

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

December 9, 2019

LOCATION: Metropolitan Council Chambers, Saint Paul, MN

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

Committee Members Absent:

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 4:02p.m. on Monday, December 9, 2019 in the Metropolitan Council Chambers, Saint Paul, MN.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

Motion by Cummings, seconded by Gonzalez to approve the minutes of the November 25, 2019 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson reported

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis Panel Discussion

The Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and the Center for Transportation Studies at the University of Minnesota are hosting a panel discussion which will revolve around the intersections of public policy, transportation and economic development. The event is Monday, December 16th from 8:00 – 12:00pm if Council members wish to attend.

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

Plastic Seats Request for Bids

Last week, Minneapolis-Saint Paul Business Journal covered the request for bids for plastic seats in light rail vehicles, which was put out in late November. Customer relations staff say customers had suggested plastic seats and staff believe they will likely be easier to clean and maintain over time. Metro Transit will require the winning bidder to develop a prototype before the Met Council approves the full production run. Bids close on December 31, 2019.

MVST Forecast

MMB's November forecast released last week shows over an \$1.3B state budget surplus for the current state fiscal year biennium-fiscal years 2020-2021. But the November forecast for SFY 2021-2023 decreased nearly \$42 million from the February 2019 forecast diminishing the \$54 million gains projected in that forecast. For Metro Transit calendar year 2020 proposed budget the forecast loss is \$7 million and will result in increased use of operating reserves. Motor vehicle sales tax is the primary funding source for the regional bus system, which for Metro Transit Bus, MVST accounts for nearly 73% of funding for operations.

C Line Electric Buses

C Line was able to return to 8th Street in downtown Minneapolis, which for the last several months buses had been detoured off 8th. This means for the first time C Line is on its regular routing and serving the new stations downtown. As of Friday, 7 of the 8 chargers are in service with the other units planned for repair in the next several days. Extensive work with on-route charger testing occurred over the last two weeks. The vendor is working on software updates to improve reliable performance. Testing will continue in the coming days and weeks to resolve remaining items. Electric Bus interior cabin electric heating has been repaired – Complaints of cold interior bus temperatures prompted a joint effort between Metro Transit, New Flyer, and Thermo King to identify and resolve a signaling issue with the electric powered heating system. 6 of the 8 electric buses are available for service as of 12/6 – 2 buses are currently down. With the snow, the buses have experienced wheel slippage which causes a Stop System light to illuminate and prevents further operation until the bus is brought to a stop and the ignition switch is cycled. New Flyer is actively pursuing the resolution. Staff are working with New Flyer and Siemens as it relates to base warranties and start dates.

Bus Operator Apprenticeship Program Graduation

Council members are invited to attend the Bus Operator Apprenticeship Program graduation, Thursday December 12th from 11:00am – 1:00pm at the Metro Transit Heywood Office. 29 graduates, 50 mentors, and others involved in making this program a success will be recognized. The Apprenticeship Program is designed to support operators in their first year.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Citizen Craig Rutherford spoke to the Committee about his experiences riding the light rail.

BUSINESS

Consent Items:

1. There are no consent items on the agenda.

Non-Consent Items:

1. **2019-351 SW:** Hennepin County Transit Link Agreement
Metropolitan Transportation Services Senior Project Administrator Sheila Williams presented this item. Chamblis asked about the proposed minimum wage. Williams responded that the minimum hourly wage is \$17.50. Sterner asked if Midwest Paratransit would continue the contract if there was additional funding. Metropolitan Transportation Contracted Transit Services Manager John Harper responded that staff had discussed service delivery issues with Midwest Paratransit and the vendor brought up their concern with sustainability of the current contract. Harper continued that staff believe it is in the best interest of the Council to move the contract to a different vendor. Sterner asked if this move to a different vendor is temporary. Harper answered yes, the move is temporary as the 5-year contract agreements are almost at the end of cycle, so this contract will end up being bid and procured competitively.

Motion by Atlas-Ingebretson, seconded by Sterner:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute a Sole Source agreement with First Transit to provide Transit Link service in Hennepin County in an amount not to exceed \$2,500,000.

Motion carried.

2. **2019-357 SW:** Amendment to Minnesota Valley Transit Authority Sub-Grant #SG-2017-024
Metropolitan Transportation Services Senior Project Administrator Michael Hochhalter presented this item. Cummings asked if this amendment will lead to other suburban transit providers asking for increases in funding for technology. Hochhalter responded that the funds being used are formula

earnings, so if the other suburban transit providers have formula earnings available in their undesignated accounts, they can use that money for technology if they want. Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson also added that Minnesota Valley Transit Authority chose to go on their own path with technology. Chair Barber stated the suburban transit providers do have a list of technology they want.

Motion by Sterner, seconded by Cummings:

That the Metropolitan Council authorizes the Regional Administrator to amend the current grant agreement, #SG-2017-024, with Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) by increasing the dollar amount by \$1,285,000.

Motion carried.

INFORMATION

1. Transportation Air Quality Conformity Update

Metropolitan Transportation Services Technical Services Manager Johnathan Ehrlich presented this item. Fredson asked about the location of the monitors in Minneapolis. While Ehrlich didn't have the precise locations, Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson stated one monitor was located at 7th and Hennepin and near I-94 & I-35W. Ehrlich stated that the increase with Miscellaneous category, relates to how the database is calculated. Ehrlich continued that wildfires are now included in this category which correlates to the increase in recent years.

2. Council Fare Policy and TAP

Metro Transit Revenue Collections Senior Manager Nick Eull and Metro Transit TAP Coordinator Andrea Kiepe presented this item. Barber asked if Go-to cards with services like Southwest Prime, to which Eull responded that service is not part of the regional service so currently there is no transfer policy, but staff continue to work with Southwest on that. Atlas-Ingebretson asked what age restrictions there are and what forms of identification is needed to apply for TAP. Kiepe responded that 12 and over could qualify and any form that is accepted for voting would be valid identification. Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra clarified that children 12 and older would qualify based on their parent's income. Atlas-Ingebretson asked if there is a time restriction on the Student Pass for Minneapolis Public Schools, stating she has heard from students who use transit to get to/from work that their card gets shut off. Eull answered that MPS student passes shut off after 10:00pm, which was the decision of MPS to implement that time restriction as other high schools don't. Cummings asked if we actively solicit the Metro Pass to companies and if there was a minimum size required. Eull responded the minimum company size is 5 and that the marketing and travel management demand staff help promote Metro Pass but that we also partner with the community TMOs. Cummings asked that staff create a document that has a brief description of the TAP program, how it works and who qualifies so Council members could put this information in their weekly newsletters and distribute to communities. Chair Barber asked that staff create communication tools and articles about TAP that Council members can distribute. Gonzalez asked if individuals can provide paystubs for income verification. Kiepe responded that staff currently doesn't verify income, but we do work with partner companies that verify income for Metro Transit. Chair Barber questioned how TAP works with the Suburban Transit Providers. Eull stated TAP works the same and Kiepe added that Southwest Transit and MVTA actually can sign people up for TAP. Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson said that free fares on fixed routes for Metro Mobility customers was piloted this year. Thompson stated the pilot found success as customers had a free fare and more services to use and that if we wanted to extend this project staff would have to come back to Council and ask for that type of change within the fare policy. Kooistra stated that we must submit financial capacity reports for federal projects (SWLRT, Gold Line) and in those the assumption is a fare increase (every 4 years) so the next one would be sometime in 2021 but it's ultimately a decision of this Committee/Council. Chair Barber asked that a fare simplification approach to come before the committee and stated that a fare increase involves a lot of

discussions, communication, outreach and a public process. Chair Barber added the last Council felt that 8 years between fare increases was too long.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:53p.m.

Becky Davidson
Recording Secretary