

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

March 8, 2021

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

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

Committee Members Absent:

TAAC Liaison Present: David Fenley

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was present when Chair Barber called the regular meeting of the Council's Transportation Committee to order at 4:02 p.m. on Monday, March 8, 2021.

AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Gonzalez, seconded by Chamblis to approve the minutes of the February 22, 2021 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

Aye: 8 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

TAAC REPORT

Fenley reported on the letter that the TAAC sent to the Chair regarding their resolutions.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson reported:

COVID Update

We are continue working with Metro Transit on coordination of vaccine for public transit workers. We are still waiting for details on the number of vaccines and when they will be available so we can establish a process to get the public transit workers quickly vaccinated. We did receive some indication that Metro Mobility drivers could be classified as 1A because they are providing medical trips, last week with this classification we were able to get 44 drivers their first dose through a program at Ramsey County, but do not have any new appointments available to us this week. In our testing last week, we had 0 positive tests. To date we have identified 139 contract workers who have tested positive, or less than 1%, and we have 4 currently active from prior reporting.

Essential Services

We are beginning to slowly transition our Metro Mobility and Transit Link services back towards normal operations as ridership grows. To accommodate the return of riders we started transitioning the essential health care trips off the system. Step one in this transition is to reintroduce fares starting on March 1st for health care workers. Implementing the fare reduced the number of health care worker trips by over

30% early last week, but demand continues to be strong for the service and we will continue to monitor. Lastly, we have had initial conversations with Counties on assisting with transportation to vaccine appointments. In addition to the fixed route system we have Transit Link and Metro Mobility (for those who qualify) available as existing options, but if there is an additional need, we should have capacity to assist.

Chamblis stated her interest in following up with health care workers who desire the service.

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

COVID Update

Metro Transit has had a total of 372 employees diagnosed with COVID from March 2020 through yesterday. This figure includes 8 new cases since the committee last met on February 22. Metro Transit bus and rail services are not experiencing service impacts due to COVID leave. Our latest ridership figures show that ridership remains down over 60 percent compared to pre-pandemic levels.

Mobile Vaccination Units – Partnership with MDH

As the Governor's office announced on Friday, Metro Transit is working with the Minnesota Department of Health to develop and deploy mobile vaccination units. Metro Transit staff have been working hard to assemble the list of materials and has met with the nursing and MDH staff at our Overhaul Base. Metro Transit's Bus Maintenance department is now in the process of fabricating one "pilot" bus to ensure that everything in the design meets the needs of the nursing and mobile clinic staff. By late spring, MDH may use up to six of Metro Transit's forty-foot buses to transform into mobile vaccination units. The buses would be deployed to hard-to-reach populations both across the metro but also in Greater Minnesota. The objective is for these buses to supplement local public health and healthcare efforts to fill vaccine availability gaps, working in coordination with trusted community organizations statewide.

Quarterly Service Changes go into effect on Saturday, March 13

Our usual quarterly service adjustments will take place this coming Saturday, March 13. As usual, are making minor changes to frequency, trip times, and similar tweaks on several routes. One change going into effect on Saturday will be to adjust light rail frequency. Both Blue Line and Green Line will operate weekend schedules all days of the week. Service Development is planning a service update information item for an upcoming meeting and will provide a broader overview of our current service and our plans for future changes then.

Transit Driver Appreciation Day is Thursday, March 18.

A week from Thursday – March 18 – is Transit Driver Appreciation Day. In non-pandemic times, we would be inviting you to join us in our garages and rail facilities to share a meal and thank operators for their work. But due to COVID, we are developing an appreciation video that we will share with our operators and on social media. This afternoon I sent an email to Council Members inviting you to submit a short video message to our transit operators. Drew Kerr in our Communications department is coordinating this effort. Drew's contact information is in my email from this morning.

Cummings asked for an update on the chargers. Kooistra said the chargers are down and the intent is to replace all of the chargers. Electric bus service will be down for a few months while this happens. Sterner asked about diesel contracts. Kooistra said there is a contract with a particular provider and the contract expires in June. Sterner brought up smoking and Kooistra said he will pass on the information. Fredson mentioned the infrastructure issue in addition to a labor issue.

BUSINESS

Consent Items:

Motion was made by Cummings, seconded by Sterner and carried, to approve the following consent items:

Aye: 8 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

1. **2021-60 SW:** 2021-2024 TIP Amendment for St. Louis Park: CSAH 25 / Beltline Blvd Pedestrian Project

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council adopt an amendment to the 2021-2024 TIP to reduce the scope and increase the cost of St. Louis Park's CSAH 25 Beltline Boulevard Pedestrian project. The scope reduction is necessary because elements of the project are being completed through other projects.

2. **2021-61 SW:** 2021-2024 TIP Amendment for MnDOT: US 212 Lighting Improvement

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council adopt an amendment to the 2021-2024 TIP to include funding for MnDOT's lighting upgrade on US 212.

3. **2021-62 SW:** 2021-2024 TIP Amendment for Richfield: Railroad Gate Installation

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council adopt an amendment to the 2021-2024 TIP to add an additional location and additional cost to Richfield's West 77th railroad gates installation.

Non-Consent Items:

1. **2021-50:** Orange Line Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority 2021 Capital Grant Metro Transit BRT Projects Director Charles Carlson and Engineering and Construction Manager Derek Berube presented this item.

Cummings expressed her excitement at seeing the transit system built out. Sterner asked about Safety Signs headquarter locations. Carlson said they are based in Lakeville, MN. Chamblis asked about the 35W station area staffing. Carlson said there will not always be a station attendant, but the details are being worked on.

Motion by Sterner, seconded by Cummings:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to apply for, negotiate, and execute capital grant agreement 211013 providing \$2,230,109 from the Dakota County Regional Railroad Authority for the Orange Line BRT project.

Motion carried.

Aye: 8 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

2. **2021-51:** Orange Line Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority 2021 Capital Grant Metro Transit BRT Projects Director Charles Carlson presented this item.

There were no questions or comments from Council Members.

Motion by Cummings, seconded by Sterner:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to apply for, negotiate, and execute capital grant agreement 211012 providing \$8,040,000 from the Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority for the Orange Line BRT project.

Motion carried.

Aye: 8 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

3. **2021-52:** Adoption of Network Next Arterial Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Expansion Recommendations Metro Transit BRT Projects Assistant Director Katie Roth and Senior Planner Kyle O'Donnell Burrows presented this item.

Chamblis stated the importance of those who rely on transportation to get to their destinations quickly and reliably.

Motion by Chamblis, seconded by Fredson:

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the recommendations for arterial BRT expansion resulting from Network Next, naming the METRO F Line (Central Avenue), G Line (Rice/Robert), and H Line (Como/Maryland).

Motion carried.

Aye: 8 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

INFORMATION

1. There were no information items on the agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 4:56 p.m.

Jenna Ernst
Recording Secretary