

Transportation Committee

Meeting date: February 9, 2015

For the Metropolitan Council meeting of February 11, 2015

Subject: Amendment to the Transitways Guidelines to update the Light Rail Vehicle Standards

District(s), Member(s): All

Policy/Legal Reference: MN Statutes, Section 473.4056, Regional Transitways Guidelines

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Division/Department: MTS/Metro Transit / Green Line Extension Project Office

Proposed Action

That the Metropolitan Council (Council) amend the Regional Transitways Guidelines to add the following guidelines for future light rail vehicle purchases:

- All vehicles must meet or exceed the standards established in the Americans with Disabilities Act
- All vehicles must also include:
 - two dedicated spaces for wheelchair users in each car
 - seating for a companion adjacent to each of the wheelchair-dedicated spaces

Background

In 2012, the Council adopted Regional Transitway Guidelines, which serves as standards in the design of transitway investments, after extensive internal discussion and public input. The purpose of the Regional Transitway Guidelines is to provide technical guidance, based in best practices, that supports the development and operation of transitways in a way that is consistent, equitable, and efficient, and delivers an effective, integrated, and user-friendly transit system throughout the Twin Cities region. Chapter 6 provides guidelines for purchasing vehicles and provides a basis for understanding the elements important to vehicle decision making in an industry where technology, styling, and vendors are evolving quickly. The current guidelines state that all light rail vehicles must be ADA (American with Disabilities Act) compliant.

In 2014, state legislation was passed that states that by January 1, 2015, the Metropolitan Council shall adopt and may thereafter amend standards for the design of light rail vehicles that are reasonably necessary to provide access for, and to protect the health and safety of, persons who use the service. All light rail transit vehicles procured on and after January 1, 2015, must conform to the standards then in effect. The 2014 legislation also requires the Metropolitan Council to specifically amend the standards to include designs that address accessibility and to review those proposed amendments with the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee before adopting, which was done on February 4. At a minimum, the standards must include:

- (1) two dedicated spaces for wheelchair users in each car;

- (2) seating for a companion adjacent to at least two wheelchair-dedicated spaces; and
- (3) further specifications that meet or exceed the standards established in the Americans with Disabilities Act

The Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee reviewed the proposed amendment that was based on the language in State Statutes. TAAC members indicated that the guideline related to companion seating was unclear. As a result, TAAC offered and approved a revision to clarify their intent to have at least one companion seat near each of the wheel chair dedicated spaces:

- seating for a companion adjacent to each of the wheelchair-dedicated spaces

See the attached proposed amended Regional Transitway Guidelines Chapter 6 – Vehicles.

Rationale

This amendment is required by Minnesota State Statutes 473.4056 and responds to concerns over the initial layout of the Type II vehicles.

Funding

The Southwest LRT project includes funding for light rail vehicles.

Known Support / Opposition

The proposed language was reviewed and recommended by the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee.



6. VEHICLE GUIDELINES

It is important to note that these Transitway Guidelines are not meant to be overly prescriptive, but rather provide a basis for understanding the elements important to vehicle decision making in an industry where technology, styling, and vendors are evolving quickly. The Transitway Guidelines should be considered collectively when making vehicle decisions for transitways.

6.1. LRT AND COMMUTER RAIL VEHICLES

The vehicles for LRT and Commuter Rail must be compatible with the existing rail and infrastructure systems and must adhere to current state and federal law.

Future vehicle purchases will consider compatibility with the existing rail and infrastructure systems as the factor of utmost importance. Effective January 1, 2015, Minnesota Statute 473.4056 established that All light rail vehicles should be ADA-compliant must meet or exceed the standards established in the Americans with Disabilities Act. The statute also established that all vehicles must include two dedicated spaces for wheelchair users in each car and seating for a companion adjacent to each of the wheelchair-dedicated spaces.

6.2. BUS RAPID TRANSIT VEHICLE SIZING AND CAPACITY REQUIREMENTS

When determining the vehicle sizing and seating requirements for BRT station-to-station service, it is important to consider the service type and characteristics. Important considerations should include:

- **Passenger load standards/peak loads**
- **Passenger trip lengths (time and distance)**
- **Ridership demand at end of vehicle life**
- **Service characteristics (speed, maneuvering)**
- **Interior organization of vehicle features such as seats, wheelchair securements, fare-collection equipment, and bicycles**

This guideline is a tool for bus rapid transit (BRT) planners and implementers to understand the important considerations when sizing and configuring a vehicle for BRT station-to-station service. There is no “ideal” BRT vehicle that will fit the needs of every corridor in the region. In addition, a guideline recommending a specific vehicle configuration would limit the flexibility of those vehicles for use on other corridors or as characteristics of the corridor change. All vehicles should be ADA compliant. Table 6-1 summarizes vehicle types and their passenger loads and appropriate service types. BRT station-to-station vehicles would match with options associated with local service but a more detailed analysis of service type using the considerations listed above should be done in addition to the guidance in the following sections.