

# Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



**Meeting Date:** December 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

## Members Excused

Chair David Fenley  
Sam Jasmine

## Staff Present

Eric Lind, Christine Kuennen,  
Kimberly Malone,  
Alison Coleman

## 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

## Members Absent

Rachel Garaghty, Trevor Turner

## Attending Remotely

Ken Rodgers, Doug Cook  
Guthrie Byard

## Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:38 p.m.

## Agenda Approved

It was moved by Dains, seconded by Bates 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 Bates, seconded by Murphy, to approve the minutes of the November 2, 2022, regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

## Business & Information Items

### 1. Expanded Identification of Disability/Ability in Transit Surveys

Eric Lind, Manager, Research & Analytics /Strategic Initiatives, Metro Transit, spoke to the TAAC Committee. I am going to talk about a topic that we have worked with you and are coming back with a first report of our expanded language when we are doing surveys around how people identify themselves when it comes to disability.

Next slide. The brief outline here. I wanted to emphasize that you should feel free to interrupt me at any point. Ask questions if you have them. Otherwise, we can certainly have a discussion at the end.

There are essentially four things I will walk through. One is just to remind you of our major survey that is going on. Onboard transit right now. The Travel Behavior Inventory. Talk a little bit about how we were motivated to improve the way we were asking about the civilities in transit surveys. And then walk through the question we are using now, and we have used it a few times. And talk about our initial results. And what to make them and how we can improve going forward.

Next slide. The Travel Behavior Inventory (TBI) is a Met Council research product where we want to understand how people are moving about the region. there are a couple of different aspects to this program. One of them that I am most interested in is the Metro Transit employee and this onboard survey.

So throughout 2022, we have been sending out interviewers to randomly encounter people to ask them about their trips onboard transit. That survey is almost complete. We are expecting a full data set to be delivered early in 2023. And that will include not just Metro Transit, but all providers of fixed route service. Including suburban providers and the University of Minnesota. So that is exciting data for us to understand who is onboard and update our information.

My colleague, Ashley, from MTS, presented to you in July, the summertime, about the pilot data that we got back from this survey.

Next slide I am going to show a reminder of what some of what was said. We were looking at a selection of routes. Not the whole system, but you might remember Ashley describing this as a retention of trips. And basically, what we saw is that when we look at people who answered this really binary yes/no version of the question: "Do you consider yourself as a person with a disability?"

We saw much greater retention of trips from people who identified as having a disability and said yes to that question than those who did not. The way we interpreted this is just thinking about people who are using transit services for their mobility, are still riding transit in 2021, in this case.

While people who did not identify themselves as having a disability, are riding transit much less. So overall, we saw this increase in these routes going from 11 percent, which is close to what it was systemwide in 2016 (10 percent) up to 18 percent. There was a significant increase in the proportion of people who identified as having a disability onboard fixed route transit.

The motivation for why I am here to talk to you about our expanded version is that I think we all can recognize that asking: "Do you consider yourself to have a disability", can be informative, but it doesn't really capture the full identity experience, perspective that is out there when it comes to understanding this issue. Especially how people with different types of disabilities, interact with transit.

So that was what we wanted to do. So that motivated a conversation that we had a year ago at this committee. We had a discussion online about how to do that.

Next slide. What we wanted to do is recognize these multiple dimensions of ability and disability. Specifically, what barriers or challenges were there to using fixed route transit based on the different disabilities that people have. We especially wanted to be able to record multiple identities, which is important in many different aspects. We ask people about race and ethnicity. We want them to be able to identify themselves by selecting multiple responses. The same thing should be true for understanding ability/disability.

Then I think, a really important one was understanding temporary disabilities. One of the key motivators of understanding these challenges is that they are universal. Almost everyone will experience some type of disability in their lifetime. If not many times. So, understanding how people are in that temporary category.

Next slide. This is too small to read. So I am just going to read it to you. I have a picture of this document that was shared a year ago. But this is meant to justify a document that the revised question that we are using. So this question in this form has been incorporated into our standard demographic panel. We asked about ethnicity. We asked about age, household income. Sometimes we asked about whether someone is a student or employed. We always include this question, now about Metro Transit and this survey. The question reads: "How do you describe your disability/ability status?" We are interested in this identification regardless of whether you identify as disabled. Your answers help

Metro Transit that make its services more universally accessible. Select all that apply.

The choices here, again, are meant to reflect particular ways that someone may experience fixed route transit and the challenges that are inherent. So the choices include (you can pick more than one. Select all that apply)

- A vision impairment
- A hearing impairment
- A learning disability (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia)
- A developmental disability
- A mobility impairment
- A mental health disability
- A temporary impairment due to illness or injury (e.g., broken ankle, surgery)
- A disability not listed above, please share your specific disability/ability status: \_\_\_\_\_
- I do not identify as having a disability or impairment

Hopefully this reflects what you remember about our conversation and certainly, at the end. If this discussion goes on, we can have feedback on how you think this is capturing the full dimensions of ability/disability. But this is what we have been using.

Next slide. So we took this expanded language and we have implemented it now in four different survey efforts. Part of my job is to help consult the survey methods and analysis for a lot of different projects we do. So, this is just an example of how we have tried to implement it across different types of research.

The first one, last Spring, was looking at Route 22, which has undergone what we call a Better Bus Route Program, so, upgrading the bus in terms of looking at timings and stop placements, and so forth. So we asked about that there.

We had a survey last fall about Northstar Riders in particular. So riders there was a lot going with office commuting and whether Northstar's ridership should be expected to grow.

Some of you may have heard that we are testing out two-car, rather than three-car trains on the light rail. That happened late this summer. There was a lot of interest in those experiences. So we had a pretty good survey in terms of participation.

Then lastly, there was a Customer Satisfaction Survey in October of 2022.

Next slide. The Better Bus Route 22. It was in April 2022. There were 533 respondents. Route Serves VA. Of those responding, almost half identified a disability.

Next slide. Northstar Riders. The survey was in August 2022. There were 822 respondents. There were current and former commuters. 25 percent did not respond to disability.

Next slide. Two-car Train Pilot. The pilot was in August 2022. There were 1,055 respondents. They were all light rail customers. 12% did not respond to disability. Of those responding, 34% identified a disability. We saw about 1/3 of people identifying with one or more disabilities.

A mental health disability was one of the most common. But interestingly, a vision impairment was also very common in people who responded to this survey.

Next slide. Customer Satisfaction Survey. This is an online survey. It included a lot of people who are not riding at this moment. Because it was different than the other surveys in terms of not encountering people onboard. But nonetheless it included people who have been our customers whether they are not our customers at this time. There were 1,414 responses. About ¼ identified as having a disability. A mental health disability and a mobility impairment were the two most common choices. With vision impairment not far behind.

Of these four surveys, we are seeing, number one, more people finding themselves in this question, as having something that we might consider part of what we have to address at Metro Transit, in terms of serving people with disabilities. The other thing is it is giving us good information of what types of disabilities really need to be focused on. And that they differ across these different surveys because



there are different types of riders out there.

Northstar may be different than light rail and local bus. Which of course, we know. This is a way to give us some really actionable information.

Streasick said I just wanted to point out, first of all. I think that this is awesome, and I think that this will serve the disability community well. When I am looking at the categories, I think that what is conspicuous in its absence, is folks with a neurological disability or a TBI (Traumatic Brain Injury). I think it is particularly important because sometimes, depending on how connected we are with the TBI communities somebody might be. It is a disability where somebody might be inclined to not think it is a disability. They may answer “No” to the disability questions and think of it as an injury. It may be a group of folks that is not captured in this yet.

Rodgers said I want to build on a little bit from what Andy’s kind of began. There is a bit of an issue right from the get-go that makes me kind of question or at least categorize some of the information that you are receiving. It is not as robust as you might think it is. For example, you used the term “Hearing Impairment”. People that are deaf do not consider their deafness as an impairment. You wouldn’t know that. It seems relevant to call it a hearing impairment. But they consider that not an impairment. So that would definitely influence the kind of response you would get from someone with a hearing loss.

So, to that point, disability means something different to every one of us. You interpret it a different way. I interpret a different way. I might suggest that, and I don’t know if this is a possibility at this point, since this survey has been out for quite a while. But instead of referring to us as having a vision impairment or a hearing impairment. Specific impairments. Seeing disability as an impairment. I might classify them more generally. In the ADA world, we call that a functional limitation. So we classify by definition under the ADA. A disability is someone who has a functional limitation in one or more areas. Do you have trouble walking, seeing or lifting, carrying, bending, seeing, hearing, sleeping, thinking, concentrating? Those are the functional abilities that someone would easily more respond to. That could be categorized as a disability and a specific kind of disability. Secondly, but that would give you more of a valid response from people, I think, than calling it an impairment. I just wanted to make that comment that I think this really going to impact what kind of data you receive. Because it is based on what somebody is going to interpret as a disability. And a lot of people don’t necessarily equate a sleeping issue or a functional interpretation of sleeping or concentrating as having a disability by definition. I think that might be helpful as you explore further.

Lind said one of the reasons I am here today is to continue improving on this practice. This is going to be evolving as all of our practices are. I definitely appreciate the suggestion about the functional limitations to see if that might be a revision we can make.

Myhre said I have a functional disability and learning disability. I get stereotyped by my disabilities. It is a combination of a couple of different things.

Bates said I like the survey. But you show roughly 25 percent of an identifiable disability. For this committee, I would like to know what is the alternative to Metro Transit? Can we take that survey and say: “If I can’t take Metro Transit, what is my alternative?”

Lind said that is a great point. One of the main things that I am trying to convey inside Metro Transit is to understand that point about who are we continuing to serve? There is a debate going on about missing commuters and other types of ridership that hasn’t come back. I think emphasizing how many people and how many types of people are riding transit right now to understand.

For this particular survey, and for the set of surveys, we are really focused on the transit experience rather than the broader travel experience. Something we should look at with the Travel Behavior Inventory.

Murphy said I know you have not gotten to the next slide but there I noticed a lot of things. A disability not listed there. Some of what we have talked about here. I know for myself; I have had a traumatic brain injury. And if I had a whole bunch of words, like what we see on the screen here, that would throw me off and I probably would just skip it. I actually kind of like what you have prior to it where they had just a few words. I understand what Ken is saying about somebody who is visually impaired or hearing impaired may not connect with that if they are using. I am not sure how they would meet



everybody's definition.

Lind said mostly, including this completeness and going back to what we were talking about a few minutes ago, I see what we are really missing. Do we have people identifying things that we didn't have in that pick list? We do see some things. There is a post-concussion syndrome. There is the TBI discussion. To see anxiety as a social interaction type of identity. So those are things that we could include. As I am listening, I am appreciating relating it back to the functional challenges. Especially since that is something we can do things about.

If we did think of it as "I have trouble following the directions of an app". Or whatever. That might be a way to allow some detail but not overwhelm people.

Acting Chair Paulsen said I am not confined to a power wheelchair. I use a power wheelchair.

Streasick said is this just a list of what response?

Lind said this is what people put in when a disability is not listed above. Please tell us what it is. This is from the response across all surveys and what they entered.

Does this happen across the medical disabilities? The legislators when they are in a hearing. Not understanding the different nuances. So when you bring this to the legislators. You are looking for funding or help and you are talking about the disabled. You have to be really clear. I actually did this, and I stood up and said, "They are different." We need to be clear on how words are used.

Lind said to summarize. A third to a half of the surveys are the people who identify as having a disability. So that is a big increase over what we had from any survey in the past. Do you consider yourself as having a disability? Yes or No. I think it is important to recognize that within Metro Transit to understand what we need to do to make our service universally accessible. The most common types being ability impairment and mental health impairment. But also looking at that list, we are talking about TBI, there is a lot of invisible impairments or challenges. That emphasizes that we have to design our service in a way that makes it user friendly.

People feel comfortable in talking about their limited mobility or their mental impairments. So what does that signal to increase the service or increase it at different times? Do we need to expand it? Or do we need to decrease it in certain sections? What does that signal to you? Our fleet is getting older. What does that look like? How can we as a representative of the disability community and the aging community play a role in that?

Lind said I think it should be motivational for us to double down on some of the really good things we have been doing. In terms of improving the accessibility at bus stops with the Better Bus Stops program. What Metro Transit is doing. Inventory and identifying places where we can improve the boarding environment and local pedestrian connections.

When it comes to the vehicles themselves, I think the newer vehicles have better special arrangements. They accommodate different riders and especially people with cognitive issues. We need to improve our wayfinding. That means not just directions at the stations. But looking at how we describe our service. How we tell people about what is available, what they can get to, how soon the bus is going to come. All these micro communications about our service. That could be something we could work on.

All these different barriers are barriers to everyone. Not understanding how to use the bus is a barrier. Not understanding how often the bus comes. How will I get back again if I get onboard? These are barriers to everybody.

Myhre said my question is the pandemic has recently been on the news as soon as yesterday. They talked about mental health and all the different types of disability problems and emotional problems. The pandemic brought out a lot of different things. So it might change how a person rides the bus or train at all. Then think of people who have autism or people who are sensitive to noise that is made on the train. How do you work with those people that could really learn something valuable and put it into use? Don't just send them on a bus or a train, with a training program. But how to deal with it. You guys have to do your part and we have to do our part. Sometimes you just want us out of your way and don't really want to deal with us. So how do you become a team together? There are some things



that you could try to work on.

Acting Chair Paulsen said since the pandemic, things have been opening up. Things are changing. We have not gotten back to the ridership numbers that we have expected. We have gotten back to some pre-pandemic numbers relating to. I think it is some leisure back and forth activities. But as far as the consumer day to day ridership that would consistently drive our trains or our buses, we have not seen that at that level.

What we are saying is that the leisure travel is coming back in a number of different areas. We don't think about riding the bus for fun. I typically ride the bus for fun. But if I do that, I bring my family. And a lot of times, because my partner and I are both in wheelchairs, we often take up those two seats. Sometimes it is not so much fun because somebody else is on the bus. Then we have to take separate buses.

The reason I say that is because we constantly see that in the routes that we take. That to me is a good sign. So back to this whole thing about what are we missing? What do we see when we look at the survey? It is not necessarily when I get to the bus stop or the train stop. Or when I get to the commuter bus stop. It is about my way there. And what does that look like? Does that make me feel safe? Does it make me feel warm? Does it make me feel able to get to that actual bus stop? Or to that actual location.

Because if I don't feel like I can even get to that, then whatever you have done on the platform or even in that space, is secondary. Because that means that we are only going to use it when the weather is nice. Or when somebody decides to shovel their sidewalk or shovel their way. At some point, we have to incentivize taking the bus. And we have to not incentivize the convenience of the fact that we have put the buses through the neighborhoods. We put the buses next to a trail.

We have to start to realize that is where these things belong. They have to coexist with each other to survive. We cannot just put a bus in an area and not put housing or nothing next to it. We cannot just put a bus down Route 61 and not understand that we are losing out on a huge population that would travel in different ways if you put it through the neighborhood. So once Metro Transit and Metro Council decides to start looking at the fact that we know that we have to do this, and then they start incentivizing neighborhoods to bring this in, there is the answer to carbon pollution and all of the emissions that we complain about with cars. The convenience of our automobiles.

Myhre said asking the questions. That changes how I look at myself with the transportation. The pandemic brought it out. They are making it sound like I had it for half of my life. And maybe I didn't. Maybe the pandemic brought it out. So, are we talking about that? When there is a big issue that overtakes the whole world, do the questions become different than what they normally are? Then I have to look at myself in a whole different manner.

If the pandemic is what did it, then your question is yeah, I have emotional problems. Yeah, I have a hard time with this. Yeah, it brought out my learning disability. Or my disability keeps me from going places because of the pandemic. Are you asking those questions too? No one is talking about that. Now we have to start talking about it. it is part of the reality of it.

If you need funding, you have to make sure the legislators understand it.

Lind said I definitely hope that we can keep on improving these questions to capture the right dimensions. I think we are not asking about the length of time that these conditions have persisted. Or whether they are new or old. The goal here is to just ask something that is important that we can understand when thinking about transit. We saw there were some social anxiety types. The answers to something not listed. And it might be going along with what you are suggesting. The social environment onboard transit has changed a lot during Covid.

The first thing is there are fewer people. The second thing is there are times and places where it has become a lot less comfortable for people to be onboard. Just because of the behavior issues that have manifested themselves. So that is real. But we are obviously working on that. We are doing our best to try to solve that question. Overall, I would say that our goal is to keep improving this question set so we can have people see themselves and identify themselves in the questions. And then make them actionable so we can improve the system overall.



Rodgers said I really appreciate your explanation and your request to improve. That is always a good thing. One thing I just wanted to mention is, and this may be different than what the intention is of collecting the data you are collecting. But I just want to mention, because I haven't heard it mentioned, that if this data is being used to try to understand ridership and getting our numbers back to the pre-pandemic number levels. You are getting data from riders that are currently using the system but there is a large segment of people that are still not using transportation for many different reasons.

I will give you an example. I work for the state. We have not yet returned to the office on a consistent basis. I am just representative of one very large state agency. There are many state agencies that have not yet fully returned to the office. And thus, there is no need to commute right now. There is a large segment of people, based on their employment needs, that aren't using transit right now because they don't need to transport themselves somewhere.

My point is if you want to access information, there might need to be a secondary track of serving individuals that are not riding transit or you don't get them from transit, but you might get them from other locations. Different large companies that have not fully returned back to work. I don't know how you would do that. But to really fully understand why people aren't returning. I think that has to be part of a discussion. Not just analyzing why people are returning. For those of us who are transit dependent. We don't have an option. If we want to go from point A to point B, we have to use public transportation. Other people have choices. And that might be a different area that needs to be explored to fully understand the bigger picture.

Lind said that is a great point. Thinking about who is not onboard is really important. I just wanted to respond to the transit dependent characterization because I try not to use that at all. In my own work in talking through our ridership, because nobody is really captive of our service. Nobody is dependent on it in terms of when we think that way, we don't give the due respect to the service we are providing. When we say that people are going to be there no matter what. That is my perspective on that.

It is important to think that we want to develop a service that is attractive to everybody, and people want to use it regardless of what their options are.

Henricksen said how long has these surveys been going on for? For how many years and when did it start?

Lind said these examples I brought today are all smaller efforts that we have been doing for many years and many different topics. The customer survey that we did in the fall has been done. Before Covid, it was done every two years, going back decades.

The Travel Behavior Inventory, from the very beginning, has been going on for decades. Also, for about every five years. So there is a long history of data. The questions haven't always been the same.

Henricksen said that is kind of where I was coming from. How long has the inquiries about who identifies about having a disability and how much has been incorporated into these surveys? And the data you have been collecting.

Lind said I don't know how long the question about you identifying having a disability, yes or no. I don't know how long that has been going on. But certainly, more than five years.

Henricksen said the question, I guess, would have segued into what kind of specific examples, programs, policies or even projects have been affected by the data specific to identifying having a disability. It stems more from a curiosity of how do you share that data throughout the entire organization and how are people actually using it? Is it something that is how you frame the statistics behind it? And then there is priority given to certain things? I am curious about certain programs. I don't know if that is something you know about.

Lind said the last time we did summaries of our onboard Travel Behavior Inventory, we called out this 10 percent number of one and 10 riders identified as having a disability. That was pre-Covid. We did put that on our main fact sheet that we sent to the press and to public to understand who our ridership is. It is a really important component of that along with race and demographics and age distribution. Stuff like that.



It was pretty prominent in how we are summarizing what we understand about our ridership. It was probably most used by our engineering facilities group. Who do the bus stop and transit center type design. Of course, they are always thinking about universal access. But I think it was probably them who use the most idea that one in 10 of the riders, pre-Covid, identified as having a disability.

I am using it as a baseline in thinking about now we are in a quarter or a third of people saying, maybe a half, in some cases. That they identify as having one of these conditions. Well, that only makes it more important to do that work.

I can't point to a specific program that developed because we asked this question. It is more feeding into the motivation to keep doing this work. In some cases, yes, just looking into money to do it.

Henricksen said I think in the data that we just saw in this presentation, 2016 – 2021. There is a metric in there that you might be able to utilize leading to just to show the criticality of transit for people who identify as having a disability. We saw a reduction of 58 percent ridership of people that don't identify as such. Even with the simple yes/no metric. And you have only seen a reduction of half that essentially in the people who identify with a disability. So, I think that is a really good point to show that transit, we understand that it is critical to this community. It is something that, it is a little nugget that can be shared. And promote the priority of accessibility and that kind of stuff. I think it is good that we are getting this. You have that information. You can always use statistics to tell a story. I think that is one you can find in there that can be promoted to those programs and policies.

Rodgers said the data you presented with the increased number of representations on the survey from people that identify with some sort of disability makes total sense to me. I don't think it is unusual or a major increase than what we had before. I think the numbers that we had before were diluted. Because there was such a wider variety of a population base. That number of individuals that would surface as individuals identifying as a disability was diluted. I think right now with the lack of complete ridership that we had before because many people are not commuting that don't need to. You are getting a more precise count. Then again, those of us who don't have other choices. We have to use public transportation. That doesn't mean that we don't want a clean and proved environment to be transported in. Or that you shouldn't still continue to use this as a gauge to make sure that our transportation system is nice, clean, and something that people want to use just generally.

I think it is just a use case that is being predicated upon people's needs right now. Twenty-five percent matches the actual number of people that we believe, live with disabilities in our population today. So it matches. Everything makes sense. Nothing sticks out. There is nothing unusual about this. I think this snapshot is just more proof that you have a good handle on analyzing who is writing. I think it just makes sense to me that these numbers make sense.

Murphy said I myself, because of my Traumatic Brain Injury, and prior to that, being epileptic, I was not able to drive. It will never be an issue of me being able to drive. So yes, I am 100 percent dependent on somebody. I sure cannot keep asking a friend or neighbor. So, when I lived in a different home, I was within the bus route. It was before I was not able to use Metro. I was 100 percent dependent on taking the bus. I don't know what you would call it. If we don't call it necessarily dependent or whatever on the buses. Yes, I would say I am sure there are many people. What the wording would be. I am not really happy that I would have to say that is me, but that is the way that it is.

Acting Chair Paulsen said I can take a specialized van. Or maybe I have private transportation from time to time. But I identify as being transit dependent. That is the way I live my life. I operate in the world. Whether it is five days a week or one day a week or one day a month. I am transit dependent. Because I cannot jump in a car or a taxicab. I cannot jump on a train without some kind of assistance. Or specialized service. The door has to be wide enough, or I need extra time to board. To say that you don't want to capture that. We haven't really heard a good reason why.

Yes, people have choices. But people identify the way they identify. When they choose to identify as transit dependent. And then you don't capture that, or you don't want to capture that, that is defeating the purpose of trying to be inclusive. And trying to be operational for everybody. Regardless of whether it is one day a week or seven days a week.

Murphy said my only option if I do not use transit is to be at home. And I chose to do that for several



years. When I did not have the ability to be able to use the bus. Because it was realized that due to my head injury. It was unsafe for me to be riding the regular route transit buses. So I have to use Metro. I cannot even go and take the train when I go to see the ball game, without somebody with me. Because the chance of me not knowing what I am doing here. So it is stay home or go out.

The other comment that I had was something that we were talking about earlier. I am also on the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Committee. One of the things that we were working on a few years ago was the wording that the state assessments have. And they wanted to bring things down in numbers. The questions. And they changed what was a lot of questions into one: “Do you have a disability?”

That turned out being an issue and we, at the TBI Advisory Committee, worked at making it be that you have to ask certain questions. Such as, for example, if I were to ask somebody, if your son or you had a head injury. You could say no. But if I turn around and say: “Did you play sports when you were in high school?” And Eric might say yes. What did you play? You say football. Did you ever get tackled? Yes. That leads to Yes, I was in the hospital for a week. I think I had a concussion.

Using just one or two words isn’t going to catch it always. A lot of times people don’t want to title themselves as being disabled. That being said. That is where I see that we need to be. Very careful with the questions to include all people. But not too vague or gentle.

Streasick said I think to just capture one of the biggest pieces of feedback here. Particularly when you get to the Transit Inventory. I heard a reason about shying away from the term transit dependent. Being at least implied that there has been the understanding that these people are always going to take the bus because they have to take the bus. What might be needed to improve things for them. Let’s not worry about that. I hear that you are very much trying to shy away from that. But I think what the committee is saying is don’t throw the baby out with the bath water here. The term transit dependent speaks to the importance of transit to the Council’s mission. And that for a large percentage of the community, that transit is dependent on the same way that somebody is food dependent or water dependent or clean air dependent. That transit is the avenue to these other things. Addition to all sorts of equality of life events and connections, etc. So I think it is just about maybe not throwing out that term or that recognition. But recognizing that it speaks not to the captive audience. But to the essential nature of the service we provided at the Council.

Lind said thank you for this conversation around this term that sprung up. It is actually important to me too. I really appreciate that feedback.

When we talk about our ridership as a whole, often the motivation and our attention is on “Choice Riders”. We are in total agreement, and I am certainly not going to discourage anyone from saying they are dependent. We are making changes to the questions, and we will recirculate them to you all, for sure.

## 2. TAAC 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Driver Recognition

Acting Chair Darrell Paulsen spoke to the TAAC Committee. I will mention the names of the drivers to be recognized. We will make sure that the plaques get out to the drivers.

Several years ago, when I was appointed to TAAC, in 2000, under the Ventura Administration. About five years after that, we used to bring a number of Metro Mobility drivers and transit operators to our committee. Usually on a quarterly basis or every six months or so. We would recognize them for their outstanding service. And their outstanding commitment to Metro Transit and to serving the population that they serve.

What happened was, over the last several years and several months, I was thinking that we should be bringing that back. What I know is that if we recognize our drivers, we recognize our transit operators. We recognize our receptionists. We recognize the people that keep our system going. We will get more retaining work out of them. About six months to a year, if we recognize them a little bit.

So, what I wanted to do is recognize five particular individuals and not to say I expect them to work for us a little bit harder for the next year or so. But to say we really appreciate the work that they have done. We recognize the commitments that they made to the population that they serve. And with that, I



will turn it over to Andy and see if he has any questions.

I will contact the winners after this and ask that they come back for our January meeting, and they can bring their plaques back. We will take a picture and place it in the newsletter.

This is an ongoing recognition that they so much deserve.

Streasick said how we gathered recipients is we just posed a question to customers. "Did you have any particular transit worker that you felt provided exceptional performance and felt that you wanted to identify?" We specifically put it out to riders with disabilities. We do have recipients from each of our four primary contracts and one fixed route operator. I will point out specifically that although the agenda says driver recognition, it was open to all transit workers. One of the recipients for our largest contract is actually a reservationist rather than an operator. At least a couple of these folks are folks who have gotten years of accolades from customers in passing and some of the others are new. So that is exciting as well.

Acting Chair Paulsen said the selection that was chosen was well deserving. Everybody who got nominated, and the nominators, thank you for that. They all deserve the recognition. But we couldn't recognize all of them. I would like to recognize the operators and the reservationist that we did choose. They do get a nice plaque. Signed both by David Fenley, the TAAC Chair and myself, Darrell Paulsen the Vice Chair.

It basically says: "Certificate of Appreciation, The Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee formally recognizes (Their names) for the outstanding service in the disability community through exceptional performance as a Metro Mobility Operator. December 7, 2022.

If you know these people, please ask them to come back to us in January. we will reach out to them with the details.

Histin Kuku – Metro Mobility Operator

Nickolay Montik – Metro Mobility Operator

Michael Owens - Metro Mobility Reservationist

Richard Huerta Cruz - Metro Mobility Operator

Scott Schaller – Fixed Route Operator

Acting Chair Paulsen said this is the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of TAAC. It has been 30 years since TAAC has been federally mandated and executed by the Metropolitan Council to operate and to advise them. It is to have an advisory role on transit issues.

Over those 30 years, I have seen the committee do a number of things. I have seen the committee be really active. I have seen it go dormant for a while. Then I saw it go active again. I think, my last 10 years at the Council, and I have been here for a while, has been some of the most enjoyable, some of the most challenging, and some of the most learning things that I have ever done with you guys. I worked with many of you guys outside of this committee. In the community and other areas. I appreciate those relationships as well.

So, I want to say that even though we didn't come and create a formal presentation for the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of TAAC. It really is an ongoing work of this committee and what we do at this committee and what we do as citizens from the disability committee. In our local environment.

So even though we missed a formal deadline or a formal presentation for the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. I think what this really means is that we work together as a group. We all come with our opinions and our suggestions and our own experiences, right? And because of our own experiences, our own desires to make transit better. We actually do affect our leaders. We do affect people like Phil, our Metropolitan Council member. We do affect people like the Chair or like Andy. People like Alison. They sit here every day. They have to peer over things that we think about. Maybe we only think about them once a month. When we come to our committee. So it is important for us to recognize work that we have done for 30 years.

If I am still around for another 30 years, I am up for the challenge. I know there has been only a couple



of other folks that have been with the Metropolitan Council for a long time. I just want to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to be the one that gets to say “Hey. We have done some pretty good stuff over the last 30 years and let’s build upon that.” I think the committee here today will do that. I think that we have a staff that works with us and sits and stands with us, in some cases, beside us to get some work done.

Henricksen said you had mentioned in the past, with TAAC, that driver recognition was integrated every six months. To appreciate the hard-working staff and drivers that make transit possible. Since I have been a part of TAAC. It has been three years, now. this is the first recognition ceremony that I have seen. I think it is important to recognize these people. I don’t know how the rest of the TAAC feels, maybe that would be a great annual thing. In December, at the end of the year, we take time to recognize the transit work, and recognize them. As an aside, the ceremony could be a talking point at future meetings. It is a good tradition that we carry on this work.

Acting Chair Paulsen said I do want to recognize that there were other people on the committee that looked at this as well. I don’t know how many of them weighed in by the time I saw the list. I do appreciate your response. One thing I did see is that the ones that came in were all male dominated. There was diversity. That is what we were looking for. To capture that diversity. Most of the drivers that I appreciated most were female operators. I didn’t see any female operators on the list.

As long as I am involved with TAAC, we will continue with the driver recognition. I will talk to the Chair to see if we can do this on an annual basis. If we have to, we will make a formal motion to do this.

Myhre said maybe in the future we can talk about recognizing women. I don’t see a lot of ladies doing this.

Acting Chair Paulsen said they can come in January or February to be recognized again. Because I think we want to recognize all of our operators throughout the year. Not just once and a while. But at least once throughout the year.

Streasick said that is an important observation. I think we know that operators are currently a male dominated field. Certainly in regard to shortages. This is true but it is also true from an equity standpoint. It is important for us, even in a contracted position where they are doing direct hiring. With that, we are trying to achieve more equitable results. If you keep doing what you have always been doing, you keep getting what you always have got. So we are working with our contractors to try to be more creative with their recruitment and with their retention. We know that there are some aspects of the job that could make it attractive to working women who disproportionately have to be head of the household. And deal with kids. Try to play up that reflexivity and advertise some of these aspects. That could certainly be something that helps us recruit in additional underserved communities.

Bates said it is kind of ironic that the 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of TAAC falls on Pearl Harbor Day. But the public needs to know that we have continued moving straight ahead. We may get sidetracked at times, but TAAC has made things better for people who are physically challenged and senior citizens. Our work continues and we don’t get sidetracked.

## Reports

Acting Chair Paulsen said the question that was posed to me is do we want to have a January Meeting? Typically, we do not meet in January. Because January 1 comes a day or two before or after. We are two days after the first. That would also be one day after the session starts. I am asking my team that we make sure that we bring back somebody for the Legislative Updates. So they can give us their monthly update. They already have their agenda set. So they should be able to give us a quick summary. That for me is going to be priority number one for January. if any of our drivers or reservationist comes back, we can have cake with them and take a little photo. You will invite the other Council members? I don’t know if we will do a formal invitation. But you have my formal invite. Now I will work with Andy to make sure that we do that. I will make sure that David is in the loop.

**Bates said I move that we do have a January meeting** because it is the start of the Legislative Session. They have \$15 billion, and I think we could give them a few suggestions that we can make transportation more accessible.

Acting Chair Paulsen said I absolutely agree with you. But I want the full committee to weigh in on this and really understand that that is a challenging time for folks with the weather and things like that.

**Henricksen seconded the motion.**

Acting Chair Paulsen said now we can discuss this. The motion was made because of the Legislative Session and there is a ton of money on the table.

Bates said we may have some suggestions for the Legislature.

Acting Chair Paulsen said if anyone wants to weigh in on this, now is the time to do it. We had a couple of meeting cancellations this year. This will make up for that. I do want to have a January meeting.

I do know that we have a 12-month calendar with work to do. And I do think that if there are unexpected things that come up, staff and committee members can take off and has the right to do so. I do think we have enough on our plates for another year or two years. To be meeting every month.

**The motion to have a January meeting passed.** There will be a January TAAC meeting.

***Subcommittee Reports***

I have two committee reports to give.

**1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers**

This item was not presented.

**2. Green Line – Christopher Bates**

This item was not presented.

**3. Gold Line – Vice Chair Darrell Paulsen**

Over the last several newsletters, the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit have been talking about the Gold Line update. We did break ground last month, in Woodbury. We are still getting a lot of traction because of that.

**4. Purple Line – Vice Chair Darrell Paulsen**

I serve as the TAAC representative. As a TAAC representative, the Purple Line BRT, still exists. It is going through some tweaking and challenges in a particular community, my community in Maplewood. Some folks don't want it in a particular location or area. So they are asking the city to pull out of supporting it. As a TAAC representative, I will tell you that they are doing community engagement. They will be starting hopefully, if it hasn't already started, and it should go into the middle of January.

I will give you a more detailed report on that because I am going to another meeting in the community about the Purple Line. Right after I am done here today.

Sterner said the D-Line opened last Saturday at the Mall of America.

Myhre said on the news they talked about the D-Line opening but then mentioned there are going to be some cuts. We don't have enough drivers.

Sterner said the D-Line replaced the local bus service. It made it more efficient with better buses. So the operator numbers were the same and we are doing really well on recruiting. We could always do better. We have about 100 drivers recruited over the last six weeks with the wage increase. It goes from around \$22.00 to around \$28.00. Once the drivers get up and running, then we can retain the current drivers, the routes will open up. There will still be more recruitment for operators at all different levels. We want to make sure we are giving good service with good quality operators. And not put too much strain on the operators.

I am optimistic about the new drivers and the pipeline it will service.

Fuglie said I was on the D-Line yesterday and I was impressed.



Streasick said two things before we adjourn today.

1. You should have gotten an email. The Council received an external request to take part in an evaluation of emergency services available for people with disabilities and one of the things that they are looking at is the development of a task force. So specifically, we wanted to see whether you or any members of the disability community with whom you interact might be interested in being part of such a task force. I believe it is a region-wide initiative for our particular region. For the purposes of this. It is sooner rather than later. So, please check out that email that was sent. Or if you do better with hard copies, there are hard copies on the table outside of the Chambers.

2. Just a reminder. If you represent Precincts A through D or are the Chair of this committee, you got an email reminding you that your term is up in January. And you should reapply if you want to continue to serve on the TAAC committee. None of the incumbents have yet applied. If you are interested in doing so. And again, represent Precinct A through D, or are the Chair, then please do so.

Bates said we have not heard from Transit Team or First Transit for a few years. At some point on our calendar, could we get those people in here?

Acting Chair Paulsen said I believe we can, Andy, we can get them in here right, Andy?

Streasick said I assume you mean for next year.

Bates said yes, in 2023.

Acting Chair Paulsen said I want to see us bring back our 12-month calendar. And lay that out with a 12-month cycle. Also, if the committee or the Council has projects that they need us to weigh in on or be O.K. with. They can sprinkle those throughout our 12-month calendar as they need to be. I think if we all look at all we do in the 12-month calendar, I think we will be a lot more focused. We will actually see the positive impacts we are making in the community.

Myhre said can we get a calendar of what is going on every month so we can base things around it?

Acting Chair Paulsen said like an activities calendar? I don't know if we could do that because everybody's choices are different. We can talk about that. I know we have done that before. We usually spend two or three meetings doing that. So that takes up almost a quarter of our year when we do that.

Alison, do you know what I am talking about? A 12-month timeline where we look at and say: "These are the things that we have done. These are the things that we identify. We identify the Legislative Update. That is on the calendar as one as long as the Legislature is in session. Then we identify with the State Fair. It usually hits us sometime in July or the beginning of August. They need to come to us a little bit earlier than that like in May. That would be nice. We know that they have road changes in their system. But if they started to talk to us in May, it would greatly improve.

Rodgers said I think the question or the issue of looking at the 12-month calendar. I think that should be an executive committee decision. So you and Chair Fenley should discuss that and bring it forward to us. That is really the detail that you guys should handle and then tell us what is going to transpire.

### ***Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group***

This item was not addressed.

### ***Chairs Report***

This item was not addressed.

### **Public Invitation**

Nothing here.

### **Member Comment**

Henricksen said I just wanted to recommend that maybe for future meetings, since we are having them back in person. Is it possible to have some sort of nametag or plaque so that the presenters know who

we are? And for members to identify members sometimes.

Acting Chair Paulsen said that is a good point. Bring back some continuity and visibility.

Henricksen said the other comment I just wanted to make is we do have a semi-hybrid mixture of being in person and having the Teams. There is a portion in the Teams with an online application where you can chat. And those are opportunities for people to communicate with us if they are at home. I don't think anyone in the Council Chamber here can really read or see what is being said. I just wanted to identify that issue. I don't know if that is something somehow, we can shore up as far as if someone has something to say in Chat that is identified by a moderator. If there is a question.

Then also. Just for transparency, we can see what has been chatted from the other side. So if it goes to everyone or it goes to a particular member, just from what I can see here. I think we can all actually see that.

Fuglie said I would like to see a topic coming up next year about the website for Metro Mobility. We have been talking about it for so long and we still see a lot of problems on the website. I would like to see an update on that.

Myhre said I was on Metro Mobility coming here and the Ranger for one of the drivers miss spoke. Are they still working on updating it and keeping it fresh? Can he bring back some reports?

Acting Chair Paulsen said both of those are Andy questions, I believe. I will talk to Andy about that.

## Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:34 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 December 7, 2022.

Approved this 7<sup>th</sup> day of December 2022.

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