

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 5, 2020

Committee Members Present: Chair David Fenley, Sam Jasmine, Patsy Murphy, Ken Rodgers, Jeffry Dains. Vice Chair Darrell Paulsen, Kari Sheldon, Heidi Myhre, Claudia Fuglie, Patty Thorsen, Diane Graham-Raff, Kody Olson, Erik Henriksen and Richard Rowan.

Committee Members Absent: None

Committee Members Excused: Christopher Bates and John Clark

Council Staff Present: Amy Vennewitz, Sara Maaske, Mitzi Kennedy, Andy Streasick, Doug Cook, Christine Kuennen, Heidi Schallberg, Richard Koop, Nick Thompson and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Sheila Holbrook-White and Nichole Villavicencio

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:30 p.m. on Wednesday, February 5, 2020.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by Vice Chair Paulsen, seconded by Thorsen to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Daines, seconded by Jasmine to approve the minutes of the December 4, 2019 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Transportation Policy Plan

Amy Vennewitz, Deputy Director MTS spoke to the TAAC committee. I lead the long-range transportation planning group here at the Metropolitan Council. The last time you would have seen me would have been a year and a half ago. One of the primary products that my group of planners produces is the Regional Transportation Policy Plan. We last updated that in late 2018. October 2018 was the adoption. Then we amended it May of 2019 to add the Riverview Corridor as a transitway in our funded system plan. And also, a couple of highway projects. We waited to produce the written version of the overview of the plan until after those amendments.

This overview is fairly recent for the 2018 plan. The big piece of this plan is that it covers how we are going to invest in transportation in the region for both highways and transit. Though it can be some of a moving plan, as the plan investment change. Generally, we adopt this plan every four to five years. I am here today to talk to you about something that recently changed in the work that we are doing which is we are going to adopt a new version of our Transportation Policy Plan this year during 2020. So that is only a little bit under two years from when we last adopted the plan.

I am going to talk to you a little about why we are doing that this year. It came up kind of suddenly. It was not something that we were originally thinking that we were going to do. But after thinking about how all of the planning work is laying out over the next few years. We determined that that readopting this plan this year is going to help us into the future. I am here today to tell you why that is the case.

So the Transportation Policy Plan is a 20-year plan. It looks out currently to 2040. It covers how we are going to invest in the highway and transit system. But also bike and ped. The plan, we produce it under both federal

and state requirements. The dilemma we are in right now is that those two levels of requirement don't always match up with each other.

Under state law, the update of our plans essentially follows a ten-year cycle. Under state law, the 10-year cycles start essentially this year with the census. We do the census. Then a year or two later we get the census data and we look at population, household, employment data and then we forecast how our region is going to grow into the future. And then the Met Council creates what is known as the Regional Development Guide, which is the overarching plan for the region. And then simultaneously, we produce what we call system plans. Transportation, aviation, wastewater and parks are our system plans. And the system plans react to the overall Regional Development Plan.

So we are right now, starting with the census, embarking on this 10-year cycle of doing the Regional Plan. Then we will do the System Plans. Once we do the System Plans, cities and counties do their local plans. That whole process takes 10 years. That is starting this year.

To get ready for that process, we do a lot of work in between. So right now, we are anticipating that the Met Council will adopt the overarching Regional Plan. Right now, it is called Thrive 2040. In the future, the plan will be the 2050 Plan. It might still be Thrive or it might have a different name to it. But it will essentially be an overarching plan that looks out to 2050.

Between now and 2024, when we adopt that plan, we are going to be doing a lot of studies and work that looks at what does our regional plan want to become? We will be doing a lot of outreach with stakeholders, and talking to our partners, the public and you about what do you want for our region? What should our region look like into the future? And we will take all of the studies and public information that we gain. We will produce a draft plan in early 2024. Bring that plan to a public information process and adopt it in late 2024. That is also the schedule for the big update of the Transportation Plan.

That is the big picture of how we want to operate. Basically, in the next four years we are going to be doing a lot of planning work. And then we will adopt the plan in 2024. One of the things I want to add is that is the state requirements that I just covered. We also have to produce a Transportation Policy Plan under federal law. The federal law requires us to indicate what we are going to be spending on transportation. And then it requires us to go out for a period of 20 years from the date of adoption. So right now, we have a 2040 plan. If we do an update, any time after 2020, if we go to 2040, we no longer cover 20 years.

What happened is, under federal law, we have to update our plan every five years, which would put the next update from 2018. It would put us into 2023. So federal law tells us to update the transportation plan in 2023. Our state law we are aiming for 2024. We have this mismatch of schedules. We don't want to adopt a plan in 2023 and then another one in 2024. So we realized that late last year. And then we realized if we don't update it. We have to update it before 2023. If we don't do it in 2020, then it can't be a 2040 plan anymore.

So we ended up with a mismatch about our two requirements between federal and state. Looking at that, we decided that in 2020, we would take the current Transportation Policy Plan, make minimal changes to it, put it out for public comment, and essentially readopt the same plan that we just adopted in 2018. But it would now have a date of 2020 on it and allow us to do the next update in 2024. I know that is very confusing. The end result being we are going to be adopting an update to this plan this year. But what we are expecting is very little change to what we adopted in 2018. I am here to tell you that that is the plan for what we are going to be doing.

The other piece that I am letting people know is that while the changes to the plan are going to be minimal, what we want to do as we are out talking to people about the Transportation Policy Plan, is already start hearing what is maybe missing from this plan? Where are there big gaps? So that as we approached 2024 or we do planning studies between now and 2024 to look at regional needs and where we are at in the region with transportation. That we can address it in the next plan.

While the changes this time are going to be minimal, the feedback is very important. Because it will inform the work that we are doing over the next four years. One thing I would like to hear from you are some thoughts on what are pieces of knowledge or policy that are missing that you would like to see us address in the Transportation Policy Plan. Not in the next plan, but as we approach the 2050 plan.

The schedule we are working on for this update is I am out during January. We have been working already with our TAC Planning group. Our Transportation Advisory Board and then the Council has also seen a presentation about the update. Between now and April we are gaining feedback from people. If there are small

changes you would like to see to the current plan, what are those? What are the bigger issues you see coming down the road for the next two or three years that you want us as planners to be working on? We will compile all of that information and help design our work program moving forward. We will have a new draft version of this 2018 plan in May. The Council will be releasing it for public comment in mid-June. The slightly revised plan will be out for public comment from mid-June until August. We will take the public comments again. Make changes to the plan but envisioning minimal changes and also use the comments again to inform our work heading into the future to 2024. Make revisions to the plan and adopt a new Transportation Policy Plan in October and November. So we will have a new version of this sometime next November.

That is essentially the schedule we are working on for the update. I can take any questions about the overall schedule we are anticipating changing. Or if you want to have a conversation about things you would like to see us working on from a planning perspective into the future. That will be helpful too. I can also come back and do that conversation in the next couple of months.

Rodgers said I have a policy recommendation to work into the policy. I realize it will take some time to implement but in terms of public transit, I will use the light rail for example or the BRT system. Consistency is the key for people with disabilities. Bus stations that virtually are identical are the easiest to maneuver and navigate around. Especially for people that are blind or have low vision. We get into massive safety issues when we encounter situations that we have different kinds of stations. Like for example, Snelling Avenue Station verses Nicollet Mall Station for example.

The Nicollet Mall Station is easy to access. The Snelling Avenue Station is impossible to access without sight. So that becomes a major safety issue. Right now, our policy, in my opinion, is squeeze in the stations wherever we can and make them look however we can to make it fit the space. I think our policy needs to focus on the needs of people first. Not the needs of the space. That is a huge lift, but I would like to see our policy reflect the vision that our transit system needs to be people focused first.

Myhre said now I have to process that information. I have to figure out were to put my GoTo card and get on the train or buses. Don't make it so complicated that I can't step outside my house to go to it.

Henricksen said some of the questions I have flipping through this 2040 plan is when you began the presentation, the plan covers how to invest in the transportation system in the metro area. I didn't see a piece where they were looking at the investment in accessibility. Or incorporating the ADA transition plan. I was wondering in the 2040 Plan. Does it really go into accessibility?

Vennewitz said one of the things I should have described about the structure of the Transportation Policy Plan. So this printed piece is what we call the overview. So it is a high level look at the total transportation system. It really focuses on the big major investments we are going to be making. The actual Transportation Policy Plan online is divided into modal chapters. There are opening chapters on vision and goals and strategies. And then we move into modal chapters. A lot of the detail on how we are going to invest in the transit system is in the Transit Chapter. And this overview is really particularly focusing on transitway investments. The big higher-level investments. We also have a land use chapter that focuses on how land use influences on transit design and the ability to provide transit services. So the actual Transportation Policy Plan is over 600 pages by modal chapter.

Similarly, we have a highway chapter that talks about highway investment, how we think about highway investment, the big highway investments we are going to be making. That chapter should have references to thinking about ADA and transition similar to the transit chapter, aviation chapter, bike and ped chapter and a freight chapter. The real details on what we are going to be doing and planned investments and how we think about investing is found in the detailed chapters. This hits the highlights of that.

Having said that, there is a discussion of all of the modes. All of the various transit opportunities in the transit chapter including Metro Mobility. We also have a chapter on environment and environmental justice. It talks about serving people with disabilities. It is a little bit scattered throughout all of the chapters of the actual Transportation Plan. But it might be something we should be thinking about. Is there a better way to holistically talk about needs?

Henricksen said I appreciate you explaining where it can be found. But when looking at an overview and especially the lens of this committee with accessibility at the forefront, when I look through it quickly, I see on page 35 we talk about equity. At least adding an overview that the philosophy is to highlight accessibility as well as something that is incorporated in at least with equity. And also, even in an overview, I think there

should be some mention of it. So that way people who pick up the overview in the book understand that it is something that the Met Council is thriving to improve.

Chair Fenley said building on that is a Segway I have on that. And also revisiting the question about the incorporation of the ADA Transition Plan which I think might be a good suggestion. I know there are instances where Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council fall short on compliance. There are many instances which is fantastic and expected. There are also instances where you strive and do go above and beyond ADA requirements and building code and focus on usability. I would suggest maybe touting some of those and also saying that you are not just here to meet requirements. You are here to make things usable for folks. It might be in there. I didn't see it again. I gave it a real basic overview. But you might be able to rely on the transition plan to identify places. I think you have assessed a lot of the facilities through that transition plan. Highlighting where you are focusing on accessibility where you are going above and beyond. Rather than just saying we are going to be ADA compliant because that is expected.

Vennewitz said this is exactly what we want to be doing is hearing people's comments and understanding what can we change now that might be fairly simple and what do we need to be thinking about as we head towards the big new plan in 2023 and 2024. So it is very helpful.

Chair Fenley said when you are looking for engagement and feedback on protected classes, it is nice if they can see themselves in the plan. Then they want to read it and they do feel like they are actually being spoken to.

Myhre said my concern is do you have a wide variety of people with disabilities and different cultures working with you on this? How do we all work together to use this new idea that you are presenting to us?

Vennewitz said one of the things that long-range planners struggle with is what is the high-level vision and how does that work down into specific projects and investments? What is too detailed for the long-range plan? What do you need in there to give direction so that people who are actually developing projects and thinking about specific implementation understand what we are trying to accomplish? The plan tries to stay up here. And then Metro Transit, as the implementor or Metro Mobility or a road authority. Whoever might be implementing projects. It is kind of a back and forth of "Here is what the vision is. How does the implementation of my project work? What can I do to help implement that vision?" Though the specificity isn't always in our pan. It comes down to project level.

One of the things I hear is the need to have regional guidance on expectations and standards for whether it is transit stations or winter maintenance. Those types of things typically wouldn't be in the plan. But they might be an appendix, or the plan would call for developing a guidebook. And then Metro Transit would develop a guidebook that the plan would reference. We start broad and then we move into specifics to help people actually implement the projects.

Myhre asked at what level are folks with disabilities or folks that are underrepresented going to be involved in this?

Vennewitz said the plan itself goes through a broad and wide engagement process. This meeting today is part of that engagement process. We talk to cities. We talk to counties. We talk in-depth to Metro Transit and MNDot. We will take it out to public comment. One of the things we try to emphasize is that this plan, if it calls for projects or planning studies to be done, there is an expectation that each of those projects will have their own engagement process too. This does not replace the need for each project and each planning study to also do public engagement, get public feedback and input. So we do set that expectation for public engagement in this plan. We are partners and are responsible for implementing it.

Thorsen said I have a question about long-range planning. A big part of it is who are you addressing that both the plan to and who is the population where the people that the services are aimed at? In terms of disabilities, I see two basic groups. You can get into specific disabilities, but there are disabilities that people get at a given point where they have right now from birth. But then there are disabilities that are acquired over time as people age. They come with the aging process or by accidents or whatever. My question would be in the mindset of the planning process. Do you have in mind both the people that right now have disabilities or someone who might get the disability later and need the accommodations and don't necessarily aren't tuned into how to use the system. The mindset is what concerns me.

Vennewitz said it is kind of a new concept for me. I think I am getting where you are going with this. There are people who maybe suddenly are finding themselves in a situation that they are unprepared for. And how do we think about that differently than people who have had a longer time to adjust?

Thorsen said I oftentimes will say to people none of us is guaranteed that the abilities that we have when we go to bed tonight will be there when we wake up in the morning. We need as planners and as individuals to be tuned into that. We need to operate from that mindset. Disabilities don't give permission of "O.K., David I am going to give you this disability. Do you want it?"

Chair Fenley said when you build accessibility in the planning process and the final result, it doesn't just benefit the folks that are asking for it. It benefits everybody. Whether you acquired a disability or whether you didn't.

Thorsen said if you aren't incorporating that mindset. You might be preventing the people with the disability who have contributions to make but aren't able to make them because things are not accessible. There is a distinction between accessible and useable. It goes beyond just the baseline standard.

Vennewitz said I think this is a good example of something we have to carry into the next update of thinking what would that nuance, how would it change our thinking of investing or how we talk about something. Probably not something in the short term I know how to address.

Dains said you mentioned the census on this. I sat through a couple of sessions on the census. In fact, I was interested in trying to do it. I am legally blind, so they are not real hip on me doing it. So we are trying to negotiate it. My understanding is there are 10 questions on the census form. I was told by two different people that equates to about \$300.00 per each individual in the metro area. This is kind of obscure, but when we are talking about the money that actually goes to transportation funding and you are talking about going to other governmental agencies, it is going to be interesting, of course, in roads and that kind of thing.

So when Erik brings up the emphasis on accessibility, how are the dollars equated once they come to the Met Council? That is my concern. Because what I hear from a lot of people who are talking about snow removal at different stations and different things we can do which all equates to funding. How is that determined when the emphasis is more on what Heidi said building? How much emphasis in terms of the funding, goes to accessibility? Because the dollars are going to speak to what happens. They always do. In the end, that is what it is all about. The census is about money. When you really talk to the folks it is about where dollars are coming from for the federal government and other places where they are going. How does that break out once you see the money? Is that part of this Transportation Policy Plan or am I way past what you are talking about today?

Vennewitz said I am going to answer part of your question. Not anything specific to the census. When we do the Regional Plan, we look at total transportation spending in the region. So it is not just the Met Council's money. It is MnDOT's money, the cities and counties and what are they spending on transportation? We have a finance chapter within the plan. What we know is in the next 20 years, our region is going to spend about 94 to 95 billion dollars on transportation. Transit, highway, bike and ped. Everything put together. The majority of that spending actually occurs on the local system. So it is cities and counties and their spending on local roads and sidewalks and bikeways is a little less than half of the total spending that occurs.

So our plan. We can't control how cities and counties spend their money. The bulk of it is property tax money. But what this plan can do is influence how they spend their funding. So setting goals and suggesting action. Providing guidelines, working with our partners. That is how we can influence what they are doing. Every so often, if it is the Met Council's money like in the Regional Solicitation, then we can put actual requirements on how we spend that money. I think you are aware that the current Regional Solicitation is going to go out in about a week and one of the requirements in the next Regional Solicitation is you can't even apply for the funding if you do not have an adopted ADA transition plan.

That is a good example of an area where we control. We are not going to give you money if you don't meet this requirement. But we have a lot of other areas where we don't control the funding. So what we are trying to do is influence decision making. Having the discussion and setting standards, having best practices, having guidelines, that cities, counties, MnDOT and Metro Transit can follow. Doing it cooperatively is a good effective way of doing that.

Chair Fenley said when you said the Transition Plan and the ADA Transition Plan has to be adopted for money to go out. Which I think is fantastic. We have already seen cities scrambling to get things together, which is fantastic as well. But there is really no clear template for what the Transition Plan is. Do you have a way to

determine if it is really a worthy transition plan to get money or they just pass the transition plan and it could be three pages long?

Vennewitz said unfortunately, the first step is just getting them to pass one. Some of them might not be very good plans. But they at least thought about it. They started on it. Hopefully, even they realize if it fell short, they are going to adopt it and then keep at it. So sometimes prodding people along the way is a good way to go about it.

Rowan said in December, Governor Walz initiated the Governor's Council on Age Friendly Minnesota. A significant portion of that is transportation. I know that that also includes the Met Council and the Department of Transportation. I am just wondering if the work of that council would be informing you as you look at updates. I think it is an important area to look at. It examines many things, for instance, not only do people who are aging use the transportation system, but caregivers need to use the transportation system to get to them. I am suggesting that you look into it.

Murphy said I have a traumatic brain injury. I look normal. I have had to quit using public transit. Because the bus stations are different. Things are in different places. The slight changes can make a difference. I can literally go there and go: "Where is this? Where did I go? Why am I here?" Unfortunately it has happened where I am on a bus and because they have done things different or in one case, a driver, who thought because I was quiet and just sitting there, that I was under the influence of drugs and called the police on me. Because of things like that, I would like to see it taken into consideration. That is one of the reasons why I am here and also doing a lot of work at the capitol. Being the voice for the voiceless.

Henricksen said it is kind of a closing statement on this plan here. I can appreciate that a 20 or 30 year plan is very high level. You are looking at 10,000 feet. You are not trying to get granular. You are not trying to incorporate things like an ADA curb ramp upgrade or looking at removing barriers. It is more to your point is a document that influences. This is just for takeaway. Is that, again to the point I was making before and other members were. It is really important to, when you are trying to have a plan or a document that is influencing decisionmakers. Not just Met Council services but MnDOT, local transportation boards, cities, municipalities, is to have that influence about the importance of accessibility. Again, to a point that was made earlier, it is such a benefit to have that philosophy because even though, for myself, I am temporarily able-bodied. Designing services that, in the future, I will need, everyone will need at some point. I think it is a very important principal to add to the list of principals.

