

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting date: August 6, 2025

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

- ☐ Chair, David Fenley, at large
- ☒ Vice Chair, Darrell Paulsen, Precinct F
- ☒ Sam Jasmine, Precinct A
- ☒ Patsy Murphy, Precinct C
- ☒ Ken Rodgers, Precinct D
- ☐ Jeffrey Dains, Precinct E
- ☐ Kari Sheldon, Precinct G

- ☐ Michele Severson, MCD
- ☒ Erik Henriksen, MCD
- ☒ Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- ☐ Heidi Myhre, MCD
- ☒ Claudia Fuglie, MCD

Ex-officio:

- ☐ Andy Streasick, Metro Mobility
- ☒ Julie Sellner, Metro Mobility Service Center
- ☐ Douglas Cook, Metro Transit Customer Advocate
- ☐ Anjuli Cameron, Metropolitan Council

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

Call to order

A not being quorum being present, Committee Vice-Chair Paulsen called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:35 p.m.

Business and information items

1. Push-button annunciator upgrade project was presented by Jasna Hadzic-Stanek and Jacob Brown from Metro Transit. The system of 450+ push-button annunciators at transit centers and bus rapid transit stops is aging, with many components no longer manufactured and frequent maintenance challenges. Currently, functionality issues are reported reactively by riders rather than monitored proactively, and the data provided through the annunciators is often not aligned with visual real-time signage. Staff outlined the project goals, which include ensuring ADA-compliant audio content, enabling faster responses to outages, reducing reliance on human voice recordings through automated text-to-speech, minimizing manual labor, reducing system complexity, and providing features such as adjustable audio levels to reduce noise pollution. The timeline anticipates a nationwide evaluation of vendors this year, a pilot beginning in 2026, and full implementation by 2027.

Discussion focused on what information the annunciators should provide and how the committee might be involved in testing. Committee members stressed that announcements should go beyond static schedules to include real-time information such as actual arrival

times, multiple upcoming departures, and detour or closure notices. Member Rodgers noted the importance of aligning the project with Minnesota's Olmstead Plan goals for people with disabilities and offered to meet with staff offline to share specific recommendations, including the need for announcements based on actual bus movement rather than timetables, and the use of natural-sounding text-to-speech technologies now widely available. Vice-chair Paulsen added that winter weather and functionality issues limit the current system, and that future upgrades should prioritize reliability and core rider needs before adding "bells and whistles." Several members suggested the possibility of a subcommittee or work group, led by Member Rodgers, to provide detailed feedback on vendor options and usability testing.

Concerns were also raised about the risk of delays or failure during the pilot phase, given the current system's end-of-life status. Staff responded that multiple vendors will be tested in parallel under an "innovative procurement" model used successfully in other projects, and that the existing system will remain operational throughout the transition, even if only with limited repairs. They emphasized that failure is not considered an option, as there are proven vendor technologies in the marketplace that can be adapted for Metro Transit. Members agreed it would be beneficial for TAAC to provide input during the pilot phase, especially around accessibility and user experience. Member Rodgers will report back at the next meeting on the outcomes of his follow-up discussions with staff, and the committee will consider how to formally engage with the project going forward.

2. Metro Mobility Update from Julie Sellner from Metro Mobility. Julie Sellner provided updated monthly statistics through the end of July. She reported that on-time performance for ADA trips was at 93.5 percent, non-ADA trips at 93.3 percent, with an overall system average of 93.5 percent. Year to date, Metro Mobility had transported 930,000 passengers, a volume Julie characterized as significant given the high level of on-time performance. She noted a dip in on-time numbers during the peak of construction season in recent months, but added that performance was beginning to rebound as road projects wrapped up, with expectations for August to be stronger than July.

Julie also presented figures on appointment-time performance, which measures whether riders arrive within 30 minutes of their scheduled appointment time. Current compliance stood at 92.3 percent for ADA trips, 91.8 percent for non-ADA trips, and 92.3 percent overall. Out of 281,000 trips with appointment requirements, 5,872 had arrived early, while 15,898 were late. She emphasized that Metro Mobility is working to reduce the number of early and late trips, with particular attention to late arrivals.

Committee member Rodgers raised concerns about the impact of late arrivals on riders who depend on timely access to healthcare. Many clinics, he noted, enforce policies that deny service to patients arriving more than 10 minutes late, which means thousands of riders could be forced to reschedule and return on another day. He stressed that this represents a major hardship for people with disabilities and asked how the gap between Metro Mobility's performance metrics and healthcare provider expectations could be resolved. Julie acknowledged the issue, noting that the agency's policy measures exact appointment-time compliance, while healthcare providers typically allow a 5–15 minute grace period. She agreed this gap needs more study and reaffirmed that reducing late trips is a core focus of their improvement efforts.

Discussion then turned to navigation tools and technology used by drivers. Committee member Rodgers asked whether Metro Mobility vehicles had access to real-time navigation updates similar to Google Maps, which reroutes drivers automatically in response to traffic and construction. Julie explained that the current Ranger system, linked to Trapeze scheduling software, lags behind tools like Google Maps in updating routes. Metro Mobility has updated Ranger maps, leading to modest improvements, but the longer-term solution is the rollout of DriverMate, a system that will provide drivers with real-time road condition data. Originally expected by fall, the DriverMate pilot is now anticipated to launch closer to mid-winter.

Ken also asked whether Metro Mobility is evaluating newer scheduling platforms beyond



Trapeze. Julie responded that while alternative software exists, such as Uber- or Lyft-style systems, these generally lack the ability to manage both productivity and appointment-time requirements at Metro Mobility's scale. She noted that Metro Transit has tested alternatives, such as Echolane on Transit Link, but found them unable to handle the system's volume. Despite this, she emphasized that staff remain open to exploring new options. Member Rodgers suggested using Metro Mobility's historical ride request data as the basis for an academic research project at the University of Minnesota or Humphrey School of Public Policy, proposing that students apply AI modeling to determine whether more efficient service models might exist. Julie responded positively, agreeing that exploring innovative approaches is always worthwhile.

Vice-chair Paulsen raised additional concerns about drivers' navigation tools, stating that some drivers appear to be using their personal cell phones to access mapping applications when Rangers are not functioning properly. She asked whether this was an approved practice or an informal workaround. Julie said it is not Metro Mobility policy to allow drivers to use personal phones while operating vehicles, calling it a safety concern, but acknowledged she would need to investigate further whether dispatch or zone-level practices were encouraging or permitting the behavior. The vice-chair expressed frustration that such basic operational questions were not already clearly answered, but Julie reaffirmed that official policy does not permit drivers to use their personal devices.

The discussion concluded with acknowledgment that technology and policy gaps remain, both in appointment-time performance and in navigation systems. Committee members reiterated that rider hardship should be minimized and emphasized the need for faster improvements. Julie agreed that the issues raised are critical and assured members that Metro Mobility is committed to continued improvements and to reporting on these key performance measures at each monthly meeting.

The committee next reviewed Metro Mobility's performance on maximum on-board ride times. Staff reported that year-to-date for 2025, 96.8% of ADA trips and 98.2% of non-ADA trips met the required standards, with an overall compliance rate of 97.2%. This equates to more than 930,000 passenger trips since the beginning of the year. Staff emphasized that these results indicate riders are not exceeding the allowable maximum ride time, though they acknowledged that trips can still feel lengthy due to the nature of a shared-ride system.

Committee members asked about the difference in performance between ADA and non-ADA trips. Staff explained that non-ADA service operates at a smaller scale outside of the ADA service area, which can contribute to the difference. Members, however, expressed concerns based on personal experience with non-ADA trips, citing frequent late arrivals, extended travel times, and difficulty in meeting scheduled appointments. Some noted that this has caused them to reduce their use of Metro Mobility. Staff expressed appreciation for this feedback and committed to reviewing these concerns to better understand where improvements could be made, including whether routing and scheduling practices could be refined.

Further discussion focused on performance reporting. Committee members observed that while overall key performance indicators (KPIs) are consistently met and often exceed federal requirements, the statistics do not provide visibility into the trips that fall outside compliance. Members recommended that staff share more detail on these cases, including examples of when service was late or when riders were on board for extended times, with personal information removed. This would help the committee better understand where gaps exist and how corrective actions are being taken. Staff noted that individual trips are regularly reviewed internally, including manifests, routing, and service data, and agreed to explore ways to incorporate this level of detail into future reports to provide greater transparency.

The committee also discussed whether drivers are aware in real time when they have delivered a rider late to a scheduled appointment. Staff confirmed that drivers do receive performance information but emphasized that challenges inherent to shared-ride operations can complicate on-time delivery.

The committee continued the discussion on Metro Mobility performance, focusing on opportunities for improved data collection and reporting. Members suggested that drivers provide real-time feedback when service metrics are not met, to supplement internal reviews. Staff confirmed that driver input is already collected, reviewed, and factored into service evaluations. Staff emphasized that Metro Mobility's strong national performance is supported by regular feedback from both drivers and dispatchers, which is used to improve operations.

Trip request denials were addressed, with staff reporting that there were zero denials in 2025 to date. Performance standards are reviewed monthly for each service provider, and key performance indicators (KPIs) are tracked and reported across the system. Staff explained that data from other programs, such as Metro Move, are not included in these reports, as their focus is on Metro Mobility operations.

Committee members raised additional operational questions, including procedures for passengers who miss appointments and the reliability of fare collection machines (Go-To card readers). Staff noted that resources are available for passengers experiencing card or equipment issues, and all incidents are tracked. Equipment failures are not charged to passengers. Staff committed to investigating recurring issues with card readers and ensuring appropriate follow-up.

Members expressed appreciation for the level of detail in the reports and presentations, noting that breaking down performance data helps identify opportunities for improvement, particularly during seasonal challenges such as construction and winter weather. Staff affirmed their ongoing commitment to data-driven service improvements and thanked the committee for their engagement and recommendations.

Reports

Subcommittee

1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers

Getting closer to engineering completion. Suggested reading update that was sent via email.

2. Purple Line – Darrell Paulsen

There was some discussion about opposition to the name of the project from local officials.

Public invitation

There was some disruptive back and forth conversation during public comment period.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:22p.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 August 6, 2025.

Approved this 1st day of October 2025.

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