

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

Wednesday, March 4, 2020

**Committee Members Present:** Chair David Fenley, Patsy Murphy, Jeffrey Dains, Vice Chair Darrell Paulsen, Heidi Myhre, Claudia Fuglie, Patty Thorsen, Erik Henricksen and Richard Rowan.

**Committee Members Absent:** None.

**Committee Members Excused:** Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Ken Rodgers, Kari Sheldon, John Clark, Diane Graham-Raff and Kody Olson.

**Council Staff Present:** Metropolitan Council Member Wendy Wulff, Doug Cook, Alicia Vap, Richard Koop, Christine Kuennen, Andy Streasick and Alison Coleman

**Public Present:** Russell Bailey.

### **CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:31 p.m. on Wednesday, March 4, 2020.

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

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

It was moved by Rowan, seconded by Dains to approve the minutes of the February 5, 2020 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

### **BUSINESS & INFORMATION**

#### **1. Brooklyn Center Transit Center Redesign.**

Alicia Vap, Project Manager, Engineering and Facilities, spoke to the TAAC committee. The Brooklyn Center Transit Center is our second largest transit facility in the system. Just behind the Mall of America. It is located in Brooklyn Center on the corner of Bass Lake Road and Northway Drive. It serves over a dozen routes including the newly opened C-Line, which just opened last year. Many of our high frequency routes also utilize this transit center.

There are many reasons why we are proceeding with the renovations at this time. The transit center was first constructed and opened in 2004. If any of you are frequent users of this facility, you might note that there is quite a bit of deteriorating concrete in the outside plaza area. It is inside where the buses loop around the circle.

Though there are a lot of accessibility concerns about the uneven deteriorating concrete, and the design of the facility. There is a really large waiting area in the middle. Then there are two smaller waiting areas on each end with a hallway that connects all the public waiting areas. That has proven to be some challenges for our security and police. So, safety and security, creating hiding spots for people who don't have a business being at the transit center for more than 10 to 15 minutes. They wait for their connection.

The remodel will provide some improved passenger facilities. This is a great opportunity for us as an agency to take a look at the space on the inside and how much space we are devoting to different functions. One thing has changed since the facility opened in 2004 is our police department is out there every day. So they are out there from 2:00 p.m. to midnight, seven days a week. Right now, the two officers share a small closet-sized office. So we are providing a little bit more space for the police department. We also have a lot of bus drivers

that use this facility for their brakes. So we are providing more space for them. We are providing a quiet room, for example, for Muslim drivers to do prayer or just have a quiet space for operators.

Then, with the introduction of the C-Line, and planned B-Line, this is a very busy area, indeed.

This slide here. I have some pictures of existing conditions. So, the picture in the upper left shows an empty plaza area. One of the things we are planning is to add a canopy on the west end and a canopy on the east end. That will provide additional shade for passengers.

If you have been out there, the picture on the right shows a large canopy that extends to the south of the facility and on the north of the facility and provide protection from the elements. Then, the picture on the very bottom showed a damaged fence panel. So we are doing what we need to do to make some esthetic improvements.

There have been a lot of contractors that have been working here. Over the past 20 years we have had some damage that we need to fix and improve.

The next slide has pictures of the existing facility. This facility has a really large waiting area. There are two waiting areas on each end. So we have some pretty long hallways that create some areas for people to hide in and do some things we don't want them to do. So behaviors that are not acceptable to our police department. And others that are waiting for buses.

One of the things that help guide the renovation work. So before C-Line opened, our outreach staff did quite a bit of surveying and then they also did some surveying of riders in 2019 of December after the C-Line opened. With all of that data, it really helped to influence our design. Some of these issues are issues that are policy issues that we need to talk over with our police department and our facilities group.

For example, the first bullet on here says: "One of the concerns that transit users have is that the restroom is not open 24 hours, which is true. The facility itself is not open 24 hours. So the facility itself is open at 5:00 a.m. and it closes at 10:00 p.m. The restroom closes at 4:00 p.m. That is one of the things we are talking to our facilities, maintenance and our police department about.

There was a lot of concern about security and safety. So that having that daily police presence is helping address this concern. A lot of people just describe that they use this facility as a transfer point for everything from daily commuting to go to medical appointments and shopping. The most common origin and destination that people travel to or come from is between Brooklyn Center and Minneapolis.

This slide actually shows the top routes of the Brooklyn Center Transit Center by routes and number of rides and percentage of total riders. Route 5 has 94 rides, with 21.3 percent. That is the highest ridership we have. The C-Line is close behind with 65 rides, at 14.7 percent. Then followed by Route 22, with 60 rides, which is 13.6 percent. Route 19 has 49 rides at 11.1 percent. Route 724 has 37 rides at 8.4 percent. Route 722 has 30 rides, at 6.8 percent. Route 723 has 27 rides at 6.1 percent. Route 721 has 21 rides at 4.8 percent. All other routes have 58 rides at 13.2 percent. It is a very busy place as you can see.

I wanted to talk about the description of the project. The exterior of the project. We are not replacing any of the concrete that the buses drive on. There was some renovation and repair work done with the C-Line opening. We are going to be replacing all of the concrete in the plaza area. We will be adding canopies on the west and east ends. I will show some renderings of what they look like. We are adding grinding strips along the crosswalk areas for visually impaired users. One thing that we have been researching but haven't landed on what the solution is as of yet. We have been working with Doug Cook on trying to figure out a good and solid way to provide a wayfinding system at the facility from the interior of the transit center to each of the gates.

So one of the issues, if you are a visually impaired user, is how do you know how to get from the transit center waiting area to the right gate? Doug has come up with some great ideas. Unfortunately, our facility maintenance department has had some concerns with the new ideas. So it is a little hard because the plaza area is pretty flat concrete. We need a flat area to meet accessibility guidelines. There are issues with water and moisture and our climate. It is something that we are continuing to research. Doug has given us some great ideas to look at. So we will continue to try to figure out if there is something we can create before the design is complete. Then the interior space. We will be innovating the interior of the area where we are providing warmer ceiling material at a lower height. That should generate some warmth in the waiting area.

We are renovating the public restrooms. Then we will be providing additional space for the bus operators and police at each end of the building.

I have a series of renderings to show. The first rendering is from the exterior of the building. So this is if you are standing closer to Bass Lake Road and Northway Drive on the southeast corner. Looking toward the northwest. You can see in the rendering that there is a crosswalk that is visible in the front. The transit facility is in the back. A canopy is visible on the right. One thing to point out. The canopy is not meant to be a transit shelter. The center of the building is going to be the location where inclement weather passengers can wait.

We will have real time signage like we have today. That will show what time your bus is coming and what gate. There is a push button for audio conversions. For users that need that audio as well. That is just one thing to clarify. It is not a traditional shelter where we have three sides wrapping or two sides with a lot of glass. So it is meant to be coverage for mostly rain and shade. There will be seating in those areas as well.

This next rendering is looking to the east. It is a closer view of what that canopy might look like. It is an open canopy. No glass. It has metal supports with some concrete foundations. There will be some benching. We will be introducing landscaping with a six-inch curb around the landscaping. We are also introducing darker concrete around the edge where all of the gates are located. Immediately adjacent to the curb of where the buses stop. Either a darker concrete or a different texture. It is for wayfinding, but I am not sure if it is going to provide a surface for someone who is visually impaired to know the difference between regular concrete and then the other material.

We still have real time signs like we have today on the exterior of the building.

The next renderings show the exterior of the building. There are some exciting new things that we are doing on the inside. So this view shows the middle of the building. If you look at the top you can see the ceiling. They are strips of wood. The entrance will have fare collections on the interior of the building. For those using C-Line and B-Line will be able to buy a ticket inside or use their GoTo card to tap just like we have at the BRT stops. We are also dedicating some space for artwork. So that is one of the things that we are working with. Metro Transit has an arts administrator. He is working directly with Brooklyn Center on a collaboration on what that artwork might look like. If it is going to be just a static piece of artwork that stays the same or it could be one of the things they are looking into. It is electronic artwork that has the opportunity to change more frequently. Be more adaptable.

Another view of the interior of the building. This view shows the ceiling and an entrance to one of the office areas that will be restricted to the public. Then there is the introduction to the real time signage on the wall.

This is a view looking from the outside of the building into the public waiting area. The facility itself, if you are someone that uses that facility daily. It will look pretty similar. It will just be the interior of the building that will be lighter and fresher and will have that warmth from the wood. But it will have more amenities like fare collection, artwork. It also has seating as it has today.

So I talked about the artwork opportunities. So stay tuned on what this might be as our combined staff continue to work on ownership and maintenance and what the artwork might be.

Schedule and staging. Right now, architects are still working on the design plans for the facility. We will be wrapping those up soon. Then we will be putting this out for bid to hire a contractor. Optimistically, we are hoping that we will start in quarter two of this year. Construction is expected to wrap up by the end of the year.

