

# Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, May 6, 2015

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Kjensmo Walker, Julianne Bina, Christopher Bates, Adora Sage, Douglas Moody, Robert Platz, Kim Trenary, Heidi Myhre, Nichole Villavicencio, Margot Imdieke Cross, David Fenley and Patty Thorsen.

**Committee Members Absent:** None.

**Committee Members Excused:** Ken Rodgers, Jeffery Smith and Bob Anderson.

**Council Staff Present:** Pam Steffen, Robin Caufman, Nick Landwer, Jim Harwood, Carol Hejl, Claudius Toussaint and Paul Lamb from Metro Transit, Andy Steasick, Andrew Krueger, Noel Nix and Alison Coleman.

**Public Present:** Kari Sheldon, Kristin Jorenby and Darrell Paulsen.

## CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Walker called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:35 p.m. on Wednesday May 6, 2015.

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Walker said that there was a change in the agenda. The Metropolitan Council staff that was to present the Legislative Update could not attend this meeting. They sent a letter with the information to Chair Walker who will read the letter in place of the Legislative Update presentation.

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

It was moved by Villavicencio, seconded by Platz to approve the minutes of the April 1, 2015 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

## INFORMATION & BUSINESS

### 1. Blue Line Extension and CAC

Nick Landwer spoke to the TAAC committee. He is the Director of Transit Systems, Design and Engineering for Metro Transit. He gave a project overview and then he showed a map of the Twin Cities Transitways, the 2040 Vision. It includes the existing transitway lines, which would be the Northstar, the Blue Line, Green Line and the Red Line. Then they show the projects in development and under study at this time. The Blue Line goes from the Mall of America to Target Field Station. The Blue Line Extension goes from the Target Field Station to Brooklyn Park. They are moving forward with 11 stations. They are budgeted for 10 of those stations. They are looking at the Plymouth Avenue Station or the Golden Valley Station. Both stations are in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. The project involves 13 miles of double tracked light rail serving Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley and Minneapolis. Eventually when it is constructed it will provide a one seat ride from Brooklyn Park down through the airport and to the Mall of America. At Target Station it will provide connections to the Green Line, Northstar and existing bus services. The projections for 2030 are 27,000 riders per day. They are in project development at this time. There are new requirements through MAP21, which restricts the time and project development to two years.

The project timeline is that from 2014 to 2016 they are in project development and working on the preliminary design. The environmental impact statement for this project with municipal consent is 2016. Engineering is 2017. The full funding grant agreement is 2018. Heavy construction is 2018 to 2020. Passenger operations/revenue service is planned for 2021.

How this project is being funded at this time is 48 percent would come from the FTA (Federal Transit Authority). Thirty one percent would come from the CTIB (County Transportation Improvement Board), 10 percent would come from HCRRA (Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority) and 10 percent from the state.

Through the Draft Environmental Impact Statement process, each of the project partners identified 15 technical issues that needed to be resolved. Twelve of these are related to the five municipalities and then there are three that are system-wide. The system-wide technical issues are the transmission lines that run down the rail corridor and the traction power substations. Through project development they are working with each one of the municipalities, which each of the project partners forming the issue resolution teams. They are looking at track alignment, station locations, operation and maintenance facility, which is scheduled to be on the far north end of the project and looking at resolving West Broadway, which is CSAH 103/LRT design.

These are the technical issues as they relate to each one of the cities and the sub issues that are tracking through each one of the teams. The overall technical issue is how do they connect to Target Field Station? How do they get through the Seventh Street intersection with the rail, incorporating the design with the Southwest, which comes off of the Target Field also? As they are running through that area from Target Field Station down Olson Memorial Highway, how does that work with the existing Olson Memorial Highway? How do they treat the design? How are they working with the intersections? How are they getting pedestrians safely across the road? The next issue is as they are coming off of Olson Memorial Highway, how do they get down to the rail corridor into the rail trench? Theodore Wirth is down below the grade. So how do they make that transition?

In Golden Valley, they are looking at the two stations mentioned before. Should both of them be in the design or in the budget? There are potential flood point impacts they need to work through. Following a creek there are poor soils in this area. How do they work the rail alignment through there? Making sure that in Theodore Wirth they are working with the park board with any impacts that could happen with the park.

In Robbinsdale, they are working with them on a park and ride facility at the current Metro Transit transit hub in this location as well as looking at the grade crossings as they go through the towns. The existing city streets cross the freight rail. They are bringing in light rail there. How are they going to get safely through those intersections? As they get into more residential neighborhoods in this neighborhood how are they going to handle the noise and vibration impacts?

As they get into Crystal, close to the project office, there is the Bass Lake Road station. How does that station configure? How do they have a drop in rides? How do they get customers to that station? After they leave the station how do they get across the Bass Lake Road crossing?

