

Metropolitan Council

Meeting of the Southwest Corridor Management Committee
Wednesday, September 4, 2024, 10:00AM, Heywood Chambers

Members/Alternates Present:	Khani Sahebjam Dr. Tyrone Carter Debbie Goettel Heather Edelson	Lesley Kandaras Robert Lilligren Brad Wiersum	Suzanne Sobotka (Alt)
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1. CALL TO ORDER

CM Lilligren called the meeting to order at 10:06AM. Introductions were made. Today’s meeting is being held at Heywood Chambers as St. Louis Park City Hall is booked with early voting activities.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Council Member Lilligren presented the June 5, 2024, Corridor Management Committee minutes. Commissioner Goettel made a motion to approve the minutes and Mayor Wiersum seconded the motion. Following a vote, the minutes were approved.

3. METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER UPDATE – Lesley Kandaras

Lesley Kandaras, Metro Transit General Manager, provided an update on Metro Transit operations. Kandaras reported that ridership continues to grow across the system, and it is 9% higher than it was last year at this time.

Public Safety. Kandaras reported that crime on the system is down over 17% compared to Q2 2023. We continue to build our Transit Rider Investment Program. This includes hiring additional TRIP agents who conduct routine fare inspections and assist customers. The Metropolitan Council is going through its 2025 budget development process right now and Metro Transit is proposing an increase in resources for the Program.

Commissioner Goettel said she is glad to hear about TRIP and asked if Kandaras can come back with stats on how successful it is. Kandaras said yes, it’s pretty early on but we are eager to assess and report on the Program as we have firmer numbers; the TRIP agents started at the end of February 2024, and we are tracking their activity.

Goettel said it would be helpful to know what kind of assistance is needed on the train, or if it’s more social work-related needs and how Metro Transit would approach that. Kandaras said fare enforcement and compliance is just part of the program, and part of training includes how to coordinate with the Metro Transit police officers and our Homeless Action Team. Additionally, we incorporated the Transit Service Intervention Project, which lasted about a year (as defined per the 2023 Transportation Omnibus). The Project included contracting with ten community-based organizations to increase social service connections on the system.

CM Lilligren said the Metropolitan Council gets a quarterly safety update that includes robust data on TRIP.

Mayor Wiersum congratulated Kandaras on the reduction in crime. He said when crime is reported to be down, he finds that it is down from the peak, but not down from the pre-COVID period. He said having an understanding of where crime stands both versus the peak (during COVID) and where we stand from the steady state that occurred before all the challenging times. In terms of reporting, he would like the intellectually honest answer. Kandaras said one challenge we have in reporting pre-pandemic crime is that Metro Transit changed how crime events were tracked, so we do not have apples to apples comparisons for pre-pandemic crime reporting. Kandaras said 2024 is on track to be lower than 2023.

CM Lilligren said anecdotally, people love seeing the TRIP agents on the line.

4. NETWORK NOW OVERVIEW – Cyndi Harper and Ben Picone

Cyndi Harper and Ben Picone from Metro Transit Service Development provided an overview of Network Now. Network Now is Metro Transit's vision for transit through 2027. Harper explained that this is a pivotal time in Metro Transit's history, travel patterns are changing, workforce is a top priority, and Metro Transit service is growing. The goals of Network Now include resolving the status of routes that were suspended during COVID and facility closure needs and providing new and redesigned routes and services, such as micro transit.

Metro Transit is conducting a community engagement process, which will include public meetings, social media, rider alerts, reaching out to government partners and community organizations, and an online comment form that will go live next week. The public comment period will end on November 15, 2024. Harper shared the dates for what's next, resulting in phased implementation starting in 2025.

Commissioner Edelson asked whether there is material to engage communities. Edelson also asked about the micro transit. Harper said Metro Transit's Community Outreach and Engagement Team has been working on reaching out to communities and she will share Commissioner Edelson's question with them. In terms of micro transit, Metro Transit is currently running a 2-year pilot program in north Minneapolis; it is a shared ride system where Metro Mobility-style buses are used within a specific travel area. Metro Transit is looking to expand to eight more areas or zones around the region, including Minnetonka with the goal to extend transit into lower density areas.

Commissioner Goettel asked where the funds are coming from for micro transit. Harper said the funding for the service expansion including micro transit comes out of the regional sales tax that was passed last fall, as well as Metro Transit's regular funding resources. Kandaras said within the legislation that created the regional sales tax for transportation, there are a number of items in the law that the sales tax must go to including micro transit.

Goettel said she has heard a lot about missing service and shortened bus availability and our unions are having conversations with us because it matters how they get to work; how do we decide when a new service will start or an old one return? Harper said there are two different situations; one situation is if a route was operating prior to COVID and was suspended during the pandemic; the question there is do we restore service on those routes or do we go in a different direction for those resources. When we evaluate suspending a route, we examine how the route was performing prior to the pandemic, and what alternatives are available and also consider public feedback. The second situation is an evaluation of adding new service where we look at demographic information and feedback from the public. Goettel said she thinks this is a great opportunity for learning what will work for the Blue Line Extension.

Mayor Wiersum said transit in Minnetonka is hard and he's glad to hear that micro transit will be in Minnetonka. Wiersum asked if micro transit is to take people to the LRT stations or if it's to provide transit around the communities, or both? Harper said it is both, bringing people into the transit network including the Green Line Extension, but also taking folks from point A to point B where we don't have fixed route service operating today. Wiersum asked if there are ways to help build awareness and get the word out. Harper said that is exactly the request that we put in a letter that is going out to all the communities; we are also happy to come out and speak to city councils or other groups within the communities.

Commissioner Edelson asked if the micro transit vehicles would be electric. Harper said initially they will be diesel fueled buses like the Metro Mobility vehicles. Harper said the Council is looking into electric vehicles long term.

5. PROJECT UPDATE

Jim Alexander, Green Line Extension Project Director provided a project update. Great progress has been made on the Kenilworth LRT Tunnel construction. The tunnel structure is about 85% complete. Excavation and inspection below the ground water table is complete.

An August 6 bike ride on the completed South Cedar Lake Trail with Chair Zelle and Jim Alexander occurred and had great participation.

Photos were shown of the construction. There are 30 cells that make up the construction of the Kenilworth LRT tunnel and the tunnel structure is completed in 20 of them. The stations in Minneapolis are nearly complete; there are 16 total on the project. The contractor is currently working in Minneapolis placing light rail track.

Alexander reviewed the Systems work and shared photos of the work. The contractor has been busy installing overhead wiring and building signal houses. We maintain a 2027 revenue service date.

6. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT UPDATE – Jim Alexander

David Davies, Manager of Public Involvement, was unable to attend, so Jim provided the update.

Commissioner Edelson asked if outreach is occurring at farmers' markets. James Mockovciak said they are at the Minnetonka farmers market monthly. Edelson suggested the outreach team attend the Hopkins farmers market as well. The Project Office will follow up on this.

6. DBE UPDATE – Jon Tao

Jon Tao from the Council's Office of Equity and Equal Opportunity reviewed and shared the DBE achievement numbers. The Civil contract is achieving 23.5% compared to the goal of 16%. The Systems contract is achieving 15.6% compared to the goal of 12%; overall DBE participation for the construction contracts is 22% compared to an aggregated goal of 15%.

7. ADJOURN

Meeting adjourned at 11:00AM. The next meeting will be in December 2024.

Respectfully Submitted,

Emily Getty, Recording Secretary