One thing to note. Even though it is a pretty small area, it is a lot of work for a lot of different trades and contractors to be working. The presence of all the buses at the facility also presents quite a challenge in terms of construction staging. All the plaza work on the outside will be done. Right now, we are contemplating two different stages. Some of the bus routes will move to Northway Drive. We are still working on the details. It is not final at this point.

Right now, we are contemplating some of the transit service. Not the high frequency transit service. But some of the other less frequent service would use some temporary bus gates that we would be installing on Northway Drive. We are still working with the city and bus operations group to figure out all the things we need to put in place for this to be a successful transition. For the short term while this plaza work gets constructed. That is the plan right now.

So one half of the plaza would be closed. We would still have the buses that are serving the half a dozen high frequency routes that would still enter the facility and circle around. The customers would be placed on one half of the plaza area. So all of the gates could be on one half. Then when the first half of the concrete work is complete, then passengers and the gates would shift to the other side. The goal for that is all of the routes that

are relocating to Northway Drive temporarily would do it during both phases of the concrete work. The routes that are staying inside the transit center, the high frequency routes, would also stay inside the transit center. They would transition from one side of the plaza to the other side. Then we would have a lot of signage. We would do a lot of customer outreach. This is a pretty big transit center. This is something that we are spending a lot of time on trying to get it right and making sure that the temporary facilities have proper loading areas for customers to use.

Appropriate signage. There will have to be a lot of work with our bus operators as well. We have to make sure that everybody knows where they need to be. We have to make sure that we have an accessible route from all of the stops on Northway Drive into the transit center for those passengers that choose to or need to transfer. Those are things that we are thinking about right now. I don't have any graphs or maps to show you because it is still a work in progress. We are still working with the City and figuring out the details.

Myhre said that she had concerns about the snow and rain blowing on the passengers while waiting in the shelter for the bus. You should also take into consideration people who are colorblind.

Vap said one of the issues we have in the exterior. One of the decisions that we have made at this point is to include the canopy, which is not the shelter, it is a canopy to provide coverage, mostly from the sun. It will provide some coverage from the rain, but the wind will still blow in rain and snow. That is why we are making sure that we maintain the real time signage inside the building. We really want customers in inclement weather to wait inside the interior of the waiting area. The design that we have is the right one to try to make more investments in the interior of the space. We have heating inside the waiting area. We have lights. We have restrooms. We are trying to make it more welcoming as much as possible.

Henricksen said my comment would be the plans are currently underway. There is an ADA Transition Plan that is being drafted. But they already went ahead, the consultant, from our last meeting. Who went around and did an inspection of all the facilities. I was wondering if you had gotten that report to see if the upgrades are going to be included in this renovation.

Vap said we did meet Julie Quarve-Peterson from JQP and got her assessment of this facility. The biggest issues that she brought out were issues that we were already addressing. There is a passenger drop off lot that is located just off Northway Drive on the north side of the facility that doesn't meet a lot of the standards and even code. It was constructed so long ago. We are addressing those issues. Everything else she noted, the new design takes care of it. We even showed her the new plans and she provided some suggestions that we made.

Daines said you mentioned wayfinding. You thought some of the elements might not work. What are those specific wayfinding elements that you mentioned?

Vap said one of the things that Doug and our facilities looked at were some tiles. Other projects on other platforms use the tactiles that are yellow and have bumps on them. There are products like that. There are products that have similar material, but they have a directional bar. So it goes the same direction as the curb. So it would be placed adjacent to the curbs. Somebody who is visually impaired could trace it with their cane. It would be a different texture. That was something that we had some concerns about. Freeze and thaw and then snow getting in. The bigger concern was the removal of snow. Sometimes we use plows on the plaza. We were worried about damaging the concrete and the tactiles.

Rowan said during the transition period, was there any thought to how visually impaired people would be able to find the routes that have been displaced?

Vap said that is not something that we spent a lot of time developing, but I will be looking to Doug and our operations staff to deal with this on a more frequent basis than I do. I know that right now we are just starting to scope out even the changes that we need to make. Even temporary improvements. There is a boulevard and a sidewalk.

Vice Chair Paulsen said the operation of the facility is open from what time to what time?

Vap said it is open from either 5:00 a.m. or 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. daily.

Vice Chair Paulsen said the restrooms are open to 4:00 p.m. That proposes a problem. One of the things I would suggest is trying to figure out how to operate the entry to that bathroom. Whether you want to do it by phone or have an automatic lock on that system. During those times when someone is not there so people

have access to that restroom. The bus drivers have access to that restroom whenever they need it. Your customers should have access to that restroom as well.

The other thing is the wayfinding issue. Because of the mapping or the facility layout because it is flat. I would urge you to go back and look at that. Using tactile strips. There is a way that you could use other wayfinding opportunities and you can get the facility mapped. It is not as big as the airport. Apple mapped the airport for MAC several years ago. I know you can partner with somebody in the industry and they would map all of your transit facilities for you at a very minimum cost. Folks like Ken and Sam, that use those things on a daily basis would know what the layouts at your facilities are like.

Chair Fenley said is there any consideration of keeping the restrooms open until 10:00 p.m.?

Vap said yes. We have been having some discussions with the police department and the facilities' maintenance. I just need to continue the discussion and encourage it more. Because this is the number one issue that customers raised during outreach.

Vice Chair Paulsen said clearly it is a violation. As long as your employees have the right to that access, and that facility is open for that period of time, your customers need that same access.

Myhre said you have to think about people with learning disabilities when you are doing all this construction. So that we can follow where you are sending us. Then afterwards, you have to think about them so they can still go to the bus stops and learn their way around. The other thing is with the way finders. I am learning more about that. I think that people with learning disabilities can benefit a lot with it too.

Council Member Wendy Wulff introduced herself to the TAAC committee. I am the new Metropolitan Council liaison to the TAAC. My district is the southern three quarters of Dakota County and the southeast corner of Scott County. My husband has a TBI. He has been dealing with that for the past 15 years.

Chair Fenley said the former liaison was Chai Lee. He has been replaced by Wendy Wulff.

## **2. Bus Capacity – Pass Up**

Chair Fenley spoke to the TAAC committee. Hopefully we can finalize where the TAAC stands on bus capacity and pass-ups. It was on last month's agenda under Stroller Policy. But after last month's discussion, I think it broadened out to what is the bigger picture, which is the accessible space that is on buses. Do we need more accessible space? To what extent does that accessible space need to be regulated? We settled on three things that emerged from the last meeting.: 1. The amount of accessible space. 2. How this accessible space is used and 3. To what extent is the public aware of this priority seating and accessible space on the buses? Also, the legal obligation maybe to keep it open. That might exist.

I would entertain folks adding to this discussion. If there is more that we need to talk about these three things. Maybe we can take them one at a time. I have drafted up things that I can read to folks. And we can change them if you want.

Vice Chair Paulsen said just like the light rail, they give you short little messages. They tell you that you are not allowed to smoke. You are not allowed to hold the doors open. You are supposed to give up the priority seating to those that need it or request it. Just like when we change the signage on the mainline bus service. We are also told that we could put that same message through the audio announcer. I don't know if they have done that. I know they may do that on Nicollet Avenue during high frequency areas. I have seen them change some of their messaging. I too agree with David that we have been struggling with this issue for several years. The thing that I want to impress upon folks is that our bus operators and our traveling public have two different perceptions as to what that policy is and how that policy has to be enforced. The policy of the accessible seating and the fact that if that accessible seating is being taken up by somebody using a stroller or shopping cart. Currently, the driver does not have to ask that individual to move or doesn't even have to indicate that he needs that spot. So what I am saying is the traveling public also has a different perception of that because they are told from the moment we are on the line waiting for the bus to deploy that lift. They are told that we are supposed to board that bus first.

Chair Fenley said the bus driver has to ask them to move. But they can't force them to move.

Cook said the driver is required to ask them to move. If he doesn't, then they are out of step with the procedures and they should have discipline and retraining.

Murphy said what we are supposed to do and what we do can be two different things. Anytime that I have been either. At this time, I am not allowed to ride the bus without somebody with me. I am mainly on the trains. I have not seen a driver of either, come and tell somebody that they needed to move themselves to a different seat. There are a couple of times that I have gone to the bus or the train and people have sat on those particular seats. With my major vertigo and the train shifting, I have fallen. Nothing is really done about it.

Chair Fenley said on trains, I don't think that there is anyone available to come and ask people to move from priority seating on the trains. But on the buses, the driver is required to ask them to move but can't force them to move. It doesn't mean they do it every time, but they are required to.

Streasick said just one thing here. Since TAAC meetings are public and Alison does such a good job with the minutes in capturing what was said here. I have been asked to clarify, based on possible interpretations of questions along legality, certainly from an ADA and FTA standpoint. The Council's current policy is legal. The Council's policy stand is there is no question of legality. Basically what we would need to do is make sure that there is adequate spacing to meet the legal threshold, since there is on all of our vehicles, that there be signage that indicates that those seats are prioritized for folks with disabilities, which obviously exists. Then the third requirement legally is that the driver at one time, ask that people remove themselves from those seats upon request, which we tell all our operators that they need to do this.

Certainly, I have been asked to do that to try and make sure that the Council viewpoint is reflected in the minutes. But more than that, strategically as you move forward with looking for traction for a solution for this very real problem, don't lean too heavily on a legal argument. We are strenuously audited repeatedly. If there is too much weight on a legal argument, they are going to say pretty quickly: "Yes, this is legal. Look from an ADA perspective it is legal. Look from a FTA perspective it is legal, we are done." I would look at alternate avenues as at least a main crux of your argument.

Rowan said is a driver just supposed to know when someone needs the seat? Or does somebody have to ask the driver to ask somebody to move?

Cook said usually, it is someone with a wheelchair or someone who clearly needs that area. They will ask. Usually, that is how it works. If someone has a need that no one can see and he asks the driver, then he will engage. But if he can't tell, then yes.

Rowan said I am thinking about seniors on the buses where I can see that they clearly need a seat, and nobody bothers to move.

Cook said that is also a cultural issue.

Chair Fenley said understanding that there is zero way to tell who or who does not have a disability. It is a matter of culture and doing what is right for each individual instance.

Streasick said to answer a bare minimum, from an ADA compliance standpoint, the driver has to ask a person to vacate a seat upon request at least once. So the triggering of that is that a person with a disability asks to have those seats.

Chair Fenley said to go back to what you said, Andy, I agree with you. I don't think it is best to hang our hat on any ADA argument. That is the bare minimum. We are actually most likely looking for something a little bit above that. The first two things I said about increasing accessible space and some kind of awareness campaign. We will have a better chance of getting traction.

Vice Chair Paulsen said we spent six months on the signage of the light rail and the signage that you see on the buses. We spent a year doing the signage and getting those words right. We even fought with the placement of where that sign should be on the window. I think the sign is down too low. It should be up a little higher. I rode buses in other areas and their signage is up higher. But at least it is visible so that everybody sees it.

Myhre said today I saw people from another country. Not everyone knows how to read English. How do we advertise in different languages? So everyone understands.

Chair Fenley said I will put that down under my signage bullet point. Other languages is a good suggestion.

Vice Chair Paulsen said our committee has had a good tussle with this. When I talk to the administration, they say: "Let's just look at increasing the ridership capacity. Maybe talk about doing it in Procurement of new vehicles." I am saying we can do that. It shifts my energy from now to three or four years from now when we

buy a round of new vehicles. But how do we solve the problem today? Today we solve the problem by clearly telling the Met Council about what we want in this new policy. We clearly tell them that we understand that we have had some push back on both sides about our desires. But we also tell them that if and when we do buy new buses, and we would get any additional seats, then we can change our stance again. To be a little more friendly. But as it stands right now, they are doing the bare minimum of the Federal law and the state law and the fact that we have more people that are using those seats than we have had ever before. We need to figure out some way to reclaim those seats back as priority seating. Those seats do not need to be hold up by strollers or shopping carts or other items that should not be there. If that means we have to take a very strong approach, and the Council is going to get mad at us a little bit, then we need to do that. If we don't do that, we need to leave this policy as it is and we need to understand we need to look at buying bigger vehicles with additional capacity. Whether it is two seats in the back or whether it is a third seat somewhere in the middle like they do in Vegas.

We cannot just sit back and say: "We can't do nothing until we get new vehicles." I don't think that is a smart approach. I don't think that is an approach that this committee wants to take.

Fuglie said I was talking to a senator yesterday. She agreed with me that Metro Transit and anybody else who is involved with public transportation. It needs to go to the media. The only way we are going to change this by the education given to the public. The education is coming from the media. She agreed with me that that is where it all starts. The media. Metro Transit, that is your job.

Chair Fenley said that is our second of three items to talk about. Which, actually, that is a fourth now that Darrell brought up any direct opposition to the stroller policy, which I don't necessarily agree with. But it depends on what the body decides. What all members here decide.

So, summing things up. The priority seating. The accessible seating. The seating for folks with disabilities and people who are aging is filling up. We see that with the pass-up numbers that happen. We don't want that to happen. I say this every time we talk about this. We can't make this an issue with parents verses folks with disabilities. First of all, there are some parents with disabilities. Second of all that is not getting at the actual root of the problem which is both folks have the right to ride the bus. Both folks have the right to ride in a space that is comfortable. Folks with disabilities have a legal right to have that space. The ADA puts that accessible space there. But the Council and Metro Transit is falling in line with FTA and ADA rules, like Andy said.

Let me run through four things that I have here, and we can address them individually, if you want. The first thing I have is TAAC supports increasing the amount of priority/accessible seating in buses moving forward. So I think having some sort of specifying might actually be better in this instance. This arose because of a stroller policy and pass ups in buses. Saying: "Look, we have this problem brought up to us. We are the body that then advises the Metropolitan Council on things that have been brought up to us. If you want to discuss another thing about disability, we can do that. But I think specificity in saying buses because that is what we are talking about."

Vice Chair Paulsen said as long as the Metropolitan Council operates those contracts for buses and light rail. We should have a blanket policy that supports increasing the priority seating across all forms of their transportation system. So that we don't have to keep changing buses. Then we get buses done. Now next year we are going to do trains. Then the next year we do the big train that goes up north (Northstar passenger train). If we just say all forms of transportation. It doesn't matter where it is in the State of Minnesota. We should increase priority seating.

Thorsen said one thing that concerns me is we don't seem to frame these issues. We talk about people having existing disabilities. When we talk about people who are aging. We don't ever talk about either the fact or that any of us can become disabled. We are not guaranteed that we are going to wake up tomorrow with the same capacities we have tonight. All of us are aging. We may not be 65 or whatever the age is. How do we communicate that to people without hitting them over the head?

Chair Fenley said that can be part of any sort of public awareness. What we are doing now is more reactive. You are talking about being proactive.

Henricksen said data driven decisions are usually best. Especially when you are looking at a policy or a stance you want to take that we want more accessible seating because we see a lot of leave behinds. In order to reinforce that stance, I think looking at trying to get a little more data on the leave behinds. Why are they being left behind? All we know is we are having leave behinds. Is it because you are seeing an increase of utilizing

accessible seating for convenience seating rather than priority seating? Or having a little bit more seating. We all agree that there should be more priority seating.

Chair Fenley said we do have the data. It is sporadic. It is all over the place. We have been presented with the data in the past. I think at least twice. The majority of the leave behinds are due to accessible seating being taken up and then to the individual with the wheelchair who is unable to board. I think that is three quarters of the leave behinds. Somewhere between two thirds and three quarters. But the numbers will be from a couple of dozen to 100. They are all over the place. It is clear that more accessible seating would help with that. Then acquiring buses with more accessible seating is already on the radar of Metro Transit. We support it. We push for more of it. All we can really do is advise. We have seen the data.

Henricksen said I just feel like if one of our approaches is going to the media and have an education campaign. The more solid data you have. Because when we talk about it now, it is more sporadic, maybe not 100 percent. Either shoring up how we collect the data now or looking at ways we can improve that or make it a little more reliable. Or we sit down for a year and do a study. You invest that time and capital into getting something a little more accurate. I see what you are saying. We are reinforcing it with our advisement.

Chair Fenley said I put down use data in the education portion of the notes.

Wulff said, so, we have data, but the data is not very good. It is not consistent. It is not detailed enough to understand what is going on. Drivers don't always report it. Even if they do, they just say: "Bus full". But, bus is full of wheelchairs? Bus is full of other people that won't get out of the seats. It is a big festival so there are a lot of people on the bus that particular day. We need better data on how that is going on so that we can solve the problem. I met with Nikki Villavicencio and Brian Funk, who is in charge of all of our buses, a couple of weeks ago and had the same discussion. From the Council's standpoint, we want to solve this problem. We don't want anybody to be left behind. Working with the drivers to get better reporting and more details about why somebody isn't getting on the bus and how long until the next one. Because, if the bus is just full and the next bus behind. The full bus is running late. Another bus is right behind. O.K. that is not a big deal. But if a bus is going to go and that person has to wait for 30 minutes for another bus, that is totally not acceptable. We have got to get better information on each time that this happens to somebody so that we can find a solution for that particular problem, rather than just a blanket across the whole metro. We have got to do something different.

We replace some of our buses every year. If we can get buses that have more accessible seating areas in them, and figure out where the biggest need is and put those buses in the places that have the biggest need. We can solve the problem relatively soon rather than just randomly putting those more accessible buses all over the system. So that is something that I have already initiated that discussion and certainly had the support of Brian Funk to work on that. So if that is part of your concern, it has already been heard.

Murphy said because I am what I call an unseen injury, which is like senior citizens. A lot of this discussion keeps coming around. Strollers or carts blocking accessible seating and the pass up of wheelchairs. What about people like myself who come on and the bus takes off right away. What's going to happen? If I don't sit down right away, I will end up falling. And you have people who walk in and sit down. I think we need to not just focus on somebody with a wheelchair, walker, scooter that are more visible. Also, people who have a disability that is not visible. We cannot necessarily blame the driver for not asking for room. But that there is not just somebody in a wheelchair or walker or scooter. How that is going to happen, I don't know. I want to make sure that people keep that process. Because there are more than just those three.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I would hope that we take the time to be very deliberate because this issue is being talked about. I have spoken to several administrators in the administration about this and they are willing to do something right now. They really are looking at us to say: "Yes, you are doing the right thing in looking at procurements and looking at what we can do now." One of the things that I always thought about is that we are here only as an advisory group. The one thing that the Met Council likes to do is shoot videos and do publications. I think it would be a cool thing for this committee to figure out maybe five or so talking points about this issue. And then maybe we could form a PSA around it and then figure out who is going to play those roles. I think that is the quickest, easiest way to get some attention. It goes to Claudia's point about getting it to the media. We don't necessarily want to take this issue to the media until we take it in our own house. So, if we get out ahead of it and produce something really catchy, then we can release that to the media. I think if we do that, right now before spring and summer. Before everybody starts jumping on our buses. I think you are going to see a huge difference in public opinion and how it plays out. Because when a driver tells me that I get to board first, right away, I am disincentivizing several other people that have been waiting there for 20 minutes or



30 minutes to get on that bus. There is a reason why we board first. Because that gives us the opportunity to get to that high priority seating that we are supposed to be at. If we just talk about things that we know that are already in existence for us. Then we put a cute little spin around it, then I think when it goes out to the media, then you will get the media to get on board with us and say: "Oh, yes, this has been an issue."

Chair Fenley said, I agree with you. I think the media should be used as a tool to disseminate or spread whatever message we work with the Met Council to come up with rather than throw somebody under the bus. I think getting into the details of any sort of education campaign is just a waste of time to do today. We have four things. I will lay them out again. Then we can decide. I think giving the Met Council and Metro Transit something to work with. Hopefully, after today's meeting, is what I would like to do.

I am going to read through the four things that have arisen from this discussion over the last three years.

1. TAAC supports increasing the amount of priority/accessibility seating on either buses and all forms of transit moving forward. I think there are pros and cons to both of them.
2. TAAC supports an awareness campaign on the uses of priority seating and its importance to people with disabilities. Transportation and the general public. This could be education of drivers and also the public.
3. TAAC reiterates the legality of the ADA mandated priority accessible seating for folks with disabilities. That is already here. Do we rest our head on that?
4. The direct approach would be to oppose the stroller policy that was passed three years ago.

Dains said I think we need to be careful with that. If we keep talking about going to the media. The media might make a story that has conflict in it. If we are talking about public awareness and public education, that works. If the stroller policy becomes what the media centers on, we are going to get nothing out of that.

Chair Fenley said it would be about the stroller policy versus the disability community.

Dains said I think a more unified message would be successful about it being on buses.

Vice Chair Paulsen said we want them to increase the accessible seating on all vehicles.

Streasick said all I would advise the committee to keep in mind is move on what you actually want. If you put in a generic statement about all public transit vehicles that are funded by the Council, including contracted services, that would include Metro Mobility. We have explored the option of a third wheelchair tie-down vehicle that was very unpopular with the disability community. It had two tie down locations behind the two rear wheels. It took an already bumpy ride and made it all the more bumpy because it was over one of the wheels of the low floor vehicle. If you are making a blanket statement about more accessible seating, that is what that would mean. From a Metro Mobility perspective going back to a three tie down vehicle. Be precise in your targeted language. If you want to throw in something about fixed route, for example, do that. But also, I would say the more chances you give somebody to say this is too much of an undertaking for us, the more you are exposing yourself to that liability.

If you think there is a problem on the trains right now with regard to accessible seating, then include it. But if you don't, don't include it just because something might happen.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I would amend my proposal to include buses and other vehicles. Not to include light rail.

Chair Fenley said I will restate the motion. Henricksen moved: **TAAC supports increasing the amount of priority/accessibility seating on fixed route buses.** Vice Chair Paulsen seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

Vice Chair Paulsen moved: **TAAC supports an awareness campaign on the uses of priority and accessible seating and its importance to people with disabilities, transportation and the general public.** Dains seconded the motion. **The motion carried.**

Chair Fenley moved: **TAAC reiterates the legality of the ADA mandated priority and accessible seating for folks with disabilities. The motion was seconded.** This was one of the things that came out of the last meeting. I have to allow that to be decided on by the body. I don't think it is necessary to go above and beyond when Metro Transit does that already.

Discussion ensued. **The motion did not pass.**

Chair Fenley said Darrell suggested that rather than have a direct opposition to the stroller policy we put the stroller policy passive data and where we put the buses in a supported way to the first resolution that we had. I don't want to have Darrell control what or what doesn't happen here. I agree with him. I don't think we should have a motion to directly oppose the stroller policy. But again, if the will of the body wants to directly oppose the stroller policy, now is your chance to do it.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I am directly opposed to the stroller policy. But I don't believe it should be in our letter necessarily. I don't think it should be in the forefront of the letter. I think it needs to be in the letter. It should have some contractual information on what it used to be like.

Chair Fenley said I am on the same page.

Dains said the stroller policy is a convenience for the parents so they don't have to fold up the stroller and move down the isle. For people with disabilities it is not a convenience. I have a son who uses a wheelchair and when he was using the bus he was frustrated, and he stopped using fixed route because of that.

Fuglie said I am O.K. with strollers but there is a limit. Folks who respect it have strollers that they fold up. The ones that don't respect it use their strollers for shopping and other things. There is not a child in that stroller. You can tell the difference.

Chair Fenley said we have had this conversation every other month for three years.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I have two very active individuals, including the Chair himself who are eager to wait to see what comes out of this committee for this particular issue. I have been on the phone constantly over the last two weeks about this issue. Hopefully, we are going to make some moves today, to make something happen.

Myhre said once we do this and then get the ball rolling, we will know to tweak it.

Chair Fenley said we will see what reaction we get.

### **3. Fixed Route Incentive**

This item was not presented.

## **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.

## **CHAIRS REPORT**

Chair Fenley said after about a year we were appointed an ex-officio seat on the Transportation Committee. I have attended two so far. The Transportation Committee has nine Metropolitan Council Members. They meet twice a month. I am serving on the committee once a month, after this meeting. So I can tell them what we are doing. They are very receptive on what I have to say. They look to me whenever there is a disability related issue on the table. Chair Barber looks to me to chime in on it.

I did tell them that we were addressing this bus capacity thing at the last meeting. Also, at the last meeting they did vote to switch the Metro Mobility South Zone contract, which is up in August. The decision was made after viewing the proposals, to switch from First Transit to Transit Team. I was on the selection committee along with

four other people. It was a pretty easy decision to make to go with Transit Team versus First Transit. It was heard by the Transportation Committee two and a half weeks ago. We came to a unanimous decision based on the proposals that were submitted. Everything I talked about was discussed at a public meeting.

Vice Chair Paulsen said it was a week ago Monday. Then it was voted by the committee on Wednesday.

Chair Fenley said I think that taking care of the Metro Mobility drivers is one of the most important things. Based on what was submitted in the proposals was what made the more sense to me. I think that having some sort of consistency in drivers is important. And based on the proposals, that is the decision we came to. The previous transition was pretty seamless. This transition shouldn't be so bad. Transit Team already is a provider for Metro Mobility in some instances. So they have the expertise. It is a very uniform practice for training for all Metro Mobility drivers. So the actual delivery of the service is similar. It is really just the people who manage the contracts are changing.

Vice Chair Paulsen said as far as everything on the street, everything should stay the same. It should look the same. The rides should be the same. The only thing that is going to be different are the drivers. The driver's uniforms are not going to say First Transit. It is going to say Transit Team.

Chair Fenley said there will be more information from Metro Mobility when the transition time gets closer.

Streasick said we will notify folks. We are talking about just the name on the jacket. But we understand that we serve a group of customers. Some of whom need more understanding. We want to make sure and make everybody know that this is happening. The name in small print on the bottom of the bus under the Metropolitan Council lettering will change. It will say Transit Team instead of First Transit. The logo on the jacket will be different. We are going to make sure and communicate this to our customers.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

#### **MEMBER COMMENT**

Myhre said we need to be talking about the safety of the drivers and the clients on the Metro Mobility buses. Some of the clients are abusive. Andy, can we look into that?

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary