. Those numbers are automatically calculated. It is not just late for appointment times. It is also if you get there over an hour early. That is going to count as a blown appointment time as well.

The other thing, can an appointment time be removed? Not in a way that we are not going to be able to see and catch it. What someone would need to do. After a ride has been booked with an appointment time, in order

to take that out, they would have to edit the ride, which is going to show up for us. We look at what they are doing. We would obviously want to know why the ride got edited. They would face problems with us. If the answer was we are editing a bunch of rides to remove appointment times. We can query to see those edits. That is something we can automatically see. Each of the providers has their own dedicated project administrator. Whose job it is to cull that data and audit the provider and see how they are doing that way.

What can happen and does happen on a more regular basis, is if there is a missed ride and it gets rebooked that same day. A ride could get rebooked without having an appointment time on it by error. We might not catch that unless a customer calls and tells us. If a customer no shows their ride and then gets a same day rebook but the rebook doesn't have the appointment time on there. That is not something we would necessarily catch. It is important to keep in mind that you can have either a no earlier than pick up or an appointment time on a ride. You can't have both.

Easily 80 percent of the complaints I get about the reservationist is "they took off my appointment time" or they call to book the ride and say: "I want to be there by 10:00." The reservationist says: "O.K. We will pick you up at 8:30." Then the customer says "No, I can't get picked up until 9:15." "Well if I can't pick you up before 9:15, I can't get you your 10:00 appointment time." That is true. A customer isn't allowed to curtail both ends of the negotiation.

When I hear from customers that there are issues with removing appointment times, the vast majority of the time it is at the reservation booking because they want to curtail both ends of the trip.

Rodgers said I would like to have raw numbers. I think percentages are just that, they are percentages. Being in the 90 percentile, we all have been programmed for years of school that 90 percent is not bad. I don't want us to lose sight of the fact that eight, nine or 10 percent that is not meeting that level, those are real people. Those are real rides. That is a large number when you talk about the raw data. Somehow, I want those raw data numbers in addition to the percentages. I think the percentages are useless. I understand the need for percentages. I would like to have both.

Streasick said I gave those today with the 283,000 were people who we had late trips in 2018, 3,400 were the number of people who experienced an onboard time violation for 2018. For the appointment time, 153,000 were appointment time violations for 2018.

Rodgers said I think if you break those down like you did with how many minutes were in violation. I would like to see numbers.

Streasick said I can do this. In fact, I manually converted the real numbers to percentages to give people an idea overall of what we were doing. I can more easily give you the raw violation numbers.

Jasmine said could you do more percentages of premium rides? Could we have another meeting about how things are doing with premium stuff? Overall and in general. I would like to see the numbers for the premium rides as well.

Streasick said we can absolutely set up another meeting with Transportation Plus. But we don't have solid information to speak of. Arrival and departure performance. We can give you what we have been given. But that is it. It will be with the caveat that it is not the same as my Trapeze data where I can go look at the bus and say "There they are" at this time. It is stand by and don't know exactly what it means. It is going to be we requested this number of Transportation Plus's and that is what we got.

Fenley said Premium On Demands have been ongoing. I think it just might be an agenda item pretty soon. And it's after we talk about the electric vehicles. Maybe today we will have some time to do some surface discussion as to what we want in that agenda item.

Rodgers said I would like to make a motion. I would like a small group of TAAC members to be established to set up some ongoing meetings, quarterly meetings, with representatives from Transportation Plus to talk about issues related to Premium Same Day.

Paulsen seconded the motion.

Rogers said I would like to discuss this a little more. So generally, when Premium Same Day works it works really well. But there are issues that, from my perspective, don't feel like it is getting any attention or traction. We have brought them up before. I don't know where that goes. But it doesn't go to the program side that I see as a user. I am a heavy user, especially in the winter. I don't want to get into this: "Here's my bad experience."

But when you can get a Premium Same Day ride to work but you can't get one home from work because they stop taking Metro Mobility rides because of the snow. There's a problem. How am I supposed to get home from work? That leaves the user in the lurch. I don't know that having an ongoing meeting with Transportation Plus with users of the program, is going to change anything. But I think it would help us feel better about them knowing. I also have some thoughts about how to streamline the program a little bit. I think we can be advantageous as well as sharing some of the issues we deal with. We are not getting customer service when we have an issue to raise. That continues to be an issue. In that small group, I would also like some Metro Mobility attendance as well. It is Metro Mobility who creates the contracts that get signed? I think some of those details need to be in the contract. I understand they may not be. We need to start talking about this in effective ways. So that remedies can be looked at.

Fenley said this needs to have a little more attention paid to it. Maybe we could talk about the creation of a work group or subcommittee rather than the problems with Premium On Demand. I think quarterly would be good.

Rodgers said initially we could set it up as a task force and have it short term. But if there is value in it, and we see that, maybe we could recommend that it be a subcommittee.

Fenley said I think if the transit company sees benefit in it, they might want to continue it. That is where I would like to see this go. Where we could actually see benefit from interacting with some of the users and the TAAC members. Does anyone have anything they want to add for the creation of the task force motion that is still on the table?

Jasmine said how will we determine who is going to be on the task force?

Bates said I call the question.

The task force will initially meet quarterly. It will discuss Premium On Demand service. We would like to have a representative of the taxi company and also a representative of Metro Mobility there. Fenley said all in favor of the creation of the task force say Eye. Opposed? Abstentions? The motion carried.

Whoever wants to be on this task force should contact me.

Darryl, Sam and Ken said they wanted to be on the task force.

Fenley said if anyone else wants to be on the task force, please contact me, otherwise we will start with those three. I would invite at this moment, someone from Metro Mobility to be on this task force.

Kuennen said my recollection around this is that June of last summer, there was a similar motion. It was immediately ahead of us hiring an intern to work on the program and start collecting data and working with our contractor. Trying to get some activity around bringing them into our customer relations application and bringing them into the fold with responding to customer complaints, etc. I think the notion of the task force was set on hold while we gathered more data. Then bring that back to the committee.

Our intern gave a report August or September of last year. We put some efforts in place on some action on that report. It never came back to this committee to talk about some of that. That is some historical context from my experience with the task force.

The other comment I have is the role of this advisory committee to compel the contractor to a meeting. I don't know if I have the language to compel a contractor to attend a meeting of this committee.

Fenley said we can change the word compel to invite.

Kuennen said I am in favor of exposing our customer needs and the information that this committee has for our Premium On Demand contractor. It is also good timing as we look to expand maybe providers of On Demand services as well. I will be initiating a contract to do that with some ride hailing and on demand services as well this year. It is a good time to examine the service overall.

Streasick said I want to comment on two things that Christine said because I think it is important. To demonstrate our own accountability to what we have heard about POD. In 2019, we are working to add Premium On Demand as a provider to our customer service module. So the responses to complaints will be the same as they are with Transit Team and First Transit. Rather than saying to call the customer care line, and then you call and leave a message and never hear anything back. This can be entered into our database and we have a record of it and can essentially assign it to the POD provider. That will be coming this year.

Then the other one that Christine just mentioned. We are looking at the possibility of partnering with additional providers. Maybe a TNC like Uber or Lyft. Or something where there is an additional type of service in addition to just Transportation Plus. It could be a good thing to give people additional options.

Fenley said I would like to propose that the first meeting of this task force happen sooner than later. And maybe just include the members of TAAC so they can lay out the framework as to what they want to see what this task force looks like and who they want there. Hash out all the details. I am hoping that comment from right now could possibly be moved to that first meeting, which I will attend as well. Just so we can determine what we want this to look like and how we want the discussion to be framed. So we do present this as an opportunity for the taxi company to get good information from us rather than be vilified by us.

Bates said this is one we can attend by phone?

Fenley said yes. That is probably what will happen. Yes.

Rodgers said I did not say in my motion that anyone was compelled to be at the table. I just want to make that really clear. The other thing. I think it is very telling if our provider doesn't wish to be included in some way. Regardless, we can get together and develop a framework and a protocol to move forward.

There is one other issue that I want to ask a question about. In moving the complaint process over to our service center, has there been any work done to eliminate the excessive long wait times to get through to the service center sometimes?

Streasick said I talked to you about that last week. We made some modest improvements with the hiring of an additional customer service specialist. My staff is in the middle of doing a work study. I have pulled a bunch of phone stats to justify a potential expansion for an additional customer service specialist.

Jasmine said that it is very hard to get customer service on the phone.

Streasick said if you get thrown to the queue and then you are on hold, that is about our own staffing. What you are talking about where it rings and rings or a rapid busy signal. First Transit East lost a lot of reservationists. They have made aggressive steps to rehire. But the last three weeks, including this week, it has been brutal in terms of the number of people that will pile up in their queue to book rides. All of our queues are connected. When First Transit East ends up with over 40 people stuck in their queue, it kills the queue. If people are calling in at that time, it either just rings and rings. It could be to us or Transit Team or to South although the problem is originating with East. Or it gives you a rapid busy.

I talked to the contract manager for East last week. He had five new reservationists start on Friday. Two more reservationists started on Monday. They shadow for three to five days and then they can fly solo. We should be starting to see improvements today or tomorrow.

Even though the problem is with calling into here. If it rings and rings or you get a rapid busy signal it is related to the problems with the queue that are currently originating out of First Transit East. Because of this loss of reservationists, the number of people that are in their queue are preventing other callers into the mobility system from being placed in the queue via here or Transit Team or First Transit. So if you have been getting the ringing and ringing or busy signal, the new reservationists will alleviate that problem.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Charlene Doll spoke to the TAAC committee about a problem she had.

Doug Cook spoke to the TAAC committee. I am going to be on assignment for a different job for the next six months. After that I will be back. Yumi Nagaoka will be taking my place.

Streasick said an employee of Metro Transit brought to my attention that they are having difficulties adequately making bus stops accessible because of shortages of facilities staff. Both in terms of front line staff and management. There are open positions that aren't currently being filled. They seem to have some internal issues with how many staff would be appropriate. So if the staff would consider submitting a statement to the Transportation Committee stressing the importance of additional facilities staff. Both frontline staff and management. I was told that that would be appreciated.

MEMBER COMMENT

Clark said I was talking with Christine the other day and she mentioned that in November, an exofficio of the Met Council was talked about. I think that would be a good position to access in terms of the actual decisionmakers.

Fenley said as far as I know it is still working through the process. It would have to go to the Met Council and then there is a bureaucratic process that it has to navigate. It is on my mind and I am glad it is on your mind.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary