

Minutes of the

SPECIAL MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

Committee Members Present: Chair Lona Schreiber, Vice-Chair Katie Rodriguez, Edward Reynoso Jon Commers, Steve Elkins, Jennifer Munt, Cara Letofsky, Deb Barber, Gail Dorfman, Marie McCarthy

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Schreiber called the special meeting of the Council's Transportation Committee to order at 4:01 p.m. on Monday, December 7, 2015.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by Councilmember Letofsky, seconded by Councilmember Elkins to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

It was moved by Councilmember Commers, seconded by Councilmember Elkins to approve the minutes of the November 23, 2015 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

TAB LIAISON REPORT

Commissioner Randy Maluchnik did not give a report because the TAB did not meet since the last Transportation Committee.

MTS DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

MTS Director Arlene McCarthy confirmed that the December 28th meeting of the Transportation Committee has been cancelled, and asked that the recording secretary send out an official notice of the cancellation. The next Transportation Committee will be January 11, 2016.

Ms. McCarthy reported that the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax revenues report for November is at 103.09%, bringing our year to date total to 99.44% of the state forecast.

Ms. McCarthy also said that Thursday, December 3rd was the highest ridership day in Metro Mobility history (the first day with actual ridership of over 8,000 trips) and that last week was the 2nd highest ridership week in Metro Mobility history. It was likely only the weather on Monday that prevented this from being the highest single ridership week, finishing with an average of 7,500 rides per weekday. MTS will be presenting strategies for Metro Mobility to the Transportation Committee in early 2016.

We now have a 5-year Federal Transportation Bill, called the FAST Act (Fixing America's Surface Transportation). A more detailed report will be provided in the future.

Transit General Manager Brian Lamb mentioned that the ABRT bus was on display for Councilmembers in the front parking lot prior to the meeting, and that he hoped everyone had a chance to inspect it.

The METRO Green Line continues to have tremendous success; average weekday ridership has now been above 40,000 for 12 straight weeks. The week of Nov. 16-22, there were an average of 40,303 rides on the Green Line, about 16 higher than the average from a year ago. According to preliminary ridership data from November, the Green Line again surpassed 1 million rides in November. That would bring total ridership through the first 11 months of the year to more than 11.3 million.

Northstar also saw a bump last week as we experienced our first winter weather of the season. Nearly 3,200 people took the train on Monday and more than 3,400 people rode on Tuesday, a 34% increase over the same day last year. Ridership is essentially flat compared to last year; with another 54,500 rides this month, we can beat last year's total.

A pilot project that gives eligible residents in the Council's Housing Rental Assistance program access to reduced-cost fares is now underway. Around 8,000 people in nearly 4,300 households were invited by letter last week to sign up for the Transportation Assistance Program, or TAP. After enrolling, TAP participants can purchase Go-To Cards that automatically deduct \$1 when boarding any Metro Transit bus or light-rail train (additional charges apply on Northstar).

To receive a TAP Go-To Card, eligible residents must provide a redemption code online or at a Metro Transit Service Center and add at least \$5 in value. The first 500 people to enroll will receive an additional \$5 in-fare value at no cost. Discounted fares will be available through June 1, 2016. TAP Go-To Card participants will remain active after the pilot concludes but full-price fares will be charged. A post-pilot survey will help inform about next steps.

Customers have been largely supportive since several Nicollet Mall routes were moved to Hennepin Avenue last month. Because the City of Minneapolis is moving ahead with plans to put bike lanes on Third Avenue, Nicollet Mall routes were moved to Hennepin Avenue on Nov. 7. Customer Relations reports that the vast majority of customers have provided positive feedback. Delays have also been manageable based on what we've seen thus far. Updated route maps for Nicollet Mall buses are included in new pocket schedules going out this week. New schedules that reflect the Hennepin Avenue routing will be available in March. New bus stop signs and shelters have also been installed at several locations.

An operator testing event will be held at Metropolitan State University in St. Paul on Saturday (Dec. 12). Eligible applicants can get behind the wheel and apply for a job as a part-time bus operator at the event. Check-in will begin at 9 a.m. This is the second operator testing event hosted by Metro Transit this year in an effort to reduce the barriers to applying and recruit more part-time operators. Two buses were also recently wrapped in advertising promoting operator and Mechanic-Technician jobs. When not being used at events, the buses will be in service.

Metro Transit, J.J. Taylor Distributing and Miller Lite will again be providing free rides on New Year's Eve. Free rides will be available from 6 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 31, through 3 a.m. the following morning. Since 2011, Metro Transit and Miller Lite have provided more than 1 million free rides on New Year's and St. Patrick's Day. The program has support from local and state law enforcement.

BUSINESS

CONSENT ITEMS:

1. 2015-312 SW: 2016-2019 TIP Amendment: Hennepin County Cedar Lake LRT Regional Trail Crossings. MTS Senior Planner Joe Barbeau. No questions from Councilmembers.

Motion to approve business item was made by Councilmember Rodriguez and seconded by Councilmember Letofsky. Motion carried. Consent to Council.

NON-CONSENT ITEMS:

1. 2015-308 SW: Cooperative Construction and Lease Agreement with MnDOT Cedar Grove Transit Station. Presented by Metro Transit Principal Engineer Claudius Toussaint. There were no questions from Councilmembers. Motion to approve business item was made by Councilmember Commers and seconded by Councilmember Barber. Motion carried, non-consent to Council.

INFORMATION

1. TOD Update. Presented by Director of Transit Oriented Development Lucy Galbraith, who reiterated TOD policy goals and strategies. Councilmember Letofsky asked about joint development along LRT lines; Galbraith answered that in the case of LRT, we own the land and will work with partners to develop, but where we don't own the land, we participate in different ways with property development. Chair Schreiber asked how closely we have worked with Hennepin County regarding the Blue Line/Bottineau project; she asked that TOD "get a little more engaged" with our partner jurisdictions. Councilmember Munt asked about handling inquiries from other agencies regarding TOD projects, and Brian Lamb discussed the significant potential of a shared mapping database. Dorman questioned whether we were flexible enough to guide properties towards TOD purposes when land comes up for sale. Councilmember Commers stated that he had participated in the first meeting of the community advisory committee formed around the Snelling/University parcel, and that the Council clearly has an important role in owning 10 of those acres; equity concerns and creating gateways in workforce opportunities were prominent topics of discussion. Galbraith gave a brief take away of the three TOD forums already held and a 2016 preview, which included moving two or more properties into development and overall, to advance TOD in all communities, all scales, all transit modes, with aligned Met Council resources.
2. Metro Transit Ridership Report Analysis Update. Presented by Nick Eull, Senior Manager, Revenue Operations. Mr. Eull spoke about YTD ridership through October, including bus, light rail and commuter rail. Total ridership in all modes showed an increase of 1.6 million rides, or an improvement of 2.3%; 2010 – 2015 trends up 10%, or an increase of about 2% per year. Bus Ridership dropped just under 5% from October 2014 to October 2015; Blue Line ridership has increased 1 million rides, or 12.5% between October 2014 - October 2015; Green Line ridership is now at 10.2 million rides, averaging weekday ridership of over 37,000 rides; ridership is very strong along the Green Line. Northstar is up .3% over 2014 levels; on time performance has improved greatly over the last year.

Initiatives to build ridership: \$20 Summer Student Pass, or 140,000 Summer Student Pass rides; Wi-Fi on buses, generating very positive customer comments; direct mailing campaigns, resulting in 54,552 additional rides; and the Ride Out the Summer program, or free rides in August for youth on weekends, for 1,300 additional weekend rides. Some additional initiatives are new text messaging options at the stop level; improved bus signage at 2,300 bus stops this fall; and low income fare program demonstration which began December 1st.

Metro Transit Director of Strategic Initiatives John Levin answered a question by Councilmember McCarthy about how breakdowns are determined regarding bus ridership changes due to the launching of the Green Line. Discussion ensued regarding ways to promote sharing of transportation resources.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:35 p.m.

Linda Thayer
Recording Secretary