Then in Brooklyn Park they have a few issues here with the park and ride, there is a 63<sup>rd</sup> Avenue park and ride. They need to add capacity to that because there will be a light rail station at that location. They need to find out how many vehicles need to park at that location. How do they accomplish that? As they go north, how are they going to cross from the rail tracks at 73<sup>rd</sup> and cross Highway 81 over to West Broadway and running up West Broadway? As they get to the north end of it, looking at the park and ride station at the north end, which would be the last station. Where is that going to sit on within a proposed target development area? They are working with the city and with Target on land usage and how that works. On the far end of it is another operations and maintenance facility that would serve this line extension. What does this facility look like as it is sited? How do they work with the community on that?

As they engage the project partners through this they are working closely with the design staff of the project, the environmental consultants, outreach and the public to listen to public input is on these issues and working through these with the cities. Most of these meetings will include the specific city that is concerned. MnDOT is there with us. So is Hennepin County. Many of these meetings with the Minneapolis Park Board and the Three Rivers Park Board District are in the meetings also as well as watershed districts when necessary. Separately they are working with the freight railroad on negotiations on what the rail looks like through that trench.

The process is they start with the Issue Resolution Teams. Come up with the best technical solutions. They bring that forward with the Technical Project Advisory Committee, which consists of project partner staff. Then they bring it to the Business and Community Advisory Committees and listen to their input. The next

step is the Corridor Management Committee, which consists of appointed officials. Then it goes to the Met Council for their final recommendation for each of the issues.

The Brooklyn Park station is the last station because it is the local preferred alternative. It is mostly determined by ridership.

The railroad right of way that they are running on is all a negotiation with the BNSF Railway.

Robin Cauffman spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Assistant Director for Administration, Communication and Outreach for projects at Metro Transit. They do a lessons learned and information sharing after each project. They are working closely with Hennepin County. They have a program called "Hennepin County Community Works". That is looking at the station areas around the alignment. They look at trails and sidewalks beyond the actual corridor, going out a half mile or so in the community and looking at how people get there. Looking at what is the land use plans for this area?

She talked about the advisory committees. There is a Business Advisory Committee and a Community Advisory Committee for both the Southwest project and the Blue Line project. They are inviting members from the TAAC committee to nominate someone to sit on each of the CAC committees. They would advise the Corridor Management Committee. They have the engineering team attend these meetings. They share information and get information back from the engineers. They give input for anything from stations to design to placement of the operations maintenance facility. They discuss bike and pedestrian and access points. Park and rides and parking near the stations are also an issue. CAC also serves as an information liaison back to the community. Members represent community groups and neighborhood organizations. They can take the information back and share it with the community groups. The meetings consist of one two-hour meeting a month. Sometimes there are two meetings per month. It is a two year term.

They just had the first Blue Line Extension CAC meeting. They currently have representatives from each of the cities along the alignment. They invited the Corridor's of Opportunity grantees. Those are some community groups like Asian Economic Development Authority that they have provided grants to in the past, to participate in the CAC. The Minneapolis Park and Rec Board has an appointee and they are also looking at Chair Duinick to appoint some at large members as well.

The meetings are generally held in the evenings at the project offices. The one for the Southwest CAC is held in St. Louis Park and the one for the Blue Line Extension CAC is held in Crystal.

## **2. Downtown East Enhancements (New Vikings Stadium)**

Carol Hejl spoke to the TAAC committee. She works in the Engineering & Facilities Administration Department at Metro Transit. She will be discussing the Downtown East Pedestrian Bridge at the Downtown East Light Rail Station. Some of the key transit issues currently the stadium is situated to be toward the west of downtown. They are anticipating up to a 40 percent transit mode split once the LRT system is built out. That would equate to about 26,000 or more customers once the system is built out. The key concern for them is pedestrian access and safety especially at Chicago and 4<sup>th</sup> Street. Currently with regular route service there is five minute combined headways. A train will pass through the intersections of 4<sup>th</sup> and Chicago Avenue and 5<sup>th</sup> Street and Park Avenue every 2.5 minutes on average. During special events there will be additional trains with an increased frequency of a train passing the intersections every two minutes on average. With the two minute headway, 55 seconds of that is going to be taken up by a train decelerating at the station or accelerating to move on. That leaves about 65 seconds for about 2,100 people to cross that intersection to get across the street. Once the system is built out they are concerned that everybody is able to get where they need to go safely.

