

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

July 27, 2020

LOCATION: Due to COVID-19 this meeting was held electronically.

Committee Members Present: Chair Deb Barber, Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, Reva Chamblis, Molly Cummings, Christopher Ferguson, Francisco Gonzalez, Phillip Sterner, Raymond Zeran

Committee Members Absent: Kris Fredson

TAB Liaison Present: None

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was present when Chair Barber called the regular meeting of the Council's Transportation Committee to order at 4:04p.m. on Monday, July 27, 2020.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Cummings, seconded by Chamblis to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Aye: 6 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Gonzalez, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 3 Ferguson, Fredson, Sterner

TPP PUBLIC HEARING

Chair Barber opened the public hearing for public comments on the TPP. These public comments will be recorded and compiled into a report to be available after the public comment period ends.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Gonzalez seconded by Cummings to approve the minutes of the July 13, 2020 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

Aye: 8 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Fredson

PUBLIC COMMENT

Ryan Timlin ATU President addressed the committee regarding contract negotiations.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson reported:

Regional Solicitation Application Summary

Scoring continues by committees. Staff will be presenting an update on project scoring to this committee in late August.

Contractor Transition

This weekend MTS transitioned the Metro Mobility South Contract from First Transit to Transit Team. As follow up to questions asked previously by this committee:

- 65% of drivers, 99 in total, transitioned to the new contract, the remaining drivers were all offered positions with existing contractor, no job loss
- All transferred employees received increases in pay over their current pay, and there was also a signing bonus of \$3k for drives, and \$1k for office staff
- This contract required the increased the minimum wage of drivers to \$17.50. As you will hear in budget presentation later today this is one of initiatives within the budget as contracts get renewed.

MTS Operations Update

All MTS transit operations are back to their COVID-level service types and levels with about 3800 health care essential worker trips and 800 food shelf deliveries. Contractors are performing checks of all employees and drivers as they arrive. In addition, the Council continues to offer COVID testing to all transit essential workers from our Contractors. Last week there were three positive COVID tests among contractor employees tested and completed all necessary contract tracing with other employees and any customers. Contractors are reporting no issues with staffing levels needed to meet service demands. Drivers are distributing masks to any customer who is attempting to board without a mask.

Traffic Update

Staff continue to monitor traffic levels on the twin cities freeways, which currently remain 18-20% below normal levels. Level have been growing gradually since early April with lows of -50 to -60%, but have stabilized at this level now since mid-June.

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

COVID Update

Metro Transit will return to front door boarding and onboard fare payment this Saturday, August 1. All buses will either have a permanent bus barrier or a temporary plexiglass shield installed that separates the operator from the paying customers. Limits to the number of people who can be onboard a bus at any given time will continue to apply. Metro Transit is reiterating other public safety messages, including:

- The importance of social distancing while on board
- The importance of not riding transit if you are ill
- The requirement to cover your face

Metro Transit police officers have masks to distribute as part of the education efforts. Operators and other Metro Transit employees will also be required to wear a mask while at work, except where exceptions are permitted in the Governor's executive order.

Pass Program Changes

At an August meeting, staff will present upcoming changes to two fare product programs (TAP and Access Pass). For the **Transit Assistance Program (TAP)**, Metro Transit will begin piloting unemployment benefits and being part of a refugee program as two new ways to qualify for TAP. The second change is expanding our **Access Pass** program beyond the pilot stage. The Access Pass is a tool available to organizations that provide clients with paid transit fares to medical appointments and other services, which is currently being piloted with U-Care and Blue Cross Blue Shield. Rather than having the organization guess how much transit fare is needed, Access Pass allows the organization to

issue electronic passes that act like transit credit cards which are then settled up at the end of the month. The pilot has shown a reduction in administrative costs and complexities associated with pre-loaded pass approach, while being more cost effective for our partners.

Budget Presentation:

Staff will be presenting the preliminary transportation budget as an information item later in the meeting but the budget will still be a work in progress for the coming months. Fare collection losses are simply a best guess about the rebound of ridership and on-going fare compliance and MVST revenue losses are based on the state’s most updated forecast that will be changed again at least once before the final Council budget is adopted.

Cummings asked how the governors mask mandate applied to bus operators. Kooistra replied that masks are required unless the operators are exempt for any of the reasons listed in the mandate. Atlas-Ingebretson asked that Council members be given information on what steps are being taken to respectively accommodate the operators who might have anxiety or other types of issues related to wearing masks, including anticipating and building a system so employees can get the support they need.

BUSINESS

Consent Items:

There were no consent items on the agenda.

Non-Consent Items:

1. **2020-198:** Lease of Warehouse to Store Light Rail Vehicle and System Parts
Metropolitan Council Real Estate Director Greg Ewig presented this item. There were no questions or comments from Council members.

Motion by Sterner, seconded by Zeran:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute a lease for a 20,000 sq. ft. warehouse space located at 2550 Walnut Street, Roseville, Minnesota, to store light rail vehicles and system parts. The initial lease term will be five (5) years and 2 months, effective October 1, 2020.

Council policy requires Lease Agreements valued at greater than \$500,000 to be approved by the Council.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection, Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as consent to Council.

Aye: 8 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Fredson

2. **2020-209:** Extend University of Minnesota Revenue Contracts One Year
Metro Transit Revenue Collections Senior Manager Nick Eull introduced Metro Transit Revenue Operations Supervisor Lisa Anderson who presented this item. Cummings asked if the contracts take into account the changes in enrollment. Andersson answered that the contracts are based on previous years but that there is a lot of unknown at this time and students will some sort of changes. Chamblis

asked if the contract will be monitored throughout the year in regards to pass usage. Anderson replied that the contracts are monitored monthly with U of M regarding sales but staff will monitor ridership as well.

Motion by Zeran, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to:

1. Execute a one-year extension of the Upass agreement with the University of Minnesota for student participants for the period of August 29th, 2020 to August 31st, 2021, and;
2. Execute a one-year extension of the Metropass agreement with the University of Minnesota for staff and faculty participants for the period of October 1st, 2020 to September 31st, 2021, and;
3. Execute a one-year extension of the Campus Zone Pass agreement with the University of Minnesota for staff and faculty participants for the period of August 26th, 2020 through August 31st, 2021.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection, Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as Consent to Council.

Aye: 8 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Fredson

3. 2020-202: East, West, Crosstown Transit Services, Contract 20P099

Metropolitan Transportation Services Contracted Transit Services Manager John Harper presented this item. Cummings noted that a large number of plan holders did not propose and asked if staff follow up with plan holders to determine why they didn't submit a proposal. Harper stated that the number of proposers is small compared to plan holders for a number of reasons: first, a number of local and national companies pull plans on multiple procurements simply to review procurement plans and track procurements in the region. Harper continued that MTS currently contracts with First Transit and Schmitt and Sons for regular route service in the region and Schmitt and Sons opted not to proposed based on the location of routes in the scope of service. Finally, Harper stated that outreach is done prior to the procurement and follow up after the procurement is concluded in an attempt to increase the number of proposers on service contracts. Cummings wanted to confirm whether companies weren't applying was because of the difficulty to unseat an incumbent. Harper answered that the work being solicited is diverse and proposers may be limited because the scope would be difficult for a small, local company or non-profit to complete successfully.

Motion by Zeran, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute a contract with First Transit, Inc. to provide regular route transit service under the East, West, Crosstown contract 20P099, from December 5, 2020 through November 30, 2025, in an amount not to exceed \$29,468,600.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection, Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as Consent to Council.

Aye: 8 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Fredson

INFORMATION

1. COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Outbreak Transportation Survey (May 2020) – Continued from June 22
Metropolitan Transportation Services Travel Modeling & Research Manager Jonathan Ehrlich and Metropolitan Transportation Services Data Scientist Ashley Asmus presented this item. Atlas-Ingebretson expressed concern with the data due to it not being disaggregated and the limitations on surveying all communities, which doesn't provide a complete picture of the population as whole. Atlas-Ingebretson continued that as a Council there should be certain standards that research projects should meet and if it doesn't, staff and Council members should question whether the data is used and shared in a public format because the public sees the Committee agendas and reports as viable information. Chamblis echoed these comments and stated if studies are going to be used to inform and make decisions, there should be thresholds on participation. Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson replied that when a full travel behavior inventory survey is done next year, staff will expand methods to obtain a better response rate. Chair Barber stated that while this was not a perfect data set, this survey was quick way to get an idea into the impacts on travel because of COVID-19. Chair Barber asked that as staff is putting together the next TBI survey, to bring it to this Committee early in the process to ensure the engagement and methodology is representative and to set any standards previously mentioned by Council members.

2. 2021 Preliminary Operating Budget Info

Due to time constraints, this item was deferred to the next meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:59p.m.

Becky Davidson
Recording Secretary