

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting Date: September 7, 2022

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Steet

Members Present:

- Chair, David Fenley, at-large
- Sam Jasmine, Precinct A
- Christopher Bates, Precinct B
- Patsy Murphy, Precinct C
- Ken Rodgers, Precinct D
- Jeffrey Dains, Precinct E
- Darrell Paulsen, Precinct F
- Kari Sheldon, Precinct G
- Rachel Garaghty, Precinct H

- Trevor Turner, MCD
- Erik Henriksen, MCD
- Diane Graham-Raff, MAAA
- Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- Heidi Myhre, MCCD
- Claudia Fuglie, MCCD
- Richard Rowen, AARP MN

Ex-Officio:

- Phillip Sterner, Council Member Liaison
 - Andy Streasick, Metro Mobility
 - Douglas Cook, Metro Transit Advocate
 - Guthrie Byard, ADA & Title IX Administrator
- = present, E = excused

Member Attending from Home

Ken Rodgers

Ex-Officio Attending from Home

Guthrie Byard

Excused

Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Patsy Murphy, Trevor Turner, Richard Rowan

Absent

Rachel Garaghty & Erik Henriksen

Public Attending

Nikki Villavicencio

Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:34 p.m.

Agenda Approved

It was moved by Paulsen, seconded by Dains to approve the agenda. Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. **Motion carried.**

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Dains, seconded by Thorsen to approve the minutes of the August 3, 2022, regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Business & Information Items

Safety & Security Action Plan Update

Leslie Kandaras, Chief of Staff, Metro Transit, and Mike Leubner, Metro Transit Police Department Sergeant, spoke to the TAAC committee.

Kandaras said we are back to provide just a brief update on the Safety & Security Plan. But we are really hoping to reserve the bulk of this time to hear from you. Both to answer questions and to listen to experiences you are having and want to make sure we are aware of.

Next slide. I will take just a few minutes to provide an update on Metro Transit Safety & Security Action Plan. We were last here on June 1st to talk about the plan that was still a DRAFT at that

point. Even before that June meeting, we had been in front of this committee a couple of times last year and earlier this year when the Metropolitan Council's Police Work Group was underway. So the Safety & Security Action Plan is a document that came out of about two years of work that the Metropolitan Council did as part of a broader police review process following the murder of George Floyd. That process included a lot of public engagement that was led by the Citizens League. Metro Transit supplemented that with more employee engagement during our Safety & Security Action Plan development process. We engaged with about 500 employees with the focus on our front-line employees.

Part of what I will do today is just give you a sense of what ended up in that plan and what we are doing in terms of implementing it. But again, I just want to really reserve our time to hear from you today.

Next slide. So back in June, a few weeks after we were last in front of you, the Metropolitan Council endorsed the Safety & Security Action Plan's three areas of work identified in this plan. 1. Improving conditions on the system. 2. Training and supporting employees. 3. Engaging customers and partners.

The Safety & Security Action Plan document has about 40 action items that fall into one of these three areas of work. Together the action plan really tries to demonstrate publicly what Metro Transit is working on to address the issues of safety and perception of safety that are really at the top of our customer list of concerns.

I think it is fair to also say that Metro Transit recognizes that they can't fix all the issues on our own. We have to rely on partnerships and working on to ensure that the systems that influence the conditions on our system and some of the root causes of poverty, homelessness, and alcohol and addiction, and untreated mental illness. These are issues that are much broader than our action plan alone can address. But this is really meant to be the framework that we are using to identify what is in our control and report publicly what we are doing about it.

Next slide. These are just some examples. As I said, we have about 40 items in the action plan. But some of the work is already underway. Back in July, the Metropolitan Council increased our police officer wages. We have also increased wages for our community service officers. That is a step that is really critical to this overarching action plan item to recruitment hiring and retention of our officers and community service officers. One thing that we heard really proximately. Both from our own employees. But also from community engagement is the importance of having presence on our system. The importance of having a person who works for Metro Transit. It can be a police officer. It doesn't have to be a police officer. It is somebody who has that official presence really helps shore up the perception of safety on our system. This notion that this is a regulated space and Metro Transit has our eyes and ears out there. Raising of the wages was one critical step to help advance part of our action plan.

Starting this Saturday, we are going to launch our supplemental security pilot. What this is going to start as is having private security personnel who are unarmed, be at our Franklin Avenue light rail station, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, to provide that additional official presence. It is supplemental because it is not taking the place of our police department at all of our stations. Rather recognizing that when we have constrained resources, and we are still trying hard to hire officers. But we need, in certain places, where we are experiencing a high reporting level of issues. We need to provide that extra degree of security.

So we are going to start off at that Franklin Avenue Station. We intend to go to the Lake Street Midtown light rail station next with this. Then depending on how this works, we will be expanding this to other high traffic sites, where we receive a lot of concerns from people about the conditions and behavior there.

I know at your last meeting you talked about the two-car light rail train pilot survey that was out at that time. This was a pilot that ran earlier this summer. Currently, we are still analyzing the results on both the performance Metrix as well as the survey that was out in the field, that I know a lot of you participated in. I think this month will have that information available to us to make some longer-term decisions. In the meantime, you are going to see a mix of two-car and three-car light



rail trains. Certainly, with schools coming back in session. People continuing to do more in-office work than perhaps they were doing in the last couple of years of the pandemic. We are seeing a rise in ridership, and we will be providing three car trains. We expect we will need it for capacity, but we will continue to use two-car trains at points too. So, that is our way of saying more to come. But as we analyze the results of that pilot. Including what we heard from the survey. But it's another example of things we are trying to address and test to see if they can change some of the dynamics on the system.

The next bullet on here talks about resuming Red Kite training. This is training we provide to our operators. It really gives them tools and techniques to improve their own resiliency and their ability to interact effectively with the customers and deescalates situations. The final example on here is another key piece of our action plan is really strengthening our relationships within Metro Transit between our police department and our frontline staff. So, for example, the police department has been out going to our garages and other facilities. Having coffee with a cop and really talking to frontline employees about what they are experiencing and how we can best partner with the police department to address those issues.

Next slide. I am not going to read this whole slide. I just wanted to point out that even though this action plan is new. As of the last couple of months, it has really been building on a lot of the work that we have been doing for years. Over the last three or so years, we have really been focused on increasing resources to increase presence on the system. That has really been challenged by the hiring of the labor market right now. But continue to put resources to making sure that we do have personnel out there where visible. We have improved the camera system on the light rail. The system created the real time information center, which Sergeant Leubner is our leader of and can talk more about that resource. We continue to support the Text for Safety Program. We increased staff for that program a couple of years ago. We have increased the number of cleaning staff. Knowing that part of that perception of safety is conditions that people see when they are there. It sends people signals. Positive or negative depending on how maintained it is. We continue to invest in the police department's Homeless Action Team. It is really designed to help people connect to services and housing.

Next slide. Finally, I will just mention that a part of what the Council did when they endorsed the action plan back in June, that also required us to start providing quarterly reports. So, we are working on our quarter three report right now. We are going to come in front of the Metropolitan Council's Committee of the Whole on October 5, to talk about the work that has been happening so far as well as move the performance Metrix we are looking at. We are going to be providing all of this information on our website too. Part of our commitment to this plan is to be really open and transparent about the work we are doing and what progress we are seeing or not seeing. So the metrotransit.org/publicsafety website is where we are going to have the reports. If you went there today, you could find a copy of the plan itself, too.

Next slide. That was our overview of where we are and some of what has happened over the last couple of months. Thank you for having us and we are both here to listen to your comments and answer any questions you have for us.

Chair Fenley said are the CSO's already in the field?

Kandaras said I will start, and I will ask the Sergeant to add to this. But, yes, we do have CSO's. Back in July of 2021, we announced a transit security initiative that grew our CSO budgeted positions from 20 part-time positions to 70 part-time positions. We have had a really difficult time hiring those. I think right now, we are probably hovering around 14 CSO's. The number fluctuates. Yes, they are out on the system, but we are nowhere near the number we wanted. Sergeant, do you want to add to that?

Sergeant Leubner said it is a part-time job. So, one of the conditions of our CSO employment is to have the officers working towards a degree in law enforcement to become police officers. So, while we lose some, they don't leave the department. They just get promoted to police officers. That is part of it. There is a short-term job for them.

Chair Fenley said I know you, last time, and also this time, you spoke a little bit about what the



CSO's do. Can you maybe go into the main differences? I would imagine they are not carrying lethal arms. That would probably be the main difference. But in terms of attitude or approach to dealing with safety concerns throughout the system.

Leubner said the biggest, overall, in law enforcement. The biggest difference between a CSO and a police officer. The CSO's often take a lot of tasks that don't require a licensed police officer to accomplish. Whether they help with administrative things. But then for us, they help us on our special events. They do the fare inspections on our special events and interact with the public there. They are out visible in the system as an extra layer of eyes and ears so that they are interacting with customers. If they see an issue, they will contact, through our dispatch, and have a police officer come over and deal with it if it is a criminal issue. They answer questions people may have about the system and things like that.

Chair Fenley said I would imagine there is also a level of deterrence just having somebody who has an official shirt on or whatever their garb is. On the trains to deter things.

Dains said I have a couple of questions. The CSO's, when they are there are they by themselves or are there two. Are they paired up? Two at a time for safety purposes? My second question is last night I saw they were hiring. The University of Minnesota's CSO's. I noticed they are very competitive, and it is public information. So I was wondering what the salary range is in terms of maybe you don't know that or do know that. I would be curious of what that salary range is.

Kandaras said when we increased wages earlier this summer. We increased the salary range to \$25.00 an hour. For CSO's, I don't know the full range. We could certainly provide that information. To Leubner, do you want to address how they are deployed?

Leubner said generally speaking, all of our CSO's are deployed in at least pairs of two, sometimes three. There are times where a CSO would be by themselves. But that is more for administrative duties. They have to run a piece of equipment from one location to another where they do not necessarily interact with the public. But on the system, they are in at least groups of two.

Vice Chair Paulsen said one thing I wanted you to know is I didn't notice quite a presence of officers. I did notice the fast response during the middle of the day. What does that look like? Obviously, when it is not the middle of the day, and it is the peak time when there is a switchover. I often hear folks say: "Well, they came for you quick this time. But they don't normally come that quick." Then we have to sort out what time of the day was it, where was it, and those kinds of things. What I was wondering is the average cost of a CSO. Even part time there is costs. You invest in training them. But that training must be transferrable to something else. Otherwise, why would they often do that?

So I am wondering what is the cost and what is the benefit of the system and why are we only at 14 officers, when we should be closer to the 60 or 70 officers like you suggest?

Kandaras said I will maybe start addressing the CSO piece and look to the Sergeant to speak about response time and how the police department manages that. I think you are rising a really good question why are we so far below our budgeted amount of CSO's? What I would say is what we are hearing is generally there has been less of an interest in people starting law enforcement careers. The last few years there has been less enrollment in schools. That trickles down to the number of eligible people for our CSO program. The way the CSO program is currently designed is you do need to be an enrolled student seeking a degree in law enforcement.

So I think we are probably trying to draw from a fairly small pool right now that is really competitive. Because we are certainly not the only ones trying to hire CSO's. I will say that one of the items in the Action Plan is to look at that CSO model and see if we can supplement that with a different type of ambassador or other personnel that would not be law enforcement to try to get our numbers up, knowing that we have had such a difficult time over the last year or so trying to increase that number. So, I am not giving you a good answer. I am admiring the problem with you. But it is something we are certainly. I think raising the pay helps but I think we are committed in the action plan to looking to additional steps to increase that presence. Your earlier points are really about response time and maybe the Sergeant can address that too.



Vice Chair Paulsen said my main question, what I was thinking about was you said homelessness and mental health issues are pretty prevalent on the system. Is there a burden on the system at times? How many of those officers, the 14 that we currently have that type of interaction dealing with folks that are truly homeless and that are experiencing some mental health or maybe a little bit of drug addiction along with self-medication. There is a lot of that. We see it throughout the system. We know there are hot spots. How does Metro Transit partner with local law enforcement or local community partners to lessen that burden on you guys and shift it to the community partners that are designed to deal with those kinds of things?

Kandaras said two quick thoughts. Then I want the Sergeant to address that to you. Just to clarify, 14 numbers just for our community service officers. We have over 100 full-time sworn police personnel just in the department. I don't want to leave the impression that we only have the 14 CSO's out there. The Sergeant will hopefully talk a little bit about how they are trained and equipped to really to work with people in the populations that you are describing. I will say that part of what we are doing is Metro Transit generally is really continuing the conversation's particularly with the counties about social services and how our homeless action team in particular, can connect people to social services in our region. It is a struggle across the region. Certainly, it is a struggle for us. I know we are not alone in that.

Sergeant Leubner said the first part I wanted to touch on is the training that the community service officers receive when they are employed with that title with us. They get a lot of de-escalation and more or less self-defense training. Not aggressive training but be able to defend themselves. I have seen those that are not officers that were community service officers while they are going through training. We run scenario-based training. You can really see how they are able to talk with our role players and deescalate in that. They have a little bit of familiarity with the system and how it works.

We definitely do train them in the first steps in becoming a police officer. And then when they get hired on as a police officer, that is where we go for all the other aspects of being a police officer.

As for response times. Right now, our department is on 10-hour shifts. With that being three shifts throughout the day. We try to cover rush hour as best as we can. Our day shift and our middle shift will overlap a little bit on the rush hour. But our middle shift is always there for when day shift goes home, and night shift comes on. There is always that group of officers that are overlapping. So we should have everybody at the station getting ready to go home or just getting ready to start work. There is always that group of officers that is out on the street.

Vice Chair Paulsen said how many of those officers have specialized training not just relating to escalation, but maybe mental health or maybe really detailed homelessness. And what that really means. If you ask anybody what homelessness means, everybody has a different definition. And it is different varying degrees. But there is really clear different degrees of homelessness around a lot of our stations and you can see it. Maybe the partners we are partnering with aren't doing what they need to be doing. Or we need to be looking at maybe increasing the partnerships and figuring out how we can creatively use new ones.

Sergeant Leubner said for officers with training. In the department, we have a fair number of officers with training with CIT's, which is Crisis Intervention Training. It is a 40-hour training program that the officers go through. It is all about de-escalation and other tactics to use when someone is experiencing a mental health crisis. Our HAT team (Homeless Action Team) is spread-out within the department's deployment strategy. So, we may not have all of the HAT team members working at once, but we put them on different shifts so that if an officer in the field encounters someone who is experiencing homelessness and is willing and wants to receive services, an officer can just get on the radio and ask if there is a HAT team member working. That officer will then go over to wherever the scene is. They can go into Hennepin County, Ramsey County, any of the areas. They are not geographically limited. They can meet with the individual that is seeking services. If a HAT team member is not working, we can take the individual's name and information down and then provide that to a HAT team member who can then reach out.

Myhre said now homelessness is coming into the suburbs. How do you protect the suburbs when



things happen? Do you do more training with all types of disabilities and not just the mental health? Legislation was put out for people with Autism, but there are also other types of disabilities and not just one area to focus on. Vandalism is starting to show up in the suburbs and we have to learn how to deal with it.

Sergeant Leubner said the first part, suburbs. They are in our response area, and we try to get down to them as time allows. If we have a call for service that is down in the suburbs, we will go down and address the issue. If it is a high priority call, we have good relationships with a lot of our peer agencies that are in the suburbs. We can ask them for an assist. If it is a life safety event, they might be able to get there faster than we can because they are responding from within their city, and we may not be in their city at that time. We take them seriously, and we still will respond. Take the report and deal with the situation.

As for the training on other disabilities. The post board did mandate Autism training for police officer licenses. The CIT training, we have covers a wide range of mental illnesses that we would go through. I think a lot of what we do in our training is conflict resolution in speaking with people. A person doesn't necessarily have to have a disability to be distraught after a crime or upset. That is all a very normal human reaction to a traumatic event.

We do work with just getting a victim of a crime comforted. Reassuring them that the police are here. We are here to make this better. A lot of the stuff we have been training in the last few years is slowing everything down that we do. Law enforcement years ago was you get to a call. You clear it as fast as you can, and you get to the next call because that is what we always did. We have looked at that and thought that is not necessarily the best way to do it. if we have to stay on a call for an extra 20 minutes. But we get a better result because of that. it is worth it for us in the long run.

Vice Chair Paulsen said what is your average response time to a call? Say downtown Saint Paul verses on the edge of Saint Paul.

Sergeant Leubner said I don't have the exact answer for you, but we can get that. I will say just a back story to those numbers. We have different calls that require different responses. If it is a priority one call where there is life or safety. That is a lights and sirens response. So we will go lights and sirens to that. Those call times will be less than what is considered a priority two call where there is no real danger to the public. There is nothing. It would endanger public safety to go lights and sirens to that. The risk outweighs going with the lights and sirens.

An example of that would be a bus driver reports here is a bus shelter with broken glass. The glass is broken. We don't know who did it. We don't know when it happened. We are just going to drive using normal traffic laws to that call. That will be a longer response time.

So I will try to get you some averages and those numbers.

Chair Fenley said do you know if there is? Is there a required field experience portion to the law enforcement degrees? Or do you just have to get lucky that these folks actually want to work in the field while they are in the particular program?

Sergeant Leubner said there are a lot of schools that require some sort of internship. So that could be some fieldwork that they have to do. One portion of any licensure degree that you get, whether it is a two-year or four-year degree is that you have to take the Police Skills, which is a hands on, for lack of a better term, it is a police academy. But it is not sponsored by a department. It is a part of your college degree. So that is some of the field experience that the candidates would get.

If anybody knows any friends or family that knows anybody who wants to be a cop, The CSO program is a great way to get your feet wet.

Myhre said my question is are you reaching out to the high school kids like they are doing for the medical field? To get more into the human services area. Like for people who need someone to help them with their disabilities. The cops at the state fair were very good at helping me find the gate to go home. Also, in your training, think about how people process information.

Chair Fenley said I was thinking about different fields besides law enforcement. Like social work

programs or public health programs. Do those folks want to be in these types of situations? To bring a different perspective to public safety.

I am curious about the folks that are at the Franklin Station, 24/7. I am guessing that is outside of the Metro Police. And outside of the CSO as well. Are they just community members that you are paying to just be there?

Kandaras said we have gone through a procurement process to secure a contract with a vendor. So it is a firm that bid to provide this service to us. I don't have the vendor's name off the top of my head. It will officially start Saturday. It will be a learning experience just to see how it goes. It is people who are being hired by the firm.

Chair Fenley said essentially just an outside security firm that staff's buildings around downtown Saint Paul.

Myhre said is that similar to what the U of M is doing? There is a high amount of crime. They have people wearing certain t-shirts or uniforms. They are riding bikes and walking the streets. They put call boxes and more lighting. Is that similar to what you are talking about?

Kandaras said that is a good question. I don't know the similarities or differences. What we are trying to do is supplement our existing resources by getting additional people there. I may look into what the U is doing. They might have some ideas for us.

You talked a little bit about the Red Kite training. I am curious. Can you go into a little bit more detail as to what it is? Is it something that all officers or CSO's engage in?

Kandaras said the short answer is I cannot go into much detail on this. But it is for operators, actually. It is a program that particularly our bus operators have been taking. It was something that we were really engaged in in earnest before Covid. We had to suspend it due to concerns of having in-person training during those times. It is different than the training our police department personnel received. But certainly, if there is interest here, I am sure we can work with our bus training folks to come in and provide more information.

Chair Fenley said I am also curious if you have had any successes or if it has happened yet. This police officer relationship building program. If they get to know each other and are friends with each other, it might be a good thing.

Sergeant Leubner said I have been to a couple of "Coffee with a Cop." Particularly with both light rail lines. They have been really good. Sometimes you forget that what the police department's issues are, the operators are experiencing the same thing. And I think some of the best things that have come out of these sessions or having a cup of coffee is you get to understand what the other job group is doing. And why they do what they do.

For the police officers when we are riding the light rail and switching train cars at a station. You are sometimes having to run to the next train car because the doors are being closed. If you see us on the platform, we are hustling. Give us a break.

To some of the other points. If they miss a bar signal, they can be down on their time. It is really understanding what do the bus operators and the train operators need from the police department. And in turn, what can the bus operators and train operators do for the police department to make it a little easier job for everybody involved?

Chair Fenley said that sounds like it could provide some benefit. So you said you were increasing the folks who are employed in the or the people who respond to the text that comes into the system. Have you seen an increase in demand? Is that why you're increasing the supply?

Kandaras said good question. That was actually one of the examples of previous work that this action plan is building on. We about doubled the number of staff back in 2019 and have kept an eye on is that the right numbers. So we don't have at this moment, as far as I am aware, plans to increase that further. So that is a good question about the volume we are getting. I haven't seen numbers on that. But we know generally, our ridership continues to climb. So I would imagine we are starting to see more volume. We need to keep an eye on it.



Myhre said are you still checking on people? They do it on the trains but not much on the buses. So you can see how many people are jumping the rides and not paying. Or for other reasons. Are you looking at cards as part of the program? Or has that slowed down?

Sergeant Leubner said yes, we still are checking tickets or fares and cards on the light rail. We are working on increasing our staffing on the light rail trains. There is a visible presence, not only with the CSO's but there are officers on the train and hopefully, next time, you may see an officer on the train.

Rodgers said my question was connecting the dots between what you spoke about in the very beginning when you first started talking. Then something later on that David mentioned several times in answering other people's questions and commenting.

So, in my mind, it seems like Metro Transit is trying to be responsible and address the security issue by implementing a lot of different strategies. Some of those strategies are areas really outside the expertise of Metro Transit. But you are trying to address them anyway. Having CSO's that can help people connect with housing and other social services.

I am wondering in an effort to be more visible, whether that is Metro Transit staff or other staff that can be responsive. I am wondering what it would take to engage in partnerships with nonprofits and other social agencies in the Twin Cities that could partner with Metro Transit and provide staff or a person on every platform to serve as an ambassador. A question, an information booth that could connect people with resources that come up to them and have a need to have a discussion. Again, it is having more visibility that there is someone to relate to staff on platforms, in trains, that could really be useful in having services going where people are that need services. And maybe that would help get them off of the train so much. But just be able to reach out and have a connection with a partnership agency that could provide services or connect people to services as another piece of this safety program. Just a thought.

Kandaras said as I mentioned, one of the Action Plan items is going to be to really take a look at what more we could be doing to add presence. I think in terms of the model of seeing can we partner with non-profits and others. That is a great idea, and I am going to add it to this ongoing effort to figure out what more can we be doing to improve presence.

I will say, on some probably limited scale, we have engaged in contracts in the past. Usually these are held by the police department. We have one with Radius Health in Ramsey County to help support our Homeless Action Team's work to connect people to services. We are in the process of preparing to contract with groups to do youth outreach. We have had some pockets of examples where we have worked with more community-based organizations and nonprofits. Usually through more of a contracting model than a different type of partnership. But I think you are raising a really good idea. It is something that I want to throw in the mix and just see if there are other opportunities out there to really expand the reach of our presence.

Rodgers said I also think that this isn't just a Metro Transit problem. It is a community problem. It is really not fair to put all of the responsibility just on Metro Transit's shoulders. It should be all of our problem. And we should come together to try to address this in a wholistic way. I think that would take some of the pressure off Metro Transit always having to be the ones that respond. I get it. But I think it is a bigger problem that we need to all engage together.

Kandaras said I appreciate the point and the perspective.

Vice Chair Paulsen said how does the CSO's play into this? I know in the last legislative session they talked about an ambassador program. A travel ambassador. We were seeking money from the legislature to do that. That didn't happen. I would assume that these CSO's would interact with those transit ambassadors if and when that program got up and running. Is it just a matter of funding that program? Is that why we don't have it or is there a way that we can look for community grants to look at trying to see how we can jump start that program?

I know we are looking at other systems. Like Franklin has the 24-hour service or looking at expanding that when necessary. How do we partner with other organizations that are out there already doing this work?



Kandaras said a couple of thoughts. So, there have been different legislative proposals over the years. The Metropolitan Council's agency initiative that relates to then ambassador CSO work is our legislative proposal for administrative citations for fare noncompliance. That has not passed the legislature. But that piece. We are pursuing that because currently, it is a misdemeanor to ride without paying your fare. As a result, only our sworn police officers can write citations for that. So, what we would envision doing, if we can get that changed to a civil penalty as opposed to a criminal one, would be to have CSO's or some other non-sworn personnel be the ones who are inspecting fares and issuing citations when people are not in compliance.

In terms of getting the program going back in July of 2021. That is actually what we were trying to do in expanding the community service officer program is we felt that would be a way to at least start increasing presence. Though we didn't have the authority to have them inspect fares. As we have talked about, we just have not had the success in hiring that we had hoped to. That is why in that action plan, we are relooking at what options we have for non-sworn personnel, whether they be CSO's or a type of ambassador.

The short answer is it is not a funding issue right now. I think it is a program design issue and labor market issue.

Vice Chair Paulsen said the county does subsidize rides to certain participants and certain groups. To ride their system. You can expand those types of benefits or those types of amenities.

Chair Fenley said Darrell, that and Ken's comments sparked a question in my mind that you might not want to answer. But you can do it in general terms, if you would like to. This is not necessarily a transit problem. This is a society problem that can become a transit problem. So Ken's suggestion to reach out to the entities that are tasked with addressing these types of societal issues. Have you maybe reached out to counties? Have you had them respond or not respond? In ways that lead you to believe that they are happy pushing this problem off on to you instead of dealing with it themselves. I know that is a controversial question to ask.

Kandaras said I would say we have active relationships with the counties, and we are continuously looking for ways to work more closely with them. I know Our Homeless Action Team, for instance, is working closely with Hennepin County to get people. This may not be their exact title, but people who are case managers actually come out to the Mall of America station where we have sometimes people who might be interested in services, congregating. So there are definitely partnerships there. I think it is really. As you have all said, this is a region wide issue that I think a lot of entities are really trying to figure out. There is always room for improving coordination and collaboration. It is a tough issue. I don't have a great answer. I don't think the issue is anybody is unwilling to work on or unwilling partners. I think it is just a really challenging time.

Chair Fenley said I don't see any reason why there should not be county officials on platforms. Redirecting these folks to services and supports that they need.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I am a small service provider in several counties here in Minnesota as well as a couple of cities in South Dakota. What I often see is county providers will often fill up those Go cards and they will fill them up to \$200 or \$300 or \$400 in transit services. You know well that the person doesn't have access to water, clean clothes, access to food, adequate shelter. At some point, where do you draw the line with these county providers and say: "You bear some of that responsibility and you can't just fill up their Go cards and say have a nice day on the street." Because that is what is happening. That is why your trains and buses are filling up. That is why you have issues on the platform.

Myhre said Darrell brings up a good point. Then there is someone like me who gets funding through Metro Transit or through the county. I don't want to be like the burden because the system is broken. Those who need the help don't really get it. How can we balance that out, so it doesn't happen like that?

Chair Fenley said many of us are in the community. Many of us work for organizations that maybe not address this stuff directly, but is there anything? Do you have any asks from us? We're not here to deal with homelessness, mental health, chemical dependency and poverty.



Kandaras said I want to give that some thought. I think we know we need to forge as many partnerships and look for as many creative solutions as we can. I don't have an immediate, concrete ask other than I would like to continue that dialogue and certainly would welcome ideas offline to you. I will keep thinking about if we have concrete asks, we can bring back to either you as a committee or you as individuals with networks and perspectives that we could benefit from. I appreciate the requests.

Chair Fenley said information and assistance provided to just your day-to-day riders. Is there anything that Metro Transit or Metro Transit Police does to inform riders as to steps they can take? Tips and tricks.

Kandaras said a really timely question. One of the Action Plan items. This is a little adjacent to your question. One of the Action Plan items is to take a fresh look at our existing code of conduct. Actually, our hope is to bring a code of conduct to the Metropolitan Council for them to approve as policy. Right now, it is a little less formal. The document that is developed by a combination of what is in statute and against the law, according to state law combined with some operational considerations. We are taking a look at that. But to me, a code of conduct really does establish the expectations for behavior in a public space. Our hope is once we do that refresh, we hopefully get the Council to adopt it as formal policy that we would invest in a promotional campaign to raise awareness and remind people that if you are going to use transit, it is public and here are the standards we hope all our customers will uphold and create the shared responsibilities to make it a positive experience for all.

TAAC 30th Anniversary Planning

TAAC Chair, David Fenley, spoke to the TAAC committee. We are making some good headway with this. You might have seen the email that the Metropolitan Council, I think Metro Transit and the Met Council. We are going to consider them one entity right now. But we are working with both the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit staff on a driver recognition. That email was sent out. I don't know if they have had any responses yet. But it was well timed and hopefully we will get some responses from the community. Maybe even some of you all in terms of operators and technicians that can be nominated for going above and beyond. Metro Mobility and regular route service. You can nominate anybody you want. It is an individual nomination. Not a blanket thank you for folks who are wearing masks. It will be this year that we decide on four operators or technicians to give a recognition to specifically from this committee. The TAAC committee. We are trying to relate it specifically to disability and maybe support of riders with disabilities.

That email has gone out. Hopefully folks are submitting responses. I ask any of you if you have operators or technicians that you think deserve that recognition. Please do. It's always nice to recognize when folks do good. I know that humans tend to more easily focus on the negative than the positive. So, focusing on the positive, I think, is a good step.

Fuglie said that kind of agrees with what you were saying because I just called a couple of weeks ago about a city bus driver. And I had him two days later. He really appreciated it. It put a smile on his face. I was in an area where it was not safe. Downtown Minneapolis. He must have seen the issue. He didn't take off. He just came down off of the bus and stood around me until the guys left. He went out of his norm just to make sure I was safe. I called Metro Transit.

Chair Fenley said that is just another reason. Whether it is good or bad, to call the Metro Transit line and report things. They need to know that these things are happening to remedy them. I am more than happy to both lift up drivers that do good things and also do an education on drivers that say "Don't deploy the lift." Or say, "the lift is broken". Or say, "There is no room on the bus." When there clearly is. I know that happens. If it is not reported, Metro Transit can't deal with it. So we can complain all day long, but if Metro Transit doesn't know it is happening, they can't keep the data and they can't take the necessary steps to educate drivers as to what the policies are in terms of riders with disabilities. It is not a hard thing to do to give someone a complement.

In regard to the second half of the 30th anniversary. I think it is going to be a little more difficult to put the timeline together given that I have a lot of archival information that needs to be sifted through. If anybody is willing to help out with that, please let me know. I will shoot the work group



an email. But if anybody else wants to help sift through this. I don't know if we have a solid time frame to close the opportunity for folks to submit folks.

Streasick said I think the plan is to probably honor folks at least verbally at the December TAAC meeting. So we would want to have people in by early November. So that we can set it up and know who we are going to honor.

Chair Fenley said we are thinking maybe an in-person thing. Whether or not they can be here. Obviously, they have jobs to do. But there will be some sort of recognition at the December TAAC meeting.

Myhre said are they going to get a gift or a certificate?

Chair Fenley said we haven't decided that yet. Does anyone have any suggestions?

Vice Chair Paulsen said where are we going to get our budget from? If we take a donation, could we use it just for this event?

Streasick said we talked about a certificate. Both because of the lack of a budget. Also, because it is somewhat complicated since these are not Met Council employees. What the Council can sponsor and be involved with if we are giving something of monetary value. Even food, or whatever. As part of a formal recognition or a award relating to job duties.

Vice Chair Paulsen said is that because we are set up as a government entity?

Streasick said yea. It is partially because we are a government entity. It is partially because we need to be really clear about our employment status legally for a variety of reasons. Collective bargaining relationships that folks have with their own employer. In the planning meetings, what we are talking about is a certificate. I think we can spruce it up and do something that is not necessarily Metro Mobility. Because Metro Transit is involved too. Something that indicates it is from the Met Council and the TAAC. From the TAAC as an advisory body of the Met Council.

Chair Fenley said if folks have memories of things and the past, please send them my way. I think that whatever we can get in terms of the history of TAAC, would be helpful. Whenever you can get it. As soon as possible.

Reports

Subcommittee

1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers

They have not started the meetings again. Things are still the same. They have decided to move forward with the Blue Line. It was on hold for quite a long time. But they have not actually met yet.

2. Green Line – Christopher Bates

This item was not presented.

3. Gold Line – Darrell Paulsen

They are working on utility improvements, and they are starting some small construction later this fall.

4. Purple Line – Darrell Paulsen

We will have our second meeting on September 13. After we have that meeting, I will forward those notes to the committee.

Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group

Doug Cook said we are still continuing to put the posters and the signs on the sides of the buses. So that is going to be continuing. I am not sure how long. Wherever the bus goes, you are going to see it.

I did mention last month that I saw on multiple buses, the campaign results in terms of showing



that the seats are reserved.

Chair

This item was not presented.

Public Invitation

Nothing to add.

Member Comment

Myhre said why are we talking about funding for the train so much now? I have never heard of anything like this since coming out. Because the other train lines have done O.K. and met their goals.

Chair Fenley said in regard to the Green Line Extension or Southwest LRT. It has just been a politically hot-button topic since it was proposed. And they ran into some retaining wall issues and other things that increased costs.

Myhre said I remember in the past they were fighting to make sure we could still use the bus stops correctly as they build the trains. And can we cross the streets safely?

Vice Chair Paulsen said it gets down to the election year. The Southwest has always been a hot button topic. And because we are going to pay double what we were originally going to pay for it, some people are going to like it and some people are going to hate it.

Fuglie said I know the Blue Line is a hot topic too. There are a couple of mayors who are working with the Met Council trying to change the direction of the Blue Line. Their issues are crime, the noise, destruction of houses and businesses. It is a hot topic north.

Myhre said and do the train lines want to give us rights to their tracks?

Vice Chair Paulsen said we should figure out when we want to review our long-term plan that TAAC typically does every year or two. I think we should look at it and switch some things around. So that come next year, when we want to hit the ground running, some real advocacy work.

Sheldon said during the State Fair and afterword drivers would ask someone to vacate the handicapped seating. It is always the elderly people, and they are the ones that don't need to be moving. It is the younger people that are not moving.

Vice Chair Paulsen said that tells me that the campaign for priority seating is getting out there. It may not be out there at the level we would like. But people are talking about it. I think ideally, that is a good thing. We will see how they deal with it in the wintertime.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:13 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of September 7, 2022.

Approved this 07th day of September 2022.

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