With that they have been working for a few years to design and figure out a way for vertical circulation. That went from the option of a tunnel or a pedestrian bridge for a feasible option. The pedestrian bridge is about 240 feet from elevator to elevator. The middle high point of the bridge is 30 feet five inches. There is a five percent slope towards the ends. It will be 17 feet three inches tall at the east end and 18 feet and one inch tall at the west end. The travel path for vertical circulation, the pedestrian bridge will incorporate the elevator access. So basically leaving the stadium you would travel northbound to the elevator. Ride the elevator up. Join with the flow of the pedestrian bridge. Go across. There is a second elevator that will take you down. The elevator will allow you to exit at the sidewalk level. If your destination is not the light rail, but downtown you would continue on your way. Aside from that you would travel around and then access the

station via the same ramp that is there today. It is proposed to be Council funded. There will be a Council meeting on that on May 27. The bridge and the associated elevators will be the property of Metro Transit. They will be responsible for maintaining it. The elevators will have glass sides. There will be cameras. They are anticipating that the hours the elevators will be operating is 24 hours.

They are still looking at the overall event management plan. There is currently a traffic management plan for the stadium and events around the stadium. That will help inform whether or not there is a very limited at grade crossing or how they staff events and how they help folks know where they should go. Right now they are looking at whether there should be an at grade crossing. At this point it is too early to say. There will be a standard size elevator.

Jim Harwood spoke to the TAAC committee. He is the Project Manager of Engineering and Construction at Metro Transit and the liaison for this project. The elevator is a standard five by eight or six by eight. They have been looking at the ramp possibility and it would be too long for the crossing. That is part of the reason they came to the solution of the stairs. The Sports Facility Authority is leading the traffic management plan. It is looking at street closures and crossings. The goal from a safety standpoint is to limit the crossing at 4<sup>th</sup> and Chicago as much as possible because the streets are closed through there. It is very difficult to move the light rail through there and maintain any operations safety with the amount of people mentioned before.

Imdieke Cross said she would like the TAAC to take a position on this to encourage that there be a backup and that there be some at grade or street crossing made available so that the only option is not the elevator. She wants to support the position of at grade or on street accessible crossings in this area. So people have a choice.

Harwood said this is the intersection they are focusing on because it has been the problem related to peoples general paths. The intersections work through traffic control through signals that allow standard crossing. This is the main intersection next to the main exit. The question really becomes how do you size it correctly and manage the correct at grade accessible route without opening it up to everybody which then limits the functionality of the bridge and limits the safe operations.

Imdieke Cross suggested a second elevator.

The event traffic management plan has just been awarded. There is a Technical Advisory Panel connected to that plan.

### **3. Spine Shelter Designs (Downtown Minneapolis East & West)**

Claudius Toussaint spoke to the TAAC committee. He is a Principal Engineer at Metro Transit. This talk is related to the Downtown Minneapolis Transit Advantage Initiative. It tries to address transit improvements in the downtown area in a series of projects. For example, they are looking at bottlenecks that hinder or slow down buses from the downtown areas to freeways. A few years ago Marquette was identified as a north/south spine through the downtown areas. A number of transit improvements were made along Marquette. This project starts to look at the east/west spine through the downtown areas. Seventh Street and 8th Street have been identified as the east/west spine through the downtown areas. Consequently this project is constructed transit improvements along two locations along 7<sup>th</sup> Street. One stop is at the Nicollet Mall and 7<sup>th</sup> and the other at Hennepin Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup>. Those two locations are also identified as the future BRT stops.

This project is a construction cooperative between the Council and the City of Minneapolis whereby the City will reconstruct and expand the sidewalk from 15 feet (the existing width) to 21 feet. The station is situated six feet behind the curb. That will allow circulation in front of the station and it will also allow eight to nine feet of pedestrian sidewalk at the back of the station. Because this location is identified as a future BRT stop they are, as part of this project, constructing the foundations and infrastructure for a pylon and a ticket vending machine. The pylon will house the various technologies like the real time signs, emergency telephones and Intercom systems, etc.

Right now they have about 12 feet between the pylon and the station. That will allow movement onto the buses and it will also allow people to access the next trip information. They have identified also 80 feet of warning strips along the curb. It will allow two buses to board at the same time in those areas. They are mindful of accessibility. They have a sidewall of about six feet, which is about two feet longer than a typical

bus shelter. They have an oversized canopy. It allows additional shelter for the customers but does not take additional sidewalk areas.

The station at Hennepin Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> is about 10 feet wide and is based on ridership. Everything else is the same as the other shelters. The station walls will be constructed of aluminum and glass. The roof will be made of aluminum panels. There is a canopy that extends over the ticket vending machines and sidewalks.

They have completed the design and are in the process of procuring a contract for construction. This is a cooperative effort between the City of Minneapolis and the Council. They have a date of May 4, for executing the contract. The City of Minneapolis will start construction on May 11. The shelter will be fabricated. They are scheduled to end construction in August of 2015. As part of the Nicollet Mall reconstruction there will be some initial projects going on at Nicollet that may affect the project at Nicollet and 7<sup>th</sup>. If they don't get the shelter done by August, it will be done by September. They can still make minor changes due to the change order alliance. When this station becomes a BRT station it will have real time signs on each end of the station. The real time signs will have a button to push that will announce the information that is on the screen. There will be a sound that will allow visually impaired people find the sign. The shelters are only six feet deep. This will not allow room for a bench inside the shelter. They have a lean rail. The heating element will stay on all the time. They are looking at finding the best place to put a bench.

#### **4. Bus Stop Improvements (Ladders of Opportunity)**

Paul Lamb spoke to the TAAC committee. He is a Senior Project Coordinator at Metro Transit. He is here to talk about the Ladders of Opportunity Program. Specifically about a small shelter design. They are in the process of receiving federal money to put more shelters out on the street at boarding areas and improve existing shelters by adding light and heat at some locations based on boardings. Part of the project they are working on is getting more shelters and trying to identify how they can get shelters in places that have more restrictive areas or right of ways that would limit the ability to place shelters in now. The region-wide goal is to put 150 new shelters out at locations where boardings currently justify them but they are not out there for either lack of funding from previous years or from site constraints. They have looked at over 200 sites for more shelters. They have identified a number of them where the standard designs would not fit in there physically without having to get easement from a property owner. This is outside of their control.

The standard shelter sizes Metro Transit is currently using are:

C Style – 12' long x 6' deep x 10' high. This is the one most used.

D Style – 8' long x 4' deep (6' with roof) x 9' high

E Style – 12' long x 4' deep (6' with roof) x 10' high

This manufacturer makes these shelters with a bench inside.

The proposed slim shelter is approximately:

12' or 8' long x 3' deep side walls (5' deep roof) x 10' tall.

It reduces depth by 1'.

This shelter also has a bench inside.

The slim shelter design benefits:

- Can be placed in constrained spaces that cannot contain standard shelter sizes.
- Provides more room for pedestrian movement
- Shorter roof reduces conflicts with bus mirrors
- Able to be equipped with light and heat
- Recognizable as bus shelter
- Faster and less expensive to produce than custom design

He gave a site example of Fillmore Avenue and Robert Street. The E Shelter verses the Slim Shelter. He asked the committee if they should use the 2' shelter or the 3' shelter. There would be 1½ feet open behind the shelter. These smaller shelters would be the exception. Only to be used when there is not enough room for the standard shelters. There is an overhang about two feet beyond the wall of the shelter. There are walls on the back side where the bench is. Then there would be a two foot or three foot wall on the sides. The front would be open. They would access the back for changing the glass on the back wall. The benches are two feet deep and about four feet wide.

Streasick said that the sidewalk access is more of a concern than a shelter.

The manufacturer can do a D shelter or an E shelter or a slimmer version which would be two feet. They would all have an additional two foot overhangs. This is for an eight or nine foot sidewalk. They don't want to go away from the standard shelters they have now. The slimmer shelters would be an exception when there is not enough space for a standard size shelter. If the space between the street and the property is smaller than nine feet they would be looking at the slimmer shelter. If it is over nine feet it would be the standard shelter, which would probably be the C shelter.

Fenley introduced a motion to support the two foot deep structure as a committee for a sidewalk measuring nine feet or less, based on coverage to sidewalk accessibility. Imdieke Cross seconded the motion. Two opposed the motion. **The motion carried.**

He will get back to the TAAC committee about how many of the smaller shelters there will be. They will let the TAAC committee know how many shelters and the sizes and locations of the shelters.

## **5. Legislative Update**

There was no time left to present this item. A copy of a letter from Lesley Kandaras explaining some of the issues at the Capitol was sent to the TAAC committee members after the meeting.

## **MEMBER COMMENT**

Fenley asked how to select the TAAC members to consult on Community Action Committees for the Blue Line Extension and the Southwest Project.

Chair Walker said that whoever is interested in joining one of the committees would volunteer for the position. If more than one volunteers she will bring it to the committee to choose.

Streasick said that the Chair could approach someone on the committee and ask if they would like to sit on the committee.

Chair Walker said that she will not approach anyone unless there are no volunteers.

Trenary suggested that the person who represents the district where the committee represents would be the best person for the CAC position.

Fenley asked if the TAAC committee could spend some time next meeting on the ByLaws.

Fenley said he would like to have the legislative update added to the committee agenda during the legislative session.

Streasick said that they have tried to get someone to come to the TAAC committee to do a legislative update but it hasn't been possible at this time.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Kristin Jorenby spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Assistant Director of the Olmstead Implementation Office. She has a request from the Ramsey County Bike and Pedestrian Planning Team. They are looking to do a focus group/listening session with people with disabilities regarding the upcoming plan. She doesn't have a date or location yet. If anyone is interested please contact her. This will be a small focus group.

Darrell Paulson spoke to the TAAC committee about when Metro Transit purchases vehicles for light rail they would come before the TAAC committee for approval. The language was taken to the Council and they approved it. He said someone from this committee spoke against it and it was pulled.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary