

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

September 27, 2021

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

Committee Members Present: Deb Barber, Reva Chamblis, Francisco Gonzalez, Phillip Sterner, Raymond Zeran

Committee Members Absent: Molly Cummings, Christopher Ferguson, Kris Fredson

TAB Liaison Present: Peter Dugan

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was present when Chair Barber called the regular meeting of the Council's Transportation Committee to order at 4:01p.m. on Monday, September 27, 2021.

AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Gonzalez, seconded by Zeran to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2021 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

Aye: 5 Barber, Chamblis, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran

Nay: 0

Absent: 3 Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson

TAB REPORT

Metropolitan Transportation Services Acting Director Amy Vennewitz reported that several items were passed at the TAB meeting – two of which are on tonight's agenda and the remaining items were related to pieces of the Regional Solicitation applications and then adoption of the changes/releasing the Regional Solicitation for public comment, which will be accepted through October 18th. After that staff will compile a public comment report and come back to TAB/Council with a summary of the comments and any proposed changes to Regional Solicitation in response to the comments. Staff are anticipating many comments. One major piece is the new application category known as Unique projects. This category is really aimed at projects that don't fit well into existing categories and will be evaluated on Innovation, Environment/Climate impacts and Equity. Staff are encouraging potential applicants of this category to submit letters of pre-interest by November 18th. This will give an indication of the types of projects that might be submitted, and staff can work with the potential applicants to help direct the projects to better meet the specific criteria that TAB identified. There was a long discussion about modal funding ranges but ultimately it was decided to leave the ranges as there were in the 2020 application.

Dugan shared agency reports and provided the following as it relates to Regional Solicitation: criteria weighting changes were made to increase weighting of safety and emphasis on equity and affordable housing in all categories; approved funding at least one roadway project in each functional class, fund the \$25M ABRT project, fund at least one new market transit project and maintain the \$10M bridge target; accepted the updated RBTN and regional bicycle barriers and release for public comment as part of the 2022 Regional Solicitation packet.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

Metropolitan Transportation Services Acting Director Amy Vennewitz had no report:

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

COVID

To date there have been 515 cases at Metro Transit, with 9 cases since last meeting and currently aren't experiencing any operational disruptions due specifically to COVID. The COVID Incident Command team continues to work towards implementation of the Council's vaccine/test requirement that goes into effect October 11th.

Operator Update:

This is a significant issue that has grown over the last couple of months and has created operational disruptions. Currently down 69 fulltime/part time weekday operators from the ideal number and do have 18 operators in training. The attrition rate is about 12-14 per month. The next hiring events are being held October 9th and 12th. Light Rail service has been impacted by staff availability on weekends that has resulted in service gaps and wider headways. Light Rail is fully staff but is having difficulty covering operator absences with overtime. Staff is in discussions about how to best align services with operator capacity.

Zeran asked if the operators are becoming fatigued and burning out that they aren't taking the overtime. Kooistra responded that yes, we think operators are tired as we have been going through a COVID period for about 20 months and like in many organizations we are experiencing fatigue among the workforce.

BUSINESS

Consent Items:

1. There were no consent items on the agenda.

Non-Consent Items:

1. **2021-244:** METRO B Line – Approval of Final Corridor Plan

Metro Transit Senior Planner Adam Smith presented this item. Chair Barber expressed excitement for this line as it will connect with multiple other lines, creating a very well connected transit system.

Motion by Sterner, seconded by Zeran:

That the Metropolitan Council approve the final B Line Corridor Plan, to establish the number and location of stations in the project.

Motion carried.

Aye: 5 Barber, Chamblis, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran

Nay: 0

Absent: 3 Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson

2. **2021-245:** Adopt Network Next Arterial BRT 2040 Candidate Corridors

Metro Transit BRT Projects Senior Planner Kyle O'Donnell Burrows presented this item. Chair Barber added the next step will be an amendment to the TPP which will go out for public comment likely in November and then will be back to the Council for approval in February 2022. Chair Barber also thanked staff at Metro Transit, not just for the ABRT work but for Network Next project as a whole.

Motion by Chamblis, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the Network Next recommendations for 2040 arterial BRT expansion corridors.

Motion carried.

Aye: 5 Barber, Chamblis, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran

Nay: 0

Absent: 3 Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson

3. 2021-254: 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP)

Metropolitan Transportation Services Planning Analyst Dave Burns presented this item. Chair Barber thanked staff for their work and stated that even though this is a routine thing, it takes a lot of work and is critical for our work with the Federal government.

Motion by Zeran, seconded by Sterner:

That the Metropolitan Council:

- Adopt the proposed 2022 Unified Planning Work Program (UPWP) with a budget of \$6,210,999;
- Authorize the Regional Administrator to enter into an agreement with the State of Minnesota, Department of Transportation, for distribution of Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) and Federal Transit Administration (FTA) planning funds.

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

Aye: 5 Barber, Chamblis, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran

Nay: 0

Absent: 3 Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson

4. 2021-255: MnDOT-Led Systemwide Review and Update of the Roadway Functional Classification System

Metropolitan Transportation Services Transportation Planning Manager Steve Peterson presented this item. Chair Barber asked what happens between these reviews when a local entity will ask us to reevaluate a classification of a roadway. Peterson responded that this review is system wide that MnDOT conducts every 10 years and that a local city/county can make a request to the Council. Peterson continued that the Council has a review process for upgrading/downgrading road classifications that goes through the TAC and if it's a big enough item, it will make it all the way to the Council for approval.

Motion by Sterner, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council:

- Administratively modify the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan to:
 - Include MnDOT's recommended systemwide changes to the Minor Arterial System;
 - Upgrade Dakota County State Aid Highway 23 (CSAH 23) from an A-Minor Arterial Expander to a Principal Arterial from CSAH 42 to CSAH 70;
 - Upgrade Dakota County CSAH 70 from A-Minor Arterial Expander to a Principal Arterial from CSAH 23 to Interstate 35.

- Recommend that the MnDOT Commissioner submit all changes from the functional classification systemwide review to the Federal Highway Administration for review and approval.

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

Aye: 5 Barber, Chamblis, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran
 Nay: 0
 Absent: 3 Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson

5. 2021-256: 2022 Operating Grant Applications to the Funding Transitway Counties

Metro Transit Finance Director Ed Petrie presented this item. Zeran asked if we anticipate any issues going forward from the participating counties. Petrie stated the biggest challenge will be Anoka County, as they haven't paid us since July 2020, but we do have a 5-year master funding agreement with the counties for funding through December 31, 2022. Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra added that the lack of payment is a huge risk to the Northstar Corridor as Anoka County represents 81.4% of the counties' share and that Metropolitan Council Chair Zelle is having discussions with Commissioner Schulte who has been the point person from Anoka County on the issue. Zeran added that the Northstar line is an asset/public good and we should figure out to maintain the service.

Motion by Zeran, seconded by Chamblis:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to apply for calendar 2022 grants from the counties of Anoka, Hennepin, Dakota and Ramsey.

Operating (Base and Non-Annual Share)

- METRO Blue Line LRT Est. \$14.5M
 - Hennepin County - Est. \$14.5M
- METRO Green Line LRT Est. \$15.0M
 - Hennepin County – Est. \$9.0M
 - Ramsey County – Est. \$6.0M
- Northstar Commuter Rail Est. \$5.8M
 - Anoka County – Est. \$4.7M
 - Hennepin County – Est. \$1.1M
- METRO Orange Line BRT Est. \$2.55M
 - Hennepin County – Est. \$2.2M
 - Dakota County – Est. \$350K

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

Aye: 5 Barber, Chamblis, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran
 Nay: 0
 Absent: 3 Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson

INFORMATION

1. 2022-2027 CIP

Metro Transit Deputy General Manager, Capital Programs Nick Thompson, Finance Director Ed Petrie and Metropolitan Transportation Services Finance & Administration Director Heather Agesen-Huebner presented this item. Chamblis appreciated the comprehensive presentation and stated it's exciting to see our past projects complete and new projects that are in the pipeline. Sterner asked about the potential costs savings on maintenance/fuel when we purchase electric buses, how we can work with suburban transit providers to purchase electric buses and with the new transit lines being built in difference areas if we think we'll see flattening out on Metro Mobility ridership. Thompson responded that there is still a lot of unknowns with electric buses (life cycle, maintenance needs, etc.) so we can't recognize any savings until we gain more experience but once we do, we can adjust the Zero Emission bus plan and budgets as needed. Agesen-Huebner answered that MTS does support the suburban transit providers in their efforts to apply for grants or federal funds, providing funding matches. Agesen-Huebner added that MTS will be starting a study in 2021-2022 to look at electric bus purchases; this will include heavy planning efforts as the contractors tend to move garages/facilities more often so how will infrastructure match that. Agesen-Huebner stated that there has been discussion around Metro Mobility customers using fixed transit route but has not been materialized enough to put into ridership projections, but that staff can come back with additional details.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:58p.m.

Becky Gorell
Recording Secretary