On page 10 of the overview document, it does go over some of those principals. If accessibility and that importance it was. If we can drive that home to everyone who is going to use this document, I think this document would be even more successful. This plan as well.

Graham-Raff said I appreciate the commitment to equity throughout. Just one little point. Most indigenous people do not consider themselves people of color. So when you do the rewrite, it would be good for folks to look for more inclusive language. Sometimes we need to push beyond the federal definitions in order to truly represent the people of our community.

Rodgers said I would just like to second your thought about at this very high level to further the concept of a guidebook or handbook for lower level entities. I don't mean that structural. I mean process-wise. Because the issues that you are hearing are in some instances, really granular issues we deal with on a daily basis. But they don't necessarily fit into a global policy direction. Such as this document would address. But your concept of having developed a guidebook, handbook that would help local entities address these more frequently or more appropriately, I should say. Is really a good one.

I think you are going to hear a lot of additional comments. I think you have to go beyond the specifics to bucket these items. Maintenance is huge, as you can tell. But that is not something that would be in necessarily, this policy overview structure. But it certainly would be within the local project stuff. I can tell you in my experience of working on teams that fund and develop projects. Funding does not cover that kind of stuff. Funding is for the development and construction of a project. All the stuff that comes after the project is built. That is all local level stuff. We have to be alert to that. Make sure that our voices get heard at that local level where we do have some input of addressing specific policies like maintenance.

The ADA talks about there has to be a plan in place. But it doesn't go further than that. That's our job. So we have to be a little more cognizant and our voices can be most heard. But I think it is really important for us to

share those issues so that at that global level you have a way to address them indirectly and directly at the same time.

Vennewitz said I took a lot of notes. I don't want to over promise for this update. But I hear some common themes in a lot of these comments and hopefully what we can do is take some of that back and think about what either studies or influencing work between now and the 2024 update. For instance, guidebooks and issues like that that take a little bit more significant work. That is where we have three years to do now. I appreciate. I did hear some general themes as people are making comments.

2. Equity

Mitzi Kennedy, Manager of Equity, spoke to the TAAC committee. The last time I was here, I told you that I would be working on the framework for equity for the Council. For which disability and accessibility should be part of that framework for equity. As you also know, I don't like powerpoints. I like dialogue. Which is a challenge to me at the Council so far. In terms of how you really do have a deep dialogue about this kind of setup. So, I guess what I will do is what I ask of you is that maybe perhaps there could be a subcommittee, ad hoc committee made up of you all who will agree to sort of meet with me and talk about this in a deeper way. Because what I really need for the framework is to have a deeper level of understanding of the meaning and context of definitions of disability. The meaning from your experience that will help inform what our documents and strategic plan at the end of the day that includes a framework. What it really says. I don't want to write that up by myself. And then just bring it hear and say: "Here it is. Do you agree or disagree?"

I want you to be engaged in that experiential, meaningful, contextual, definitions and understanding of what it means to the Council. How we move forward together. I thought about doing something where we put up. I got some data from the Demographic Center from Minnesota about abilities, the numbers, all kinds of different data. Some of which I have with me. The last time I came. I thought about putting up a poster board on the wall here and letting you come up and respond. To get that meaning from you in that way. But I don't know that this is the right environment to do that type of exercise.

I am asking, is that ad hoc? There is a smaller group of you who meets with me and I can give you some context in terms of what is a framework? How do we define things? Here is what I have so far. What is your feedback? Then we bring it back together to this group. Or what would be the way that you could assist me so that I don't come in here and bring you definitions and things that have not been created with you being involved in it.

Chair Fenley said I do remember our conversation before. I know that it was robust. Maybe to see if things are little better for our committee members here. Can you maybe speak to the stuff that we discussed last time and things that you learned and/or talk to us about the general framework of this or the structure of this.

Kennedy said what is this framework thing? You may know that there is an equity policy. It was created in 2018. It was passed by the Council. The equity policy says that OEO must work with the divisions. The divisions are responsible to provide collaboration and technical assistance to the divisions and must develop this framework that is this shared understanding and way of thinking about equity for the whole Council.

Right now, there is a definition of equity that is in Thrive. But there are a lot of different definitions that people use to do their work. Different divisions, different departments. Think about equity. Describe equity and do equity in their work in different ways. We don't have this sort of shared meaning and understanding of what the components are or what do we really mean by it in our work?

What I have been doing my whole year here is trying to understand the Council as a whole. Trying to understand the different divisions and the work they do. Trying to understand the different committees and the work they are doing. Trying to understand what are the disparities in the region. Trying to understand all that so that I could do in my job as the equity manager, try to put together what this framework thing that is also described as a strategic plan sometimes. What is this thing? What are the essential components that we as a Council, should all be thinking about together and have this shared understanding?

What is our strategic approach to equity? That is really what I believe my charge was, coming in a year ago. I have looked at a lot of the other governmental organizations across the country along with getting the work we have done with the Council. Along with the City of Minneapolis, the City of Saint Paul. Lots of governmental institutions are working on equity. And they tried to change their systems so that they can integrate equity into the way that they do business. It is an exciting time. There are lots of examples and best practices out there

about how you do that. How do you put forward a strategy that is Council-wide for equity? That we could all get behind and understand as we move forward in our work. So accessibility, universal design, in my view to be part of our framework. What I was saying to you is that I want you all to be engaged in that process. I said it already. What is the meaning? What is the context? What is the definition? Let me tell you what some of the other, what I call essential components, of the framework? There should be institutional commitment leadership at all levels. That is required for systemic and structural change. I am sure you can understand why that would be necessary. Institutional and commitment and leadership at all levels.

We need to engage and marginalize communities. Of course, that is something that the Council does a lot of. It is something that the Council needs to do a lot more of. Workforce equity, inclusion, who we hire. That sort of thing. It is a huge part of what the Council should be doing. Hiring people with disabilities. Hiring more people of color. More people from underrepresented communities. We should be the kind of place where people should feel comfortable once they are here.

All of these areas I could write a dissertation on. In terms of the meaning of that. The context of that. We have to have a methodology of change. That is another component. How does each division approach moving toward becoming more equitable in their work? Performance management. Of course, we have to have outcome. A matrix for everything we are going to propose that would move us closer to an equitable system here at the Council. We need to prioritize the achievement of racial ethics because of the disparity that exists in the region. We need to have accessibility, universal design that must be anchored into the culture and system of the Council. Though those to me are the building blocks and the central component. This is how we would look at what it is that we need to do together, moving forward at the Council.

So now I need to go on the road with these essential components and talk to people. Get their buy in. Get their understanding. Have people participate. Have them talk back to me about what that really means to you so that as we continue to develop these components into a framework that we have the real understanding. From the experience of the people. That is why I am here. So thank you for backing me up. To talk about the Framework itself. And then why I would want to engage you in definitions, meeting making, moving forward.

Chair Fenley said first I would request that you go with the CDC's on national average for folks with disabilities. Not our state demographer. There is an extreme deficiency there. A demographer is 11 percent for the state. The national average is 24 percent, which there is no way that that is possible that disability avoids Minnesota. A question before I go to committee members for you would be: if we were to put together an ad hoc task force to be the disability input to this framework. Give us an example of what would have been on one of the posters that you would have put up here? So we can start to give you real information so you can start to incorporate that into the framework?

Kennedy said here is a good one. Local communities and employers, nonprofits, transportation, and housing service providers and the state, overall, will need the plan to be more responsive to the growing disabled population. So what I am looking for, and this came straight from the demographer's office, a bunch of data about employment, earnings, low earnings, lack of earnings, things like that. Statements about the community and what service providers need to do like what I just read. I would want to hear from you about what does it mean in terms of housing service providers or transportation or being responsive to a growing disabled population. What does that mean for the Council within a framework? To contextualize that. What else would I say about that? If I were writing a strategic plan that brings the meaning of your experiences in how you live, how you work and how you live your life. Would you want to be a part of our understanding at the Council?

I think I am looking for the higher-level stuff that goes along with the data. That we do have. But then a little bit of experience in terms of the meaning and the qualitative needs in people's lives. So that that can be real in any publications or a description of this area within the framework and the strategic plan. I think we really want to get it right and have it be meaningful.

Myhre said in the end, all this data and information collecting and our ideas. What are you actually going to be doing with it? Is it going to stay in the State of Minnesota? What I want to know is we are giving you what you want, but where does it go from there?

Kennedy said we are talking about the region because that is where the Council serves, the region. We are talking about who we are as a Council, and how we approach the issue of equity in a shared, meaningful way as divisions coming together at the Council. How do we understand this accessibility in terms of our work every day? And then how do we plan and move forward with those plans? What I am asking for is feedback that would help me be able to help the entire Council really get its arms around the meaning of accessibility and

disability and the experiences that people have. And therefore, here is how we approach our work now. Because we have that real understanding. This will be our commitment from now on. Not that we haven't been committed already. Again, in the equity policy, it says that we have to move equity forward. Before we could do that, I think we have to have this framework, this shared definition, understanding, meaningfulness. So that we can all say: "This is what we mean by this, these concepts and this is how we measure it."

Chair Fenley said so your work is finished when this framework is complete. The Council plans on incorporating it into everything it does.

Kennedy said the way that I view this is that each division will need an equity strategic plan where it has a responsibility to meet certain goals around equity. The goal is that as we move forward, we have Thrive. We have equity policy. We have a framework that ties it all together in terms of what we mean by these things and how we have to look at it and where we go with it in our divisional work and operations. Therefore, here is our plan to move us forward. The hope is that we will come from this shared vision and understanding to a plan for moving forward. This work for me is all about operationalizing equity. That is what it says in the equity policy. That is the point of my work is to operationalize the equity policy so that each division understands the work that they need to be doing around the concept of equity. When, right now, your definition might be completely different than mine. So if we could have this shared meaning, shared understanding, then we might be able to move forward with: "What do we do in my department to move forward with it?"

Rodgers said I think you are doing a fabulous job in making your request pretty clear. And providing us with the golden ability to be in on the ground floor in shaping policies that affect people with disabilities instead of having someone make a policy on our behalf without us. I think from that understanding, **I move that Chair Fenley appoint an ad hoc task force to provide input at this beginning level to assist with the expansion of the equity policy. And from my understanding, that the work that this ad hoc work will do will formulate a plan that will come back to the Council for input. Vice Chair Paulsen seconded the motion.**

Chair Fenley said what that ad hoc committee looks like, I'm not sure yet. How often it will meet, I'm not sure yet. It probably will be a monthly or maybe every other month thing. We would hope to maybe have some of those be done by phone and not necessarily fully in person. How many people would you be looking for?

Kennedy said three or four.

Chair Fenley said do you have a specific timeframe in mind?

Kennedy said sooner rather than later. I would love to have a meeting in February or March. We could be done by then. We could go a couple more months, depending on what the group decides.

The motion passed.

Chair Fenley said we will get together very soon. If you want to be on this let me know.

Vice Chair Paulsen, Jasmine, Rodgers and Murphy volunteered to be on the committee.

3. TAAC Stance on Stroller Policy

TAAC Chair, David Fenley, spoke to the TAAC committee. The stroller policy/leave behinds, which is something that we have been discussing a lot over the last three years. I looked back through the minutes and through the agendas over the last three years. I realized we spent a lot of time initially discussing the stroller policy and then moving into the leave behinds. I am not necessarily claiming that the two are connected to each other, but they might be.

In December of 2016, we had an initial presentation on what the previous policy was and what the new policy will be. That was three years ago. Some of you might not have been here. I am going to read what the previous policy was. So, in 2005, customers with strollers were asked to adhere to the following rules for the safety of a child and for other customers. So, the customers on the bus must fold their stroller prior to boarding. And then folded strollers were to be kept out of the aisle. While riding, children should either be seated in a seat or held by their parents. That was the previous policy. That was 2005 onward.

There were some reasons behind the changing of the policy. There was some parental embarrassment for having to do this. There was also the inability, given the number of children or other things that were happening in their lives in the moment. There were some operator assaults. There were customer complaints. And they

also looked at industry standards from peer transportation organizations who had looked at and/or changed their stroller policy as well. So the current stroller policy, which was adopted I think January of 2017. It might have been December of 2016.

In the very beginning of 2017, the new stroller policy. The proposed new stroller policy said customers and strollers are asked to adhere to the following rules for the safety of the child and customers. Customers may board with a child in a stroller. The child should be secured with a lap belt. Stroller brakes must be set. The parent remains with the child. The aisle still must remain clear for safety reasons. Customers with disabilities, who are using mobility devices, have priority to the securement area.

So essentially, it went from you have to fold your stroller up to you don't have to fold your stroller up. But you still have to maintain clear pathways. You still have to give priority to folks with mobility devices who need the space.

Vice Chair Paulsen said the shoulder strap, or the securement strap has to be fastened as well.

Chair Fenley said so what we have seen anecdotally crop up over the last few years. We have talked about this a lot, is folks who use mobility devices that require the space, are essentially not being able to get on the bus because of people in strollers in accessible seating.

I have stressed it over and over again that this is not parents versus people with disabilities. This is let's move this discussion to the higher level, which is what is Metro Transit doing to ensure both groups' rights to ride buses in our transit system? We have had a lot of discussion over the last three years. We have had a couple of different motions in November of 2017. We had two motions. One which was to track and report these leave behinds. And to see if there is any correlation to the stroller policy. I don't know if that is possible to do. To draw any direct correlation to the new policy and an increase in leave behinds.

Olson said define leave behinds.

Chair Fenley said leave behind is unable to board. So, you are going to get on a bus. You can't because there is not enough space on that bus because the disability seating is taken either by two other wheelchairs or strollers. That bus driver is required to, if there is not another bus, that driver is required to call the Transit Control Center, who then should arrange for someone else to pick up the person in the wheelchair. Whether or not that happens every time. I would like to believe it does.

Vice Chair Paulsen said it doesn't happen every time. There are times when I was on a bus. One day it happened four times in a row. After the third time the driver got tired of pushing the button. The Control Center on the other side said: "We see your issue. We know you are calling it in. Are you calling in another leave behind or is it the same one?" The bus driver said: "Another one." We could put another bus out there. Which is what they should do. They could say to the next bus: "Be prepared. There are other people who want to board next time you get there."

Streasick said just one slight clarification. Unable to boards are not necessarily occurring because of full disability seating areas. Although that is the most common reason. It could be happening because a lift failed. It could be happening because the lift could not be deployed because of some kind of structural barrier. It could be happening because an ambulatory passenger was unable to successfully get to the bus because of a snow drift. Whatever the reason, a customer was not able to get on. The most common one is lack of available seating. But that is not the only reason.

Chair Fenley said so there are two things here. One is the stroller policy. The other is unable to board. I believe that they are related. But we don't have the data to prove that.

Jasmine said my understanding is that the bus driver can ask that they move but they are not required to push on that. They are not required to really stress that they should move. There is not a whole lot of incentive for that person to move. Especially in the months from November to April, they should be mandatory to put out another bus. You could be sitting out there a long time in a chair or walker. It may be a whole lot harder to get back to some kind of shelter that is warm enough for you to not have damage to your body.

Fuglie said we are talking baby strollers. What happens to the other stuff that is being brought on the bus? Grocery carts, luggage and furniture. All of this stuff that is taking up the accessible seating area where somebody else could use it.

Vice Chair Paulsen said in any other part of the country, they have policies that mandate what that seating area is used for. I just came back from Vegas on Christmas Day. I couldn't get back to my hotel for about 2½ hours because there were two drunk people on the bus. The one guy fell off the bus and into the aisle and he would not get up. Eventually, the bus driver had to stop the bus. We had to wait for the road supervisor to come. And for the road supervisor to put that bus back on duty. At that moment, we were told, my last bus was at 9:00. If I missed that bus, I would not get home. The road supervisor got the two people off of the bus. He told the bus to go back in service because the bus was out of service for 40 minutes. We waited for another hour. The last bus to our hotel was at 2:00 in the morning. We had time to get there.

It happens everywhere in the country. The one thing that I want to impress upon you is the airlines have a certain policy where they allow certain luggage on their plane. The buses should adhere to the same federal policy. It should not be something that we go from state to state and say: "In Minnesota, we could put four pieces of luggage where in Nevada, you are only allowed to put as much luggage as you can on your back at the time you enter that bus. So you are not allowed to enter and get on and off the bus multiple times to get your luggage on that bus. We could do something similar to that here in Minnesota and we should. We shouldn't have policies from state to state. There should be one standard policy. It should be something that we are all O.K. with.

Rodgers said some considerations that I am thinking about are as follows. 1. There is an ADA reason for accessible seating on public transportation. That is a requirement. The policies around how that gets used, that is up to the entities. But clearly, buses are shared responsibilities. We encourage people to get on buses to get to the airport. They have luggage, typically when they go to the airport to take a trip. We can't just require them not to have luggage. This is pointing me in the direction of is we need either additional storage space on the bus or additional accessible seating. We have too limited right now, to meet everybody's needs. Thus, we have the problem with strollers when it is nice weather and we have other issues that crop up from time to time. But to just create a policy that pits one against the other. That is not going to be a good solution. I think a more appropriate solution is let's indicate that we need to be looking at different kinds of storage and additional kinds of seating options.

Chair Fenley said what if there was not necessarily increased accessible seating. But you maintain your priority seating for folks with disabilities with wheelchairs, walkers, etc. And then you have another type of seating, whatever that may be. Whether it be people with strollers or other items. Once that is full, it can't overflow into the disability's seating. Those people then get passed up.

Rodgers said I don't have a physical disability. When I get on the bus, I have never been denied a seat that has been taken. I know other people have had it happen. You can't always tell by looking at somebody whether they need an accessible seat. So I think all of those things in consideration are important factors to consider. I don't think it is a good idea to have really stringent policies. We just need more flexibility in the type of seating we have.

Fuglie said who made the change in the policy? Who at Metro Transit changed that policy?

Chair Fenley said you know that is not a specific person. It is an institutional decision. It doesn't really matter what person did it. It was for driver safety, operator assaults, police calls and police resources, customer embarrassment, customer complaints and then falling back on other peer transit organizations doing the same thing because of similar reasons. They were specifically related to drivers telling parents in front of their kids: "Get out of the stroller or don't get on the bus."

Streasick said there is another why here that we should touch on. While drivers and the ATU have had a voice that said we will be O.K. with recognizing that we ask people to move at least once from disability seating. Drivers mostly said: "I'm not calling transit police to take a mom with her kid off the bus if they don't take them out of the stroller. If you are telling me that there is no conflict where someone isn't looking for the accessible seating. I'm not going to be the guy who goes and says look, no one is using it but you get out. If you can't get your kid out of the stroller, I am going to call the cops. I'm not doing that." That was brought up again and again. Drivers and ATU had a stand on that and its stance. I just wanted to add that as an additional reason that folks had.

Myhre said I had a situation on a bus where a person with a stroller told a person with a disability to move and they did. I stood up for the person with a disability and it ended up where there was bad language going across the room. How do we avoid those kinds of things in the future or somebody ending up in the hospital or getting

hurt? I see it on the trains and buses that people are not doing best practices. People don't use them correctly or they abuse it.

Chair Fenley said I think that is a really good example for what a potential educational thing for seating. Whether it is a PSA or posters or whatever on buses. That has been brought up in the past. My intention of having this discussion now is to maybe make a decision or two. Not necessarily saying we oppose the stroller policy, but to go beyond that. Something like Ken says. Increase accessible seating. Increase education. So folks with strollers aren't telling people with disabilities to get out of their seat. Rather than having to rehash this every couple of months, over the next three years, we can have an official position. We can say this is what it is. They can take it or leave it.

Olson said I think that this question relates more broadly to a bigger picture. That is what do we want out of our public system and when you ask the question of: "How do you deal with these different conflicts?" I think that we should adopt positions that are forward thinking rather than reactive. What I mean by that is I completely agree with what Ken said. Let's reevaluate the actual space itself rather than creating a policy. I think that space doesn't work. If we want moms to be able to take their kids to parks and we want people with disabilities to be able to use the buses, then I think that we need to say that. Our value is we want everybody to be able to use the public transit system. We want to equitably serve our communities including people who don't own cars. I think that our policy should be reflective of what we want out of the public transit system rather than what we have.

Vice Chair Paulsen said one of the things that I am concerned about is that our elderly population is getting older. They're not able to scoot down the aisle as much to get to seating beyond accessible seating. They are often bringing their grandchildren or groceries. The point of bringing the stroller policy back wasn't to bring a bunch of bad feelings up. But the fact is that anywhere in the country they have probably three to four spots for accessible seating. We only have two. So, yes, we could put two additional ones in the back. But then we could only use those during the summer months and the nonwinter months. We are not going to be able to swing that back door around to have people access that. So that is something that is a tradeoff. But at the same time, to David's point about a PSA. If we would just encourage folks to say: "Hey, we understand that this is our policy, but ideally this is what we are thinking about in the future." Forward thinking. If we just put it out there and let people decide for themselves. When we talk about this, does the organization ever talk about empathy and what that looks like for an organization such as this? Around transportation particularly.

Streasick said I want to discuss what Sam said for clarification. Sam, you mentioned that we should always have to send out another bus. I want to be clear here. Council policy and federal law do say that if it is going to be more than half an hour before that next bus is there, they need to send out another bus. Including if they can't guarantee that the next bus that is coming out is going to have available accessible seating. What Darrell described where he had multiple buses in a row where he was unable to board. That is a violation of both regional policy and federal law. I wanted to be clear here that there is a policy that says that the driver needs to call it in. Another bus needs to be dispatched if they cannot guarantee that another bus is going to be there in half an hour.

Jasmine said Darrell, when that happened to you, that was in Vegas or here? If it was here, did you call it in? Or did you report it? Then I would ask Andy, who would you report that to if that is indeed against several policies/laws? The other thing is we can talk about changing the seating all we want but if we don't have money to do it, it won't get done. If we are going to think forward, we should think about things that would actually work and that we could actually do.

Vice Chair Paulsen said it happened in Vegas, but it also has happened here.

Chair Fenley said we have been supporting calling things in ever since this committee was created. We want things to be called in. So that is something that we generally push for. In terms of your last comment about feasibility. I don't necessarily think that this is infeasible. The feasibility part would be to go back and alter all the old buses, but in moving forward, if this can be put as an actual priority at Metro Transit, especially since there is precedent in other areas to have more accessible seating. That is precisely why we had a change in the stroller policy because it happened in other areas first. So other areas have increased accessible seating and it is not just us going off on a limb here. It is not necessarily impossible or infeasible for us to begin that process. It might already exist. You never know. They might already be having this discussion. If it comes from us as a resolution or whatever, maybe that would help to move that along in the purchasing of new

vehicles, which we do have to approve, by the way. Any new vehicles purchased. Altering them moving forward in creating more accessible seating. I don't think it is completely unheard of.

Jasmine said I didn't mean to infer that wouldn't be. But the idea that when is the next time and we are able to buy new buses, all that needs to be looked at. Is this reasonable to go through and do this and then we don't get to have any new buses for five years. That doesn't help anybody until five years. I just want something to work and help somebody sooner rather than later. Because it won't stop getting cold here. And people won't stop getting left behind.

Chair Fenley said the more immediate solution might be some sort of education campaign or PSA where it is like let people know that it is actually wrong to be using this space and maybe try to have a little more empathy on both sides of the equation. The folks that need the accessible seating and the folks who think it is a fantastic space to have their stroller, which it is. There can be a more human sort of interaction rather than just I'm sitting here in your space.

Dains said I think the education thing is important. Making some modifications to some existing buses and new buses but I don't know what the process is in terms of capital improvements and replacing buses or if that has been discussed. It has been a concern of mine for some time. Because I ride buses. I look at them and think how long is their longevity? Because that is a key thing to me in terms of looking forward to making these kinds of changes. Make more accessible space and storage space. I have been told by my son who has lived in Denver that Denver is way ahead of this in terms of what they do on the buses in terms of accessible space and storage. I don't know what the program is for that for replacement. But there has to be one. What they are looking at in terms of the future in terms of buses.

Cook said we are looking at 16 years for a turnaround bus, but they may be pushing it a little farther just because we are trying to get a little more bang for our buck. These buses are quite a bit of money. Metro Transit has had some buses procured in the past that has extra space. They are pushing towards that idea of other space on the buses. They were looking at a bus that had extra space like the ADA area that would be not ADA but it would be extra space with seats that flip up. I am not sure about the final decision on that.

Chair Fenley said 16 years does not mean from today. There could be buses that are 15 years old right now.

Henricksen said to me it is the law that accessibility seating is required to be on those buses. And they are reserved for people with disabilities. I equate that to accessible parking spaces at Walmart. But to have a policy that contradicts what is required by law, I feel like I can't make sense of it. If you look at the legality of everything, I don't see how a policy can subvert law. Maybe starting at looking at the policy that contradicts the law. It is the first place to start. We want equity for everybody. Everybody deserves a seat on the bus to get where they are going. But we have the laws in place for a reason and we should adhere to that.

Chair Fenley said it's a little more harder stance. It is a valid point.

Vice Chair Paulsen said we could look at using the communications team or the media team to develop a PSA around what the current law is. Even though it is the current law, most of the drivers out there. If they need that spot, they will advocate for that spot. Even if you are not advocating for that spot, most good drivers would do that. I think this PSA thing is awesome. It is an opportunity for the committee to get their point across without saying: "Do this or we are going to say something more about it." I think it gives us something to do. I think the committee needs something to do. I think this is an excellent opportunity for us to rally behind it and maybe make a little noise.

Chair Fenley said if we take a position on something, TAAC members can talk about that as an official position of TAAC. But we have to agree as a body before we can talk about that. You can't represent the body unless the body has allowed you to represent it on a particular issue.

I am happy to bring back that what I am thinking are three distinct things that we talked about here today.

1. Increased accessible seating.
2. Some kind of education campaign or PSA.
3. The harder stance of the legality of actually creating policies that allow folks to take priority ADA seating who might not necessarily deserve to be there.

Graham-Raff said a fourth thing. Going back to what Kody said. That is creating the community that we want verses just being reactive. I have seen in other places where you have two or three rows of regular seating.

These are courtesy seats. If you are sitting here and someone needs space because of age, disability or whatever, you are going to be expected to do the courteous thing of giving people the opportunity to be good neighbors. The information for the ones that have the spots for people using mobility devices. It explains: "You can sit here but the person with the wheelchair has to have this spot for their safety. So you will need to move." Then people can go: "I can sit here." And when they see someone in a wheelchair come on, they go: "Oh, I have to move." Giving them the opportunity to be good neighbors.

Chair Fenley said I would see that as being woven into whatever we do here. Maybe not as a specific item. But that is part of the increased accessible seating. Part of the education campaign. I actually have a big box around that particular thing that Kody said when he said it. We will put this discussion to rest right now. We can revisit it next month. It might be a bit quicker. I have a few things here.

CHAIRS REPORT

Chair Fenley said Chris Bates' vision has finally come into fruition. We have an ex-officio spot on the Transportation Committee. It meets the second Monday at every month. I went to their first 2020 meeting last month. I will be there on Monday again. I will bring things from this committee to them and I will bring things from them to this committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Nichole Villavicencio spoke to the TAAC committee. I live in Maplewood. To add to the conversation you were just having. I would like to give my two cents. I come at this as not just a person with disabilities, I was also one of the mothers that had a stroller on the bus. Plenty of times, when my child was smaller, I can see it from both perspectives. The way that I see it is that the confusion is a point of scarcity. Desperate women of color, with their children, are riding the bus and desperate people with disabilities are riding the bus. We have to fight over these spots. I have been in more than one situation where it literally was to the point where I probably was going to get punched in the face if I didn't give up my seat on the bus. That is not an exaggeration. That is very scary to have to experience with your child in tow and their child in tow.

Having said that, I think the only solution is for the Met Council to add more accessible spots. I understand that it is a process. As we all know, those of us who have been involved in transportation for a long time, when we had to retrofit the light rail when we made that mistake. That takes time, but it got done. I think we need to move towards that as well.

Streasick said there are three things I wan to talk about. If folks are interested, I will contact them for additional information. First, we are looking like we are finally ready to reroll out web booking for Metro Mobility. We have had a small group testing. A couple of which have been very active. Would any TAAC members be interested in playing around for the rest of the week or so in test on booking pretend rides? Then maybe in about a week, start booking real rides in production. Patsy, Patty and Ken are interested.

Chair Fenley said this is a great role that members can play. Folks who use transit. Folks who are ready to dive into technology.

Streasick said just to be clear here. Go ahead and get on and play with it. Right now, your rides won't really show up. It will just be in test. So don't book a ride and expect it to really come. Then to prevent the opposite of happening, when we do go live and you guys start doing real rides, we are going to kill the test servers so you don't accidentally go into test and book a ride and then it won't show up.

Next, Jeff Syme, our Communications guy who puts together all of our print materials, is looking for Metro Mobility photos again. Which means he is looking for customers including maybe a TAAC member or two to take pictures that he can use for new Metro Mobility photos. With an updated vehicle. Last time around, we did an agency. Would anybody like to do this? Patty and another person said they would like to do this. If anybody is interested, let me know.

We had some comments in the member comment about real struggles in the East Zone. I wanted to make people aware that we have been meeting with them regularly here to address it. Between December and January, a couple of strategic initiatives that they have employed have moved up all their key metrics between three and five percent for us. Complaints went down 27 percent in the month. What they have been doing is they really bumped up their driver goal number. So much more aggressive hiring. Staff additional drivers, which was important. They have also been more aggressive with their absenteeism policy to make sure that

folks understand. Look, if you are sick, you are sick. But if you are not sick, this isn't a job where you can just take off without letting us know. There is going to be repercussions if you do that. Those two things, just within a month, have really turned things around in a number of key ways for East. Since that was something that had been called out by the committee. I wanted to just bring that up on the fact that things are measurably improving in just the last month based on those. So we have been pleased with that.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

This item was not presented

2. Green Line

This item was not presented

3. Gold Line

This item was not presented

4. Rush Line

This item was not presented

MEMBER COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary