

# **Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, October 1, 2014

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Ron Biss, Margot Imdieke Cross, James Williams, Bob Anderson, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, Mark Hoisser, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Nichole Villavicencio and Patty Thorsen.

**Committee Members Absent:** Kjensmo Walker and Robert Platz.

**Committee Members Excused:** None.

**Council Staff Present:** Clare Schleichert from OEO, Pam Steffen from Metro Transit, Andrew Krueger, Raintry Salk, Andy Streasick, David Russell and Alison Coleman.

**Public Present:** Courtney Whited from DARTS, David Fenley from MNCOD, Claudia Fugile, Mark Hughes, Sean Kealy and Rosalind Sampson.

## **CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Biss called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:32 p.m. on Wednesday, October 1, 2014.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

It was moved by McGuire, seconded by Anderson to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Myhre, seconded by Thorsen to approve the minutes of the September 3, 2014 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

## **INFORMATION & BUSINESS**

### **1. Metro Mobility Update – Metro Mobility Public Forums and Dakota County Metro Mobility**

Andrew Krueger spoke to the TAAC committee about the Metro Mobility Public Forums. There were seven different public meetings soliciting feedback around the metropolitan area in regards to Metro Mobility service. Starting on September 8<sup>th</sup> and going to September 24<sup>th</sup>. The meetings were held in St. Paul, Minneapolis, Bloomington, Eagan, Anoka, Shakopee and West St. Paul. The public meetings in Minneapolis and St. Paul were the best attended. The Council is required by state law to hold the public meetings or forums each year to solicit comments and feedback. They are changing the scope of the service next year. They wanted to get out into the communities that are going to be most impacted by those changes. What they found was somewhat interesting. In Anoka County there were two people who came to the public meeting regarding the change in the service. Both of them lived in the West Metro and are being served by Transit Team, not Anoka County Traveler. When they attended the meeting in Shakopee, there were two people at that meeting from Dakota County, in DARTS area.

The public meetings focused on the changes that were made in 2014 and the big changes that are coming in 2015. The first thing talked about was the changes in the no-show policy. People were very supportive of the changes that are being made. Metro Mobility staff were concerned about not cancelling the afternoon ride for people automatically but there was no big concern about that. They have not seen a significant increase in the no-shows that they were anticipating.

The second issue talked about was the maximum on-board time. The change from a strict 90 minutes to a distance based maximum on board time. The feedback was that the customers liked the concept. There were a lot of negative responses in how it was implemented in July. There were problems with the scheduling software. The first three weeks in July were a little bit rough. Staff got feedback saying it has improved significantly. They were not having the same issues that they were having before.

Staff talked about the AVL and the computer system. There was a lot of positive feedback. They did not receive any negative feedback that they were anticipating on the new automated phone system and sending out calls. They didn't receive any negative feedback on the change to the menu options that they were anticipating.

When staff talked to the two customers about the new provider service areas that are coming in 2015 they were expecting some negative feedback. What they got was overwhelmingly positive. A lot of that is because at the same time they were talking about restructuring service areas they were also talking about eliminating transfer rides. That was met with a lot of enthusiasm in some of the outlying communities.

The last thing they talked about was GoTo electronic fare payments. That ranged from everything from people being really excited about the integration it offers in being able to have one card to travel on the light rail, the fixed route and Metro Mobility. To have their Metro Mobility card serve as their fixed route GoTo card so that it is mobility enabled to pay the 75 cents. They also got comments about people being nervous about the loss of tickets and being able to purchase tickets. Sometime after they implement the GoTo card they are going to phase out tickets. Most of the negative comments that they got from phasing out tickets came from the agencies that are purchasing tickets in bulk and are giving them to their riders.

The only major theme they talked about as a staff is appointment times. That appointment times need to be a priority. One of the concerns that people had was that appointment times don't seem to be consistently adhered to. They wanted to see Metro Mobility put more emphasis on appointment times. With the new contracts coming in place in 2015 they have restructured the contracts. All of them will have penalties associated with it for the providers. They are making 95 percent on time performance be across the board. That is the minimum threshold and standard. So on time means they either pick you up on time or get you to your appointment time on time. Metro Mobility is going to expect to do that 95 percent of the time or more. It is the same financial penalty in place in the new contract structure for both. That is not the case today. The old contracts were structured with 95 percent for pickup and 88 percent for appointment times. The financial disincentive right now is disproportionate. Contractors today actually have a financial incentive to pick people up on time and get them to their appointments late. Starting next year that is no longer going to be an issue.

A lot of the County social programs are already using GoTo media now on the fixed route and supporting GoTo media. Metro Mobility staff needs to get to those county social workers and to the agencies that are doing that. They already have the mechanism in place on fixed route. They just need to mirror that mechanism on Metro Mobility. It is not going to be a big transition but it will be a learning curve.

The maximum amount of time on the Metro Mobility bus is 2½ hours. The maximum onboard time is distance based. They are basing it on comparable time to fixed route. A one mile trip could take up to 34 minutes on Metro Mobility. A 45 mile trip may take up to 2½ hours on Metro Mobility. The goal is to have people going from the same direction to the same direction on the bus together at the same time because it is shared ride public transportation. If that does not happen call the service center with specific examples to the routers and schedulers to find out why that happened. The Metro Mobility staff wants to find the root cause of why you were on the bus too long. If someone is on the bus too long or are late for pickup or arrival and they are entitled to a refund, they should call customer service and they will take care of it.

He talked about the Dakota County transition. The DARTS contract in Dakota County was cancelled. September 10, 2014 the Metropolitan Council informed DARTS that it was terminating the Transit Link and Metro Mobility contracts. That was done using a contract clause that says that the contract can be terminated for any reason or for convenience. It requires a 60 day notice. Effective on midnight of Sunday, November 9, 2014 that contract will be terminated.

They are doing three separate things in the interim:

- a. Agency work, which is people going into a center like a day training and rehabilitation center or adult daycare, which is people going to the same place every day. They have a contract for that (an agency contract) where Metro Mobility bills the agency for the rides. Currently that is about ¼ of the work that DARTS is doing, which is 150 to 200 trips a day. The standing order trips are going to the two largest agencies in Dakota County which are Lifeworks and Pro Act. Those trips are going to be transferred to the agency contract on October 20. There is a large bus order that is to be coming in October that was supposed to go to all three of the providers. Metro Mobility is going to keep buses that were going to

be retired, in service until the entire transition is done so that they have extra capacity. So 12 new vehicles are going to go to the agency contracts and they will take those trips.

- b. They are going to split the Dakota County service contract into two separate portions. The northern portion of the service center will be given to First Transit (South St. Paul, West St. Paul, Mendota, Mendota Heights, Sunfish Lake, Lillydale, and Invergrove Heights.) They have been served historically by DARTS and First Transit. That is approximately 250 trips a day. The southern part of the service area is going to go to Transit Team (Burnsville, Apple Valley and Rosemont). Then Eagan is going to be split along the middle along Diffley Road. Trips that are being done on transfer rides today (from Burnsville to Bloomington), they were going to eliminate those transfer rides in May. Now they will eliminate those rides in November. Rides which would have been transfer rides from northern Dakota County and southern Dakota County will be direct trips starting in November.

Midwest Paratransit is taking the Transit Link Trips. That is being handled by Sheila Williams in MTS.

In order to entice as many of the DARTS employees as possible to stay providing Metro Mobility service the Met Council is funding a \$500 transition bonus for DARTS line staff. The problems that they had with DARTS do not reflect on the drivers, the reservationists or the dispatch staff. Metro Mobility staff has had great interaction with their drivers and their front line staff. They want as many of them to remain employed as possible. They would like all of the drivers to transition over and they have told them that. When the drivers are hired and begin service with their new company, if they stay until November 8 (the last day that DARTS is providing service) and then start with the new company, they will get a \$250 bonus for transitioning over. If they stay for 180 days or through this entire transitioning process or until the new contract is in place, they will receive another \$250.

Metro Mobility has sent out over 4,000 letters to riders in Dakota County. About 2,000 letters were sent to people who have never ridden Metro Mobility. They sent out press releases and updated the website. They are going to continue to do that going forward. In the next two weeks they are going to be sending out a letter to all the customers informing them who their service provider is going to be and what the number is. They would like to send out an email alert and then piggyback on Minnesota State Council on Disabilities email blast list. The number that people are using to call DARTS today to book their rides is a Met Council number. That will be updated to give them the new phone number. They will also be given an option to choose which provider they would like to talk to.

- c. They were gearing up at the service center for a huge public reaction once the letter went out. That hasn't happened. They did not receive the negative feedback they expected. The concerns are "Will I still get a ride?" and "What about my standing order?" Metro Mobility staff are going to do everything they can to make this transition as smooth as possible. But there will be problems. The big two variables are drivers and vehicles. They have the vehicles and are trying to hire as many drivers as they can. Any driver who comes over will go through a training process.

## **2. Update on Regional Parks Policy Plan**

Rainry Salk spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the coauthor of this plan. It is currently in its draft form and is out for public comment and review at this time. In terms of the regional parks system, in 2014 there are over 54,000 acres throughout the seven county metro region that are dedicated regional park lands. That is comprised of 41 regional parks, 12 park reserves, eight special recreation features and 40 regional trails with 340 trail miles. This is the system to date that is open to the public.

This is a unique partnership model. The Metropolitan Council is in partnership with 10 regional park implementing agencies: Anoka County, Bloomington, Carver County, Dakota County, Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board, Ramsey County, Saint Paul, Scott County, Three Rivers Park District and Washington County.

The roles and responsibilities differ for the Metropolitan Council. They are from state statute required to provide the long range planning for the entire regional parks system. They are also to review and approve individual park master plans as well as being the fiscal agent for dedicated state funds. The state provides operation and maintenance funds for the regional park system and the Council funnels it through the various agencies. They also provide their own sources of funding for the acquisition, development and redevelopment of the regional park system.

In terms of the regional park implementing agencies, they are the ones who own and operate the regional parks system lands. They are responsible for the planning and development of these facilities. They are also responsible for the day to day operations in terms of the facilities on site and the programming and staffing.

In terms of the direction the Council receives from the Thrive 2040 MSP vision plan, they have four main directives:

- a. Expand the regional parks system to conserve, maintain and connect natural resources identified as high quality or of regional importance.
- b. Provide a comprehensive regional park and trail system that preserves quality natural resources, increases climate resiliency, fosters healthy communities and enhances quality of life in the region.
- c. Promote multi-modal access to regional parks, trails and transit network where appropriate.
- d. Strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails by all of the region's residents, such as across race, ethnicity, class, age, ability and immigrant status.

The role of the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan fulfills state requirements. The Council is required by state law to put forward a system policy plan as part of the Regional Development Guide (regional parks, transportation, aviation and wastewater). It provides guidance for local comprehensive plans for communities in terms of delineating where proposed parklands are slated to occur. It serves primarily as a guide for park implementing agencies. In terms of what they expect them to be doing in order to adhere to the regional park system vision and long range plan.

In terms of developing the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan the timeline was very tight. Council staff had five months to write an entire plan. From February to June they had several policy discussions and extensive stakeholder engagement. July of 2014 the draft was complete and ready for public hearing. In October they scheduled public hearings. The Council will adopt the final policy plan in January 2015.

In order to draft the plan they held stakeholder meetings of various groups, including the park implementing agencies, the Department of Natural Resources and other partners. They held focus meetings with various equity advocates and others who could provide them with other directions in these new areas of emphasis. They also conducted some focus group research with communities of color. They also did some park polling within the park. They had multiple conversations internally. They have an advisory body much like this one but for this system it is called the Metropolitan Parks and Open Space Commission (MPOSC). They had several long meetings at three to four hours long having policy discussions trying to come up with some firm policies to put forward in the plan to respond to our directives. They also held several meetings with the arm of the Metropolitan Council, the Community Development Committee as well as other internal conversations about this plan.

Here are some of the new policies and strategies that are put forward related to the directives from Thrive: in terms of promoting multi-modal access to regional parks, trails and the transit network where appropriate. The policies are along the line of three different areas: planning policies that are focused on regional parks and trail master plans. Awareness components focused on transit schedules, signage and websites. Collaboration (local jurisdictions and organizations).

In terms of planning they require regional park or trail master plans to identify existing and planned local train connections to the site and require a regional park or trail master plan to include a way finding signage plan.

In terms of awareness they encourage park agencies to provide transit schedules and information at parks served by transit. They also include information on how to access a regional park or trail by transit on park agency website (where applicable). They encourage park agencies to promote regional trails with existing Transportation Management Organizations. They are encouraging improvement of way finding signage.

In terms of collaboration they plan to coordinate with local jurisdictions to identify and plan for local trail connections to regional parks and trails as well as connections from transit. They plan to encourage regional park implementing agencies to collaborate with bike share programs (such as Nice Ride Minnesota) to site bike stations near regional parks and trails.

There are new policies and strategies to strengthen equitable usage of regional parks and trails through information and convening, planning and funding and investment.

One of the policies put forward in convening and information is to provide community engagement assistance to park agencies to engage diverse races, ethnicities, classes, ages, abilities and immigrant statuses in developing a regional park or trail master plan. Provide regional-level research related to changing recreational preferences and demographics. Conduct region-wide visitor survey on a more consistent basis. Create a Met Council funded regional parks system ambassador program to build awareness of the Regional Parks System. Develop an integrated web application with an activity/park finder feature. Conduct quarterly “best practices” meetings with regional park implementing agencies, partners, community based organizations and advocacy groups.

Regional Parks System Planning allows new special recreation features to be developed as “bridging facilities”. A facility that introduces specialized or single purpose recreational activities to attract diverse users. It also allows and encourages the following design elements in regional park or trail master plans:

- a. Amenities suited to an aging population or those with limited mobility
- b. Picnic areas for mid-size groups of 15-25
- c. Large open ball fields for a variety of pick-up games
- d. Clustering of amenities for multi-generational groups.

Strengthening equitable usage, funding and investment:

- a. Create a new grant program for regional park implementing agencies using Council bonds for capital projects to strengthen equitable usage.
- b. Require a certain percentage of each park agency’s share of Parks and Trails Legacy Fund (PTLF) appropriations to be used to connect people to the outdoors (one of the four pillars of the 25 year Parks and Trails Legacy Plan).
- c. Begin MPOSC and Council involvement in the prioritization of grant funding for the CIP and PTLF grant funds, using the Regional Parks Equity Toolkit as a lens.
- d. Require regional park implementing agencies to complete a Regional Parks Equity Toolkit, akin to the Council’s Equity Lens in grant applications. To explain what impacts their project might have.

The equity tool kit is a series of questions that hasn’t been developed. It is asking people to identify the impact a proposed project might have.

The other component of the Regional Parks Policy Plan is to define the system and identify the proposed plan. She showed slides showing the existing parks and trails and the proposed parks and trails. And the additions to the parks and trails in the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan. In 2040 they should have 70,000 acres, 1,190 regional trail miles, 48 regional parks, 13 park reserves and 8 special recreation features.

They have to come up with estimated acquisition and development costs for the proposed plan. The estimated cost is \$861.4 million. They provide approval of master plans. The plans are drafted and then come before the Council for approval. The Regional Parks Policy Plan specifies every criteria that is required within a park and trail master plan. There are sections in this document that specifies everything that will be assessed in terms of content in that park or trail master plan. There are planners within the Metropolitan Council staff that provide consultation and collaboration with them during the process of plan development. The planner works in close collaboration with the 10 park implementing agencies that they work with. They don’t work with the City of Maplewood or some other jurisdictions. They work with the 10 park implementing agencies of which the City of Maplewood would be Ramsey County.

McGuire said that the Council is required by state law to review these master plans. The Council could, just like it did with Lake Elmo, at some point say they have to comply.

Imdieke Cross spoke about Lebanon Hills and that they had issues about making their park accessible.

One of the policies they have with this draft plan is to require agencies to engage with their various constituent groups to better develop a plan. So for instance they may have heard from their local community that they didn’t want a paved trail but did they engage with other community members to understand that they were creating a plan that was not accessible? The Council staff is putting forward the requirement that you have to talk to people with limited mobility. You have to talk to people who are not Caucasian males. Their requirements are to make sure that everything is ADA compatible, to make sure

they are addressing accessibility issues, to make sure all of their expenditures for capital projects are all ADA compliant.

During the master plan development they must incorporate a community engagement process that includes diverse races, ethnicities, ages, abilities and immigrant statuses. Earlier in the plan there are comments related to trail use that has reasonable accommodation to serve persons with mobility impairments whenever possible. In terms of ADA requirements it says all new projects and updated master plans for the system include an ADA review before the projects or master plans are approved. Then related to park and trail design they encourage development of amenities suited for those with limited mobility. Related to accessibility the master plans must include a plan that identifies special populations to be served and addresses accessibility. It also says master plans must include a plan that identifies how the facility addresses accessibility, affordability and other measures designed to ensure the facility can be used by all.

**McGuire made a motion recommending the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan be revised to include language directing the Metropolitan Council (and its ten regional park implementing agency partners) follow U.S. Access Board guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas as a minimum standard of accessibility on all new or substantially altered capital projects within the regional parks system.**

**Imdieke Cross seconded the motion. The motion carried.**

Salk added they should follow these guidelines for proposed capital projects, which are funded on an annual basis.

The public comment period closes on October 30. They will then prepare a public hearing report. They are looking to present that public hearing report and have the Council approve the 2040 Regional Parks Policy Plan in January. So it is not too late for staff to incorporate the suggestions that have been made today.

The Council is partnering with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and the Parks of Greater Minnesota to create an integrated website. It is a one stop shop where you can get maps and information about all of the different outdoor recreation facilities. That is in the preliminary development phase. Once that gets underway there will be a dedicated staff. There is actually park and trail legacy dollars earmarked for marketing and promotion of our facilities. This plan is revised every four years.

Regarding meeting the ADA standards Imdieke Cross said: "I would say that this is required and if it cannot be achieved then an alternate plan needs to be developed with the input from the disability community."

### **3. Metro Transit Update**

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. The training video that some of the TAAC members were in is not done yet. They are adding more people to the video. They are starting the driver training in October.

Regarding the light rail accessible stickers. While she was going through her notes there is a lot of feedback about that discussion. She is going to compile those notes and send them out to everyone.

### **MEMBER COMMENT**

None.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Mark Hughes spoke about some concerns he has.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary