

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

Wednesday, February 6, 2019

**Committee Members Present:** Vice Chair David Fenley, Ken Rodgers, Kari Sheldon, John Clark, Patty Thorsen, Margot Imdieke Cross and Richard Rowan.

**Committee Members Absent:** none

**Committee Members Excused:** Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Darrell Paulsen, Heidi Myhre and Diane Graham-Raff.

**Council Staff Present:** Doug Cook, Tracey Jackson, Guthrie Byard, Michael Joyce, Rick White, Clarissa Schleichert from Metro Transit. Andy Streasick, Laron Weddington, Paul Colton and Alison Coleman.

**Public Present:** Claudia Fuglie

### **CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum being present, Committee Vice Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:35 p.m. on Wednesday, February 6, 2019.

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

It was moved by Rodgers, seconded by Thorsen to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Rowan, seconded by Thorsen to approve the minutes of the December 5, 2018 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

### **BUSINESS & INFORMATION**

#### **1. Driver Barriers**

Mike Joyce, Assistant Director of Bus Maintenance, spoke to the TAAC committee. I am here today to demonstrate an operator safety barrier that has been chosen by the Transportation Safety Security Committee of Metro Transit. It is the preferred product. We have a bus outside on Robert Street. We invite anyone who is interested to bring your mobility device and use the ramp and navigate the barrier. The barrier has open and closed options. See how it works in real life situations. We want to make sure there are no obstructions with that pathway. That is why I am here today.

We have presented a number of products in the past to the committee. We are looking for some feedback. The last time we were here a lot of the members saw this. If we could get a feel for where we are at, that would be appreciated. We have about 25 to 35 minutes to do this.

Rodgers asked Joyce to describe the patrician. Did it require the change of the farebox? Has any of that existing hardware changed from where the placement of the barrier is?

Joyce said no. It actually sits above the farebox. There is a guard around the farebox. There is a farebox pedestal on the right when you enter the coach. Then the guardian actually ties in with the barrier and it wraps around the farebox. The footprint is the same. The barrier locks into the driver's hinge by the door. The hinge door locks into the operator's seat behind the farebox. It should be a clear pathway.

Rodgers made a recommendation that the demonstration take place at the end of the meeting.

The committee agreed to do so.

## 2. ADA Transition Plan

Tracey Jackson, Senior Manager of the Office of Equal Opportunity, and Guthrie Byard, Equal Opportunity Consultant, spoke to the TAAC committee.

Vice Chair Fenley gave an overview of what the ADA Transition Plan is. Transition Plans are a way for public entities, basically the government, to take an assessment of areas in which they need to become accessible. So they would account for all the barriers that exist. Both the program and physical architectural barriers. Essentially you have a long list of things that should be fixed. When they are going to be fixed. What are they going to cost? The agency then uses that to remove barriers and eventually be a fully accessible agency. The Metropolitan Council maybe should have started this a few years ago. Twenty-five years ago, probably.

Imdieke Cross said that 1995 was the deadline.

Jackson said it is much more than the transition plan. We are going to be talking to you a lot about digital accessibility, the ADA self-evaluation, which then goes into the transition plan, and give you the update. Nick Jelinek, which is an intern from our Audit department came here in June to give you a timeline. Yes, we are behind but now we are proactive and ready to go. Now we are here to give you an update on that timeline in addition to others that we are doing. I also had mentioned that we were in the process and we would be hiring an ADA administrator for the Met Council. I have him here today. His name is Guthrie Byard. He just started New Years Eve day. He has been working very diligently every day since, which has been about six weeks. He will be presenting to you the powerpoint.

Guthrie Byard said thanks for having me here. My role is primarily to get the ADA Self-Evaluation and Transition Plan underway and in process. As Chair Fenley mentioned. This is a compliance requirement for the Met Council. But it goes beyond that. It goes into the human rights aspect of being accessible for folks with disabilities across all facilities and programs and policies of the Met Council. Right now, what we are doing, is we are trying to bring in a business that would actually go out and do a self-evaluation or survey of all the public and support facilities under the Met Council. So they are going to be looking for physical barriers that impede somebody who identifies as having disabilities and being able to access that facility. They are being able to use a service that that facility offers. Our hope is that through that we would be able to collect all the different barriers or remediations and the changes that are needed in order for those barriers to not exist anymore. That is where that transition plan comes into play.

That transition plan essentially lists out all of the barriers by facility and the cost to make those changes to those barriers. That is where that transition plan comes to place. So there is an order to these things. The self-evaluation will come first. Then we will take the bulk of this year until the end of the year to get a review of all of the facilities. There are several facilities that need to be reviewed. In order to get back a report on all of the barriers. Because then, after that, we figure out what are the costs to address those barriers. Which department is in charge of making sure that those barriers are addressed and what is the timeframe of getting all those barriers addressed?

To step back though, the Council is looking to not just change the physical structure. The physical buildings that people are in. But we are also looking to ensure that we are making accessible all the aspects of the Council. So the first two words of the powerpoint are digital accessibility. So we do have a process underway where we are looking for someone to come in and do an audit of all of our digital assets and our digital public facing products. Just our websites and any of the content that is in the websites. To ensure that those are fully accessible. What that means is that they will be reviewing all the websites and the mobile application if anybody uses that. Then they will provide us with a report on how accessible or inaccessible that is. That report comes about from what is called user testing. They are going to have folks come in who identifies with having various disabilities to actually test the website and our applications and provide us with a report on their accessibility.

This will be a multi-year process. But the hope is that the audit is done by the end of the year. So then we will know what we are up against and what changes we can make. Like the transition plan. Then we prioritize what changes we can afford to make sooner rather than later. Especially with some wider or Council-wide changes around the redesign of the Metro Transit website. Making sure that that is fully accessible since a lot of that design work is underway. Then allowing for ongoing testing by people with disabilities to make sure that our digital content is fully accessible and is done in plain language when absolutely possible. That the videos are fully accessible. That we have information on our website that details where we are at with all our accessibility initiatives.

That is not present on the website right now. But that is something we are looking to do so that the community that relies on all of our work is fully informed on what it is that we are doing. Then there will be some community engagement work to make sure that what I am presenting today is shared with folks that use Metro Council services and that we get input on all of this work we are doing so that we are not operating in a silo or echo chamber that makes sense.

We are going beyond just physical barriers and we are trying to look at a more holistic approach toward accessibility. That includes the digital content. We are looking to make sure a review is done by the end of the year. And that we work closely with anybody that they identify with as part of the testing to ensure that that testing is robust in that we get good input on what we put out there for the community to read and to listen to and watch that we make the changes that we need to make.

As we have discussed that ADA self-evaluation is the second phase where we are looking at the structural barriers that need to be changed. That self-evaluation, when we have a report that we will be able to present that will include some of the other items that we are working on. So while this business that we are having come on to do this evaluation of our physical buildings. That is going to be their focus. They are not necessarily going to be working on the digital audit. That will be a different business. That is still going to be there as far as what is the totality of all the accessibility work that we have been doing. So that people will get a good sense that we are trying to address this holistically. We will not just do it in parts and pieces. This a big initiative for the Council. It is long overdue. It has been recognized.

But we have the people to do it. We have the will to do it. Now is the time to do it and not hold off any longer. That transition plan, being the second part, that details what are the next steps? What is the cost? What are the implications? What are the changes that need to occur to the buildings? What are any sort of changes to digital content, to the digital accessibility piece? It will all be part of that transition plan. So it takes into account all of the changes that the Council needs to make to be not only ADA compliant, but to be seen as a model for what accessibility looks like. The Council is very unique in that it is a regional government and not something that every state has. We could be easily seen as a model for other entities that are similar. Or either in size or in scope so that they can see our work as best practice. That they can use.

Some other accessibility work. As I mentioned we are trying to take a look at a holistic approach. A wider lens approach and not just focusing on the buildings. We are trying to change and infuse a culture of accessibility internally. So that starts with the staff. It starts with leadership here. There is going to be some formal training this year for department leaders, department managers on various topics within accessibility. So digital accessibility. The appointments of people with disabilities in creating a pipeline for leadership potential here. Addressing mental health in the workplace and its impact on productivity as well as just the shame, the silence that continues around that. As well as addressing workplace accommodations. Reasonable accommodations in making sure managers are fully aware of the process for reasonable accommodations and how they can be beneficial and actually more productive in the workplace.

What we are looking to do here is have topic specific sessions at a series of trainings this year to get leadership more engaged in the topic of accessibility. So that next year this becomes infused into workplans so that there is individual accountabilities across the Council on accessibility. So that everybody is on the same page as far as what accessibility means. The agency they have to make changes in their own work as far as accessibility. In addition, staff will be trained to make sure that documentation, communication internally and externally with communities is fully accessible.

So there is a lot of built in checkers like PDF and Word. Getting beyond that too so that communications and marketing are making sure that what we are putting out there is fully accessible. It is fully readable. It is understandable. In an effort to become more transparent and more welcoming of people of all abilities.

Rodgers said my comments are being made from the point of wanting to put everybody on the same page. Talking about the same language. What the actual requirement is under ADA compliance. I have some specific questions. What are the standards being used for digital accessibility?

Byard said what is being use as the web content accessibility guidelines 2.1? With the addition of some of those best practices. That is what the consultant will be using and adhering to with ensuring that digital information we have is accessible.

Rodgers said I would assume that 5.08 is also a part of the standard you are using. Because that is different than the WCAG?

Byard said yes. There are best practices there.

Rodgers said that implies for us because we receive federal dollars. That is also us. Not just the federal government. The Rehab Act is required to be followed by anybody who gets a dollar from the federal government. We get substantially more than a dollar from the federal government. So that requirement carries over?

The other thing I want to make sure that everybody's really clear about. I am sharing this just under the realm of awareness and so we can all be on the same page with the language that we use. You made it sound like you are doing the physical barriers as part of the ADA Transition Plan and the extra stuff is the digital piece. It is not extra. It is all a part of ensuring your programs, activities and facilities are accessible to people with disabilities. That they don't discriminate. It is all one.

Under the ADA Transition Plan, it is all called the Transition Plan. It is not really the end product that is the transition plan. It is all part of the transition plan. The inventory is part of the transition plan. As is the outcome of what is accessible. I think that piece was not mentioned. It is not only pointing out what is not accessible. But what is accessible? What part of our business that faces the public or employees meets requirements? So it is both. It is a plus and a minus? And then trying to address the minuses. It is a general category. I just want to suggest that be careful with language. Because language is really important when talking about this issue.

The last comment I will make is around this concept of compliance. There is often a misnomer for people wanting to be compliant with the law. The ADA is minimal requirements. It is the ground floor. It is the minimum that needs to be met. That doesn't mean that we can't go above the minimum. We can't have standards that are better than the minimum? I would hope that that is part of the discussion that you are having internally is that the ADA sets out minimal standards that must be met. I would think that we as an agency would strive to go above those minimum requirements. Please add that to your internal discussions as you move forward.

Byard said point well taken. I am in full agreement.

Imdieke Cross said you are building access. The business that you are contracting with to do the surveys. Do you know who at this point? Have you sent out a RFP for that?

Byard said that is being finalized right now.

Imdieke Cross said it is for all of the Met Council buildings and facilities?

Byard said currently right now it is for all of the supportive public facilities. That would include park and rides, transit centers, the administrative buildings like Robert Street, Heywood, which is by Target Field. We are envisioning that it would be a phased in process so that this isn't a one and done. It will be continually a self-evaluating. Or physical structures that continue to ensure that they are accessible. For right now we will continue to support those public facilities.

Imdieke Cross said I have seen some self-evaluations done previously. Some contractors have the wherewithal to know whether a code is phased in over a period of time. That it changes every couple of years. It is real important to me that we use current code as our standard. And not allow some previous code to be used as acceptable. There are huge differences from the 2007 code to the 2015 code. I just want to make you aware of the fact that what we are actually going to be evaluating, using as the tool for the evaluation is our state building code because that meets and exceeds the ADA standards. It is real important that we use current codes. And that that be stated in there. Because if we simply say that it complies with state or federal codes or design specifications, that opens the door for anything that was acceptable at any point since the signing of the ADA. We want to focus in on current code, highest standards. Best practices is always the way to go. Even if the maximum reach ranges, if we can make it more effective. Bring it down a couple of more inches, that is going to make it more accessible for more people.

Clarissa Schleichert said I have a question for Margot. Do you feel the Access Board is the most up-to-date on what they are proposing? What a statute should look like? And a forecast of what we might see as a statute either state or federally? Is that a good tool? I know that in the past you referred us to the Access Board. But I don't know if it is the end all, be all. I was just wondering if that is good guidance potentially for what a statute would look like two to three years from now.

Imdieke Cross said the Access Board is a wonderful resource. For a lot of things, I would go right to the Access Board. For outdoor developed areas when you are looking at parks and recreation facilities. For public right-of-way information. When we are talking about streets and intersections. They have a lot of really cutting

edge, current really good stuff. But for areas that are totally not being addressed. For instance, bariatric issues. There is a growing and emerging issue that is taking center stage for a lot of state agencies, is the bariatric issue. When the ADA only requires a minimum of 250 pound weight capacity, how do we then make that accessible for someone who is 500, 600, or 700 pounds? Who is going to use that facility? We need to incorporate the expertise of the Access Board, but not stop there with the emerging issues. Because as good as they are there are always issues that are coming in from different perspectives. The Access Board is for issues that have been established. When we are talking about a technical standard. When we are talking about the slope and the width and the height or what the accessibility technical requirement is. Then I am going to refer our people to the state building codes. Because we have worked hard to make sure that we exceed national standards. In fact, we get a lot of criticism. For the technical standard, go back to the state code.

Rodgers said I just want to make sure that I am understanding the entire scope of the Transition Plan. Because I heard a lot about barriers. I heard a lot about buildings. Outwardly facing buildings or projects. I didn't hear anything about Title I internally related. You mentioned a little bit about reasonable accommodations. I think the language is critical here. It is not a nice thing to have a supervisor provide an employee with a needed accommodation if they are a qualified individual that is entitled to one. It is a requirement. It is a legal obligation. I want to make sure that that gets conveyed during the training process to supervisors and managers. It is a nice thing. It is the right thing to do. But there is the law as well. That needs to be part of that equation. There is also effective communication. That is another title of the ADA. That also needs to be a part of this transition plan. It is multi-faceted. It is not just physical barriers. That is a big focus. That is a lot of our programs and activities that are just physical. But it is not just that. I want to make sure that it is not missing that in the total plan.

Fenley said I think that gets to your first point as well. I would assume that you are not separating what you presented to us differently. The digital accessibility and then the ADA Transition Plan. While digital accessibility definitely fits into the spirit of the law. It is not in the letter of the law yet. We are still waiting on the DOJ to do that. To Ken's point. Is all of this, Title I, Title II and then the communications Title IV and the digital. Is all of that going to be part of your singular document ADA? We can call that the transition plan? Is that your goal? You just presented it to us separated so that we have an understanding of what is going into it?

Byard said yes. It is separated in that there are two different RFP's or request for proposals. There are two different businesses that would be conducting the audit or evaluation. One on the physical side and one on the digital side. But then it will come together in the overall self-evaluation plan or the writeup summary as well as what is in the transition plan regarding prioritization and dollars and all that.

Fenley said as I recall you mentioning that training for supervisors both in digital accessibility and reasonable accommodations. So that ongoing training process will be in the transition plan. How you are going to do implement that instead? Is that part of the transition plan?

Byard said that is a good point. That will be in there as far as providing more context to the Council wide initiatives that are underway. There will be reference to internal trainings to this internal culture of accessibility that we are trying to create. Not just through compliance but getting beyond that. So it is a mind shift as far as what it means to provide communication internally and externally to provide more programs and services so that the Council is fully understanding of and implementing not only the law, but around accessibility guidelines and that it really meets the spirit of the Thrive 2040 plan. That is the Council wide plan to address a lot of our work in particular around equity. All the components under equity including accessibility.

Fenley said to Margot's point, include what you do. To Ken's point, include how you are going to make that better. Both for physical, digital and for reasonable accommodations for employees as well. So it is there for everybody to see. We know that you do good things already. We know that you want to do things better.

Rogers said things that I didn't hear mentioned is a policy evaluation. All of the policies are part of the Met Council. Policies need to be evaluated for equity and accessibility as well. Not just digital accessibility. But the policies need to be in line with the ADA. It is policies, practices, activities and projects. All those things are a part of that. I don't want them to be omitted. That is part of the complexity of an ADA transition plan. It is big, deep and encompasses just about every aspect of the Met Council. It is not just barriers for buildings. It is internal. It is external. It is all the policies, all the practices, all the activities that are conducted by the agency. With the lens of looking at it to not discriminate against people with disabilities.

Byard said in 2016 the Council adopted an accessibility policy. Going forward to the intent is especially with the leadership forum and these departmental trainings is that the policy is adhered to but that within each

department there are procedures under that accessibility policy that really dictate the accessibility work that they are doing so that it gets into a more granular level of what is each departments accountability around accessibility? So it is not just this grand thing Council wide. But it has specific meaning to the work that you are doing within the departments. The point is well taken in that there needs to be a continual focus on policies outside of the accessibility policies. So that they are there on the side of accessibility inclusion and equity. There is a review process for that. But then, more specifically, there are procedures under that for the departments so that they are not only adhering to the policy. But in their day to day work and in the work plans there is accountability around accessibility and around inclusion.

Fenley said this issue is very important to all of us and the disability community in general in the metro area. Come to us with questions. We won't do the work for you. But we will inform. We will advise. With our expertise with how you can best go about getting the work done. Feel free to email or call me. I am not going to offer the committee members up to you for that. But I will farm it out to them if they feel so inclined to respond. Otherwise we would like to have updates on your progress on this. Just for the sake of being able to offer our expertise to you.

Jackson said with the two RFP's that are going out soon. We will have these businesses onboard to help us with this work as we move forward with this project. How often would you like us to come back? Would you like us to come to the meetings? Or if a RFP goes out, would you want to be advised of that? How can we communicate that with you?

Fenley said there are already a couple of our members that are on your slides that are involved in the RFP selection process for the digital accessibility. On a more specific out of committee work like that, let me know. I would just toss it out quarterly. I know you are looking to have the self-evaluation done by the end of the year. Then, hopefully, soon thereafter, starting on the actual transition plan implementation. That only leaves us with a couple or more meetings. Should we do it quarterly?

Imdieke Cross said quarterly seems to me to be a bit too long. Only because a lot is going to be happening. If we could be notified initially when a business (Consultants) is hired to do the evaluation. Also, who has been selected. That would be helpful from my perspective. Then regular updates.

Fenley said that sounds more "as needed". Or maybe on the front end of every other month or just keep us more in the loop. One thing I have been thinking about is I would like to reinvigorate the subcommittee task force / workgroup aspect of this committee. This seems like it might be on the task force / workgroup side of things over the next few months where a select few members of the committee could put themselves forward as interested in this. And as a way to help inform this process. Two hours a month is not a lot of time to do this and everything else that the Met Council comes to us for advisement on.

Imdieke Cross said I think this is an update. I don't think there is any decision making or advising that we could do at this point. If a quarterly is what you want. Then I would go back to the quarterly. I don't think this warrants a task force. I don't think there is anything for us to do other than receive updates.

Fenley asked Jackson if they want to come back next month for a five-minute update.

Rodgers said I agree with Margot. I think an every two month check-in. When they work with however we get an agenda created, a determination can be made for how much time is needed. I am thinking an update like the surveys have started, and we anticipate they are going to take six-months to complete. An update might be we are at 20 percent done. Just a brief overall so that we can stay on top of stuff.

### **3. ByLaws**

David Fenley, TAAC Vice Chair, spoke to the TAAC committee. At the last meeting we stopped at Article IV. As to the Civility clause in there. From what I hear it was a very colorful conversation last month. Based on some of the conversation that happened last month and some of my own personal beliefs. In moving forward with this committee, I would recommend that we remove the civility portion from the ByLaws. But I am hoping for alternate perspectives on that. I think that with proper education to presenters as to who they are presenting to. We might not have such need for colorful discussion. I am happy to be the person, while I am in this position, to hopefully institutionalize it. The person who does that education to the presenters that come to us. I think that a lot of the contentious debate comes from the fact that presenters come with a canned presentation. They don't necessarily speak to what matters to us. That is annoying. It snowballs from there. I also think that just a general decorum of the committee and also a focus on Roberts Rules can help us be more civil. If the

civility clause isn't necessary at this moment. Then again, if folks on the committee think it should be there, it is in there. It is on the agenda. So we have to have the discussion and the vote. But that is just where I am at.

Rodgers said I move we remove the civility clause from the ByLaws. Imdieke Cross seconded the motion.

Fenley said if memory serves me correctly, we are doing this section article by article.

Rodgers said I don't want to give the impression that I don't think civility is important to this committee. It is crucially important. I would be more inclined to have a respectful policy. Just a general statement on respect and how our committee expects respect from presenters. They should expect respect in return. When you talk about accessibility, with a group of people that live with disabilities, it can be a very impassioned conversation. I don't want us to get mixed up with passion verses being uncivil. It may run up against being respectful. But I think that is our charge and we have means to Roberts Rules to handle that. I am always against regulating something like civility or behavior. We are all grownups. We should be able to police ourselves.

Clark said I think the important thing is that the policy making process is inherently messy and conflictual. I understand that. We want to be respectful to presenters. But I don't want to muffle the discussion. I think the civility clause has the potential to do that.

Fenley said I think this speaks to Ken's point as well. Any time that you are dealing with policy issues and it is rubber stamping and is not contentious, you are probably not doing something that is all that important. If it is contentious and people have different views on things, you are wading into territory that probably needs to be waded into. That is a very good point, John. The lines of being silenced or having the impression that people are trying to squash your opinion or your belief. I think that we need to avoid that at all costs. Some of the passion that arises in this committee does so because people feel like they are not being listened to or heard. There is a lifetime of being segregated. Not being listened to and not being heard. Once you are in a room like this. A committee like this where you do have some say in how policies are made and how the largest transportation agency in the state and how that affects daily lives does things. You want to be heard. You want to be listened to. The perception that maybe somebody isn't listening to or that they are trying to silence your opinion evokes passion. A lot of times that spills over to disrespect. That is a line that I am going to do my best to keep from crossing. I am going to ask that all of you do the exact same thing. The passion is allowed. The disrespect is most definitely not allowed.

Streasick said with the removal of the civility clause, there has been a long standing problem with the TAAC in terms of occasionally crossing the line between impassioned self-advocacy and advocacy and screaming and yelling at somebody sometimes with inconsistent feedback from what the committee has formally recommended. I was merely spelling out that one of the things that has happened in the past from that, and I think we have made some improvements, is that we have had some cases where the most appropriate subject matter experts were no longer available to come to the TAAC because their direct supervisors were not going to subject them to a situation that they felt was abusive. I think we have moved from that somewhat. I just wanted to make sure that we didn't backslide.

Fenley said I think the responsibility lies with both places. Both on supervisors, presenters, subject matter, experts at the Met Council, Metro Transit. But also on the committee members to maintain a level of respect. I will do my best to deal with both sides of the equation. Voices won't be silenced. We need people to want to come here and present to us if we are going to do our statutory obligation to advise. There has got to be some kind of healthy medium there. Andy is right. It is not as bad as it used to be. It is only going to get better.

There is still a motion on the table that has been seconded. Is there any more discussion? All in favor of removing the civility clause from Article IV of the ByLaws, say Aye. Opposed. Abstentions. There was one abstention to remove the civility clause. Kari Sheldon. The clause was removed.

Right after the civility clause we have some more highlighted text.

Streasick said I noticed there is listed two staff liaisons. There are currently three. Could you make the OEO (Office of Equal Opportunity) number three?

Fenley said if there are actually three liaisons, the ByLaws should say that.

Clarissa Schleichert spoke to the TAAC committee. Just to give you a little bit of history here. My understanding of how our office has been involved in TAAC as a liaison. In the past we were asked to come because in regards to accessibility, and things of that nature, our office has been the go to for a lot of those things. If there are issues going on around the Council, we wanted to make sure that they are being presented

to you. When Chair Walker was here, she had requested that our office be a liaison and requested that it be at a supervisory level. This is how Jan Dietrich was appointed in that role. When Jan is not able to come, I fill in her place. I don't think that she has any strong feelings either way. This is just in response to a request from the TAAC. However you folks want to handle it is fine by our office.

Fenley said if no one else has any comments, we will change the number two to three. First line, Section four, Article IV. We have one more change that just lays out who they are. So "Two staff liaisons will be assigned by the Metropolitan Council to serve all regular and special meetings." The change occurring right here. "One representing the Metropolitan Transportation Services. One representing Metro Transit. One representing the Office of Equal Opportunity."

Imdieke Cross moved to approve the changes to Article IV. Rodgers seconded the motion.

Fenley said we are doing Article IV now. The civility clause has been amended out. Staff support number has been raised to three. Then we have listed all three of the departments that the staff members come from. That is the end of the changes to Article IV. We have a motion on the table that has been seconded. Is there any more discussion? All in favor of the changes in Article IV say Aye. Opposed? Abstain? The motion carried.

There are no changes to Article V. The ByLaws are done.

#### **4. Ford Flex Preview**

Fenley said this was recently added to the agenda. Today. There is a discussion surrounding the replacement of the Equinox vehicles. The Metro Mobility Equinox vehicles with a Ford Flex. We are going to be shown a presentation that was not provided to us beforehand.

Paul Colton, Fleet Services Manager, spoke to the TAAC committee. The Ford Flex is going to be here between 2:00 and 3:00 p.m. today. If anyone wants to see it, touch it, feel it, sit inside it and have a further discussion about it.

When we select any vehicle, we have a pecking order of what the priorities are. The number one quality is passenger access, the vehicle comfort and space. The second is this is the driver's workspace. We want to be respectful of the driver's workspace. We try to get the best seats that we can find for them. If it is laid out in a way that makes sense for them to function to be as safe as possible. The installation of technology is really important. We lay out the technology with our Ranger units and our camera systems.

In the case of our SUV's. The sport utility vehicles. The cargo space is important too. In case we have groceries, a walker and other mobility devices. Then we look at fuel economy and cost. A brief summary to get everybody on the same page. We have been using sedans for about 13 years. We introduced them to contractors in 2005 for some of our customers that have extreme pain. From using our services because of a medical condition they have. Some folks find it impossible to use our buses. This gives them another option.

What we also have found that sedans and SUV's are a little more nimble. So we can get closer to locations because they weigh less and are smaller. So they have some additional residual benefits. It is a very small percentage of our fleet. Right now, we operate 31 vehicles. There are 31 SUV's in service. We are going to replace 24 of those vehicles. Six more will be replaced later this year. We may not make this selection. We may look at something else.

What I am showing is the current vehicle, which will be retired. It is a Chevy Equinox. It has been a great vehicle. We have had good feedback over the years. The space and the room. It has held up well. This is also an important factor. Maintain ability. They are at the end of their useful life. They are due for replacement. We want to try to find something even better. Our minimum criteria is they have to have at least the characteristics of the current vehicle. For accessibility and for the ride.

We had narrowed that down to the Ford Flex and the Ford Edge. The reason we did not look at the 2019 Chevy Equinox is because they made too many changes that were detrimental to our ability to make the passengers comfortable. The back seat shrunk. The cargo area expanded. Our initial review of that we were not comfortable with the loss of head space. So we looked at something that was equal to the Chevy Equinox.

The Ford Edge is very similar in size and dimension and looks to the Chevy Equinox. Similar spacing, seats, leg room, head room, shoulder room and height. It is potentially a good option. The Ford Flex is a little bit larger vehicle. We will go through the pro's and con's of each vehicle. It exceeds some of the space requirements based on our evaluation of that vehicle. In testing the side-by-side comparisons of each vehicle.



A direct comparison of the two. The numbers may be misleading. The Ford Flex is rated. This is all from Ford Motor Company. It has greater head room. Equal leg room. The Edge, hip room is a half inch less. The shoulder room is two inches less. In the rear, the head room is nearly identical. The rear leg room is four inches more. In the Flex, rear hip room claims to be two inches less in the Flex than the Edge. The shoulder room claims to be two inches less than the Flex. Two and a half inches less than the Edge.

Our experience of sitting in both vehicles, people of all different sizes does not show that.

Streasick said I am speculating that there is substantially more leg room in the rear of the Flex. So has folks of all sizes and disabilities got in and out. It was easier to get in and out. Once you are in, it was much easier to get comfortable, shift with another person in the back seat of the Flex and maintain that comfort. It may be that in a lab where you are measuring the rear seat. The Edge comes out with more hip room based on whatever they are doing. When in terms of functional usage, the Flex, for people of all sizes, including folks with disabilities getting in and out of there, and sitting there comfortably, there was a noticeable benefit of that vehicle.

Colton said just briefly a comparison of the two. At a high level, the Flex has better space for passengers. The Flex and Edge have about equal challenges for installation of technology. So, it is neutral on that. The Flex has more cargo room available. We need to make some adjustments to that. We have already begun working with Ford on that. The Flex, based on our test drives, is a smoother ride. Better road handling for the driver and the customer. The Flex and Edge have similar space for the driver. So it is neutral on that. The Flex and Edge have a similar dash layout. The Edge has the advantage over price. It is about \$3,000 less per unit. The Edge does get better fuel economy. About five gallons better. At the end of the analysis, we believe the other factors are more important than those last two. We have a budget that can accommodate the Flex.

As we move forward, with the replacements of the sedans, which we plan on doing every three years, we are excited about where electric vehicles are taking us.

Imdieke Cross said these are not hybrid. It looks like you are going to buy the Flex?

Colton said that is what we are recommending.

Imdieke Cross said the question that I have in regards to the Flex is there a higher step up to the Flex than the Edge?

Colton said it is a couple of inches lower than the Equinox and the Edge. The creation of the Flex by Ford is really that it replaces the station wagon. It is not a minivan. It is kind of a SUV station wagon with a really big back cargo area. It is roomy in that luxury car market as far as space goes.

Rodgers said the extra four inches of leg room in that back seat has more space for a service dog?

Colton said I believe so, Ken. But we can go visit it.

Streasick said when I was in there I was specifically looking down on the floor area for service dogs space. A larger service dog would fit very well. Your service dog would fit very comfortable in there.

Colton said we are in the early process of exploring modified minivans. A Chrysler product that is lowered. It has a wheelchair space in the front passenger seat. Then a wide back seat in the rear. Then it has a ramp. We are exploring that hard. Could that be a replacement for this? Could we get the reliability out of it that we are going to need? We are in the process of talking to some transit properties that are beginning to use these in service. We are going to have to work on our budget a bit. The converted minivans are about \$42,000. We are not getting any more life out of them than the Flex. The Flex comes in around \$31,000. If it is going to be a solution that really benefits our customers in the Metro Mobility system. I will look at that.

Streasick said I want to point out that we will continue to look at that ride. We looked at a ramp equipped minivan before. They did not ride any better than our vans by the time there was the low floor and the ramp in there which would essentially eliminate the benefit. For those folks who can't ride one of our buses where there is a direct threat associated with that kind of a jarring because of their health condition or disability. The time we last looked, which was years ago now. It wouldn't have done us any good for that population. That is something we are going to prioritize if we go in that direction.

Imdieke Cross said I like the idea of a minivan for folks. I think it is a great step forward for service. I have some real concerns regarding the Chrysler minivan. As long as you don't care about transmissions, you go

ahead and get as many as you want. You might want to add extra money in the budget to repair those transmissions.

Colton said Margot, I hear you loud and clear. One of the challenges in this market for that product, which is modified. As far as I know, it is the only minivan out in the market that goes through this modification. So our choices are slim. We are going to take a really hard look at it. Because I already have maintenance people saying they are not big fans of that because they know a lot of the issues that come with that vehicle. All of those factors have to be looked at.

## **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

### **1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers**

This item was not presented

### **2. Green Line – Christopher Bates**

This item was not presented

### **3. Gold Line – Darrell Paulsen**

This item was not presented

### **4. Rush Line – Darrell Paulsen**

This item was not presented

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## **MEMBER COMMENT**

Ken Rodgers said this is for Andy. For people using the Premium One Day Service. The taxi cab service. Reservationists are taking the reservations and they are still telling people to wait 10 or 15 minutes and call Airport to arrange your transportation. That is always a good default. That will work. But they have updated their systems such that I don't have to call. In 10 minutes, I get a text saying my order was received saying that when I am ready to go, text "GO" and my order will be activated. I text "GO" and I get a text back saying I Hail 368 has accepted your order and is approximately 1.8 miles, four minutes away. And it counts down. I can watch it approach. I never have to call Airport Taxi anymore. That was news to one of the supervisors at Transit Team. But I shared that almost three weeks ago or maybe a month ago and those reservationists are still indicating the old process. How do the reservationists get the updated information? So that they can give accurate information.

Somebody needs to tell the Service Center that there are extreme wait times for somebody to call to talk to a service representative. I have waited up to 30 minutes twice and hung up. You can't call the Service Center and make a complaint or accommodation or any comment or issue if you can't get through. There is no way to ask for a call back, leave a number, indicate that you have been waiting on hold for 30 minutes. I would imagine that issues of weather that wait time gets even longer.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

After the meeting adjourned the TAAC Committee went outside to look at the Driver Barriers on a bus and the Ford Flex auto.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary