

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 3, 2021

Committee Members Present: Vice Chair Darrell Paulsen, Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Patsy Murphy, Ken Rodgers, Jeffry Dains, Kari Sheldon, John Clark, Heidi Myhre, Claudia Fuglie, Patty Thorsen, Diane Graham-Raff, Erik Henricksen and Richard Rowan.

Committee Members Absent: None

Committee Members Excused: Chair David Fenley.

Council Staff Present: Jason Tintes, Doug Cook, Cody Olson, Andrew Brody, Adam Smith, Sara Maaske, Paul Colton, Brooke Bordson, Guthrie Byard, Andy Streasick, Michael Mechtenberg and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: None.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Vice Chair Paulsen called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:33 p.m. on Wednesday, March 3, 2021.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Fuglie, seconded by Sheldon to approve the minutes of the February 3, 2021 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Replacement of 7 Equinox SUV's

Paul Colton, Fleet Manager, spoke to the TAAC committee. Metro Mobility is in the position of replacing seven Chevy Equinox SUV's. These seven have reached the end of their five-year life cycle and are eligible for replacement. Per Council policy. When replaced later this year, with whatever vehicles we choose, all seven will have reached a minimum of 175,000 miles. Three vehicles will have surpassed 200,000 miles. We got good life out of each of these vehicles. This replacement cycle matches the Fleet Management Plan.

What should we replace them with? The first option would have been the Ford Equinox, which was first purchased over a year ago. Those are no longer available and manufactured by Ford. So we have to move on. Those have been a great vehicle and we have gotten great feedback for those vehicles.

We want to keep with an all wheel drive version of this vehicle. It has been really good at getting through snow, sleet and ice and other bad weather. We don't want to change that.

One of the things we do want to change. We want something with good fuel economy. And that is going to need less maintenance. So with encouragement from the Governor's Office, MnDOT, Pollution Control Agency and Council Thrive Policies, Metro Mobility is recommending a gas/hybrid SUV option using the State of MN Contract. It has already been competitively bid. That is a big advantage for us. It has already been completed.

The three vehicles that are on the state bid are a hybrid SUV:

2021 Toyota RAV4 Hybrid.

2021 Ford Escape Hybrid.

2021 Toyota Highlander Hybrid.

The Toyota RAV4 Hybrid and the Ford Escape are one of the smaller class, similar to the Equinox. The Toyota Highlander is in the mid-size class of SUV. Similar to our Ford Flex. To give you some perspective on that.

Evaluation criteria. What are we looking for in a Metro Mobility SUV?

- Rear seat with plentiful leg, hip, shoulder and head room.
- Storage room large enough to carry packages and mobility devices.
- Good driver ergonomics – comfortable, easy to navigate controls.(scheduling and mapping, fare collection device and our router that we move everything through and for communication).
- Ease of installing Metro Mobility technology.
- Fuel economy.
- Maintenance schedules.
- Price of vehicle.
- Overall value of vehicle.

These are used for customers that can't use our bus. We want to make sure they are very comfortable. Comfortable ride. Comfortable seating. We need enough space for the customers, when we have multiple customers onboard.

In the end, we are looking at what is the best value of the vehicle to the Council. Taking into account price and all of those other features that are best to serve our customers.

On the vehicle comparison, here are a few of the things we looked at, side by side with these three vehicles:

	<u>RAV4</u>	<u>Escape</u>	<u>Highlander</u>
Rear seat head room	39.5"	39.3"	39.4"
Rear seat hip room	47.7"	53.3"	57.0"
Rear seat leg room	37.8"	38.9"	41.0"
Cargo volume	37.6 cu. Ft.	37.5 cu ft	58.4 cu ft
Fuel economy (mpg)	41 city / 38 hwy	44 city / 37 hwy	35 city/hwy
Price of vehicle	\$29,513	\$25,856	\$40,011

Staff looked at all three of these vehicles and spent a lot of time with these vehicles. Comparing, taking notes, with the sales staff. Asking questions they couldn't answer. I believe we did a really thorough job of examining these vehicles. In the end, staff was unanimous in that the Toyota Highlander is the best option for our customers and for the Council. So if we were to go out for a RFP, and got bids for all of these vehicles, we would have selected the Toyota Highlander. Even if we know it is more expensive. Here is why:

- Most interior room.
- Most storage room.
- Easiest installation of technology.
- All Highlanders are manufactured in Princeton, Indiana.
- Excellent fuel economy for a mid-size SUV.
- Excellent safety record – 5 star crash rating.
- Additional cost of vehicle purchase can be recovered in fuel savings over the life of the vehicle if we compare it to the Ford Flex vehicle we have been using.
- Available in 45 to 60 days from time of order. We can place an order as early as next week.

This has already been in our capital budget. It is ready to go. We wanted to come to the TAAC to get your approval in the process.

I am ready to open it up to questions.

Jasmine said comparatively to the SUV that is being used now, how much leg room is in the front. I presume that there is nothing that goes to the back to provide the seats in the back. No cup holder or anything like that.

Colton said the front leg room is equal to or greater than the current vehicle. We are replacing the Chevy Equinox. So 41" in the front leg room.

Jasmine said then there is nothing that extends into the back. Sometimes you see the extenders that go back to divide the floor space.

Colton said it is mostly a floor in the rear and the console between the drivers seat and the passenger seat does not extend into the back seat.

Jasmine said some of us have guide dogs and we have to fit them in somewhere.

Colton said that was one of the things that we talked about when we were comparing the Toyota RAV4 and the Highlander side-by-side. We agreed that there is just too tight in the RAV4. And ultimately the Escape had the same feel It was too tight. We wanted to maximize as much space as we could for customers and their service animals.

Clark said I was wondering about the reliability of the Toyota Highlander.

Colton said the Highlander has a great track record for reliability. They have been manufacturing the hybrid for at least five or six years. Battery life at a minimum is expected to go 150,000 miles and most likely much longer than that. The maintenance schedule is oil changes are every 10,000 miles. I think that is an EPA regulation. It has a really good maintenance schedule. We are expecting these to go very easily five years.

Clark said so you are replacing seven vehicles. Is there any advantage to buying a cheaper model and getting a couple more vehicles?

Colton said we have talked about that in the past before splitting up our fleet into a couple of vehicles. The challenges for our contractors is that now they have to carry additional parts, find additional parts, for different portions of the fleet. Which isn't our concern so much, but I am aware of that issue on the maintenance side. The second thing with this particular purchases is that based on staff feedback and review, we are very confident that folks would be very disappointed if we were to purchase the Ford Escape based on the size within the interior of that vehicle. We do not want to take a step back in terms of the accommodations that we can provide with our sedan fleet.

This vehicle is on par with the Ford Flex. And that is kind of some of our thought process was.

Rodgers said in terms of the hybrid and the electrical part of it. How often will it need to be recharged and are we going to be able to get the most benefit out of the hybrid part of it? Because of the amount of use that these vehicles require. In other words, how much of the gas savings are we going to get based on how often it needs to be recharged?

Colton said these are not a plug in hybrid. These are a gas hybrid. So the electrical system is recharged through regenerative braking.

Henricksen said it seems that the Highlander won out because of the size? So why not compare competitors when it comes to size? Why not just look at all SUV's of the same size?

Colton said I would love to look at more mid-sized SYV's for replacement. Unfortunately, on the state contract, the Highlander was the only mid-sized hybrid SUV on the state contract at the present time. I expect that to change down the road. By the time we replace the Ford Flex's, I think we will have a lot more options. Not just in the hybrid market, but in the electrical vehicle market in the mid-size SUV.

Sheldon said are we only replacing vehicles that are not wheelchair accessible? Or are we eventually going to be replacing Metro Mobility buses?

Colton said this is only replacing the seven vehicles that are eligible for replacement on the SUV category. We will be replacing a huge order for buses as soon as the state is finished with their contract with the different bus vendors in the region. As soon as that is done, we will be ordering Metro Mobility buses. The plan is they will be very similar to what we have today as far as layout for maximum efficiency and effectiveness for our passengers and our operators.

Sheldon said the second question would be it will be an opportunity for wheelchair users and scooters to look at any new vehicles coming out. Correct?

Colton said correct. The floor plan is likely not to change significantly.

Myhre said for people who have braces. I just wanted to make sure they are not. Can they move the seat back? I know some people like to sit in the front. I want to make sure that I can get in and get out and be able to shut the door. Will I be able to open the door correctly? I wanted to make sure the seats can slide back.

Colton said that is more of a special issue. The drivers should be able to adjust for sure the front passenger seat to accommodate your seating position.

Myhre said how can we make sure that people who have braces can get into the back seat properly?

Colton said I will bring that up with the operation staff.

Graham-Raff said are there any issues that the seat height is a little higher and have problems getting in or out or do you have step stools if there is an issue?

Colton said yes, we have addressed this because they are a little bit higher off the ground. All three units are about the same. At about 18 or 19 inches off the ground. So we will continue to use the availability of a safe step stool or we are exploring the potential of a running board or a step that would be safe to use as a step to get into the vehicle. Chair Fenley was there and was able to give some feedback.

Clark said how many passengers do they hold?

Colton said two adult customers can fit very comfortably in the rear seat in the Highlander. Depending on the policy regarding the front seat, that is a potential passenger space.

2. B-Line BRT

Adam Smith, Senior Planner in the BRT Project Office, spoke to the TAAC committee. Just to provide a quick overview of the B-Line Bus Rapid Transit project for folks who may not be familiar. This is bringing Bus Rapid Transit to the Lake Street and Marshall and Selby corridors and Minneapolis and Saint Paul. It is planned to be the fourth arterial BRT line in our region. It represents the substantial replacement of the Route 21, which has been historically our region's second highest ridership bus route. But has been the route that has the slowest in service route. Service of the B-Line would be every 10 minutes, seven days a week and one of the big project goals is faster, more reliable service. So we are shooting for approximately 20 percent improved travel times for transit users with existing conditions on the Route 21 corridor.

The project is fully funded at this point. We are targeting opening in 2024. So we are looking forward to sharing more details now as our draft corridor plan is rolling out. I have a corridor plan that I will talk in more detail later in the presentation.

Next slide. So in terms of background in the planning efforts for this project, we really started planning in 2019. Originally, the B-Line was only intended to go as far east as Snelling and University in Saint Paul. but we heard from a number of stakeholders very early in this process that an extension to Downtown Saint Paul to the Union Depot was of significant interest. So it is just something that we took a look out very early. In November of 2019, did make a recommendation to extend the B-Line into Downtown Saint Paul along Selby Avenue and to route the B-Line along Marshall, Snelling and Selby Avenues in that area of Saint Paul. So no longer crossing I-94 as Route 21 does today. Rather taking a more east to west routing.

At that point in late 2019, we identified 33 preliminaries station locations where the B-Line would stop along the corridor. We also included some very preliminary information about an overall bus service plan. We started to look at the mixed service along with the BRT service. Look at maps to detail the evolution of the plan as we move through the previous steps of the process.

Next slide. At this point I will turn it over to Cody Olson to summarize what we heard.

Cody Olson, Outreach Coordinator for the B-Line, spoke to the TAAC committee. I wanted to give a little background and history on some of the community engagement that has been completed as part of this project. A lot of the images on this page shows a number of different areas that we engaged in person as part of this project. In 2019, when a majority of our planning engagement happened, the goal of our engagement process was to really get the feedback on the first planning questions that we had. Around the extension to Downtown Saint Paul. around the route the bus would take when it reached Snelling Avenue. Those main questions. And then later, we worked hard to determine the actual intersections that the B-Line would stop at. The tent of activities that we were able to connect with community members included open house meetings, bus stop pop-ups and ride-alongs, neighborhood/group meetings, office hours at local businesses, business pop-ups and door knocking and larger community events that were happening in 2019.

During this engagement phase we heard a lot of feedback related to the travel time of the buses. The frequency and the reliability. Those were things that people really cared about and had improvement on. The route for the future B-Line to try to assist with.

We have heard a lot of feedback supporting the alignment that went to Downtown Saint Paul. the feedback was a bit more mixed around the actual route. The majority of open house attendees favored alignment that remains south of I-94. The majority of feedback in Midway and Selby Avenue areas indicated preference for alignment directly serving Midway.

Adam Smith said next slide. Part of the next stops we took was to take that feedback from the B-Line corridor. What we released to the public on February 22 that we received in comments. The main focus of this plan is really to identify intersections with stations that are located along the corridor. And then identify which corner of the intersection would have a platform. That is the level of detail we are at at this point and the main goal of the draft corridor plan and our plan in process is really to solidify those platforms within each intersection.

I did want to go through the corridor west to east to make sure everyone is aware of the locations we are talking about.

First, Minneapolis, along Lake Street. We are planning stations at the West Lake Street Station and Green Line extension.

Lake & Dean/West Bde Maka Ska Parkway
Lake/Lagoon & East Bde Maka Ska Parkway
Lake/Lagoon & Hennepin
Lake & Lyndale
Lake & Nicollet
Lake & I-35W
Lake & 4th & 5th Avenue
Lake & Chicago
Lake & Bloomington
Lake & Cedar
Lake Street/Midtown with a connection with the Blue Line there
Lake & Minnehaha
Lake & 31st Avenue
Lake & 36th Avenue
Lake & 44th Avenue
Then crossing into Saint Paul
Marshall & Otis
Marshall & Cretin
Marshall & Cleveland
Marshall & Fairview
Turn on to Snelling & use the existing Dayton on the A-Line
Selby & Hamline
Selby & Lexington
Selby & Victoria
Selby & Dale
Selby & Western

Then turn on John Ireland & Marshall before the B-Line would continue into Downtown Saint Paul. Share station locations with the planned Gold-Line on 5th and 6th Streets in Downtown Saint Paul before ending at Union Depot.

These station locations and the more detailed platform locations are the main focus on the draft corridor plan. But we are also providing some of the additional things for contacts running a refined bus service plan. So taking an updated look at that local limited-stop bus service within and along this corridor as well as an early look at potential bus priority treatments which are different mechanisms that will make our beef up speed and reliability goals for the project.

Next slide. In terms of looking at these stations and platform locations, we really went through a site by site basis with our agency partners and proposed platform locations based on a wide range of different considerations at each location. I will note that the plan excludes locations where platforms have been

finalized. Where the location of platforms where other projects. With platforms of other projects. But I will the platform designs I will share in the plan will continue to evolve to coordination and engineering. So we are not at the detailed design step yet, it is really about identifying which quadrant of each intersections should host the platform.

I have some graphics to show some examples at Lake and 36th Avenue. On the left is the existing conditions where there are existing bus stops that are Southwest and Northeast quadrants at the intersection. Then at the right, the proposed Lake and 36th station plan concept that shows planned BRT platforms that are Southeast and Northwest centers of the intersection. So moving from what we call a near side stop to a far side stop in that location. This is just an example of the level of detail that is needed.

Next slide. Some of the additional information in the plan includes the refined bus service. In addition to B-Line service, which would run every 10 minutes, seven days a week during the day and most of the evening. We are also looking at retaining local service on Route 21 every 30 minutes between Hennepin Avenue and Minnehaha Avenue. They have the highest ridership in that portion of Lake Street. We are also looking at adding local service on a new route. Route 60, which would run every 30 minutes along Selby Avenue connecting to Midway area of Saint Paul directly. One of the things that we heard in that earlier stage of engagement is the importance of that connection between Selby and Midway and this is looking to address that need while maintaining overall B-Line needs as well.

These conceptual service plans will continue to be further developed and refined as the B-Line nears opening. And we will also be taking a closer look at Route 53 service as the B-Line approaches implementation. It has in the past had provided limited service along a large portion of this corridor. As with other express routes have been suspended during a great portion of the pandemic.

A different corridor map shown on this slide highlighting where those portions of local service would be provided based on what we have on the concept.

Next slide. I will hand it back over to Cody.

Olson said one of the questions that we often get is how people are going to participate in reviewing this draft corridor. Especially in this current situation. The engagement of this plan will be digital due to Covid19. The different kinds of events that I mentioned earlier are things we just can't do under the current situation. People will be directed towards the project website, where they can choose which elements of the plan they would like to engage on. Once you get to the website, you can identify what people might be interested in. whether they are interested in a specific station, or in the plan as a whole or certain elements of the plan to engage on.

People are able to choose the part of plan they would like to engage on. Tell us their thoughts on the proposed. As part of this phase, elements will be selected and evaluated and redistributed as part of a recommended corridor plan. Which will have its own sort of engagement. Before we finalize that into a plan that we would take to the Council to solidify those corners of the intersections as part of this plan.

As you look at this page, there is an example of what this website is telling you. As you enter onto the B-Line webpage, look towards the B-Line platform.

Next slide. Where will outreach efforts be focused? We are trying to get the word out about this. There are different ways. We are doing this through media communications: Council communications: Social, Connect, Insights, Wire, Riders Club, Project Newsletter, and Rider Alerts.

We have been able to get some coverage from some local media on this plan as well. Communications from neighborhood and community groups, project partners like Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Hennepin/Ramsey Counties.

We are also communicating with At-stop communications: Flyers on non-transit items like light poles near all 21 stops. There is also limited in-person surveying. Particularly in high traffic areas. It has safety and Covid19 guidelines.

On this page is an example of this type of flyer that you will see at the stop. It is also very similar to a physical postcard that was mailed out to addresses within a certain radius of the current Route 21 today.

Next slide.

Smith said the next stop in terms of our project schedules.

We distributed the draft corridor plan and are currently seeking feedback on that. What we hear will be implemented into an updated corridor plan later this spring. Then we will have a final corridor plan in late spring. With an adoption in early fall of this year.

Recommended Corridor Plan: May 2021

Final Corridor Plan: September 2021

At that point we will really be getting into the more detailed design

Engineering phase: Mid-2021 – Late 2022

Construction: 2023- 2024

Next slide. So those are the updates we have for you today. Cody's and my email addresses are

Cody.olson@metrotransit.org

Adam.smith@metrotransit.org

www.metrotransit.org/b-line-project |

We are open for questions.

Rodgers said is there a difference between routes that start with a letter, Route A and Route B and the color lines? Or is it just a way to confuse riders?

Olson said generally speaking, the letter lines are what we call Arterial Bus Rapid Transit. They are really more focused on running on arterial streets the color lines which is more highway based BRT. So there is certainly some overlap in terms of types of service. But the Arterial BRT in terms of A-Line, B-Line, C-Line, those are really focused on the Arterial BRT service that includes consistent types of stations, consistent station spacing. Those things more in common.

Clark said does the rerouting stop at the Twins or the Saints affiliate? Second, the Union Depot. When they add a second Amtrak to Chicago with an alignment to Duluth? Third, I used to ride Route 21 way back in the day, it had a reputation for crime. I wonder that would also happen with this line.

Smith said the closest stops would be simply Wacouta and 4th, Union Depot and south.

Vice Chair Paulsen said this BRT project is in line with the 10 projects that were proposed a couple of years ago? During the governor's first part of his administration? Am I mistaken, or am I right?

Smith said this was one of the projects that was identified as a priority in the last few years. That is why it was fully funded.

Better Bus Route 3

Michael Mechtenberg, Program Manager at Metro Transit, spoke to the TAAC committee. I have been working for a couple of years on this project for reliability and service. Our current project is focused on Route 3. These are the desired outcomes:

Improve the speed and reliability of service, bus stop accessibility, customer satisfaction, operator satisfaction.

I want to give a brief overview of this new program we are working on called Better Bus Routes. It is our way to invest in local bus service. Our goal is to really focus on low-cost, common sense improvements. Stuff that we can turn around a little bit faster. Improvements that might be smaller scale development that we can do quickly. We started with Route 2. That was the pilot project (fall 2018). We recently made changes on Route 63. That was last fall of 2020. Then Route 3 is our third route as part of this program.

Our goal is to do a new route every 1 to 2 years. If we can hit our stride, it can be every year. If I don't get to your question, you can go to our website: metrotransit.org/better-bus-routes

Next slide. The shortest way to show what is on this slide is to take what was on the BRT presentation and shrink it down. There are comparisons of improvements between Better Bus and Metro BRT. Service frequency, shelters/facilities, signal priority to make buses go faster, improved accessibility and simplifying the route design. We are doing everything they are doing but on a smaller scale, lower costs, faster turnaround. This program often gets confused with BRT. I think that is the quickest way to describe it.

Next slide. I am going to spend a few minutes to describe some of the strategies that we use to describe what we are doing with this program. The goals are to improve the speed and reliability of the service, customer

reliabilities. One of the strategies that we use is stop consolidation. In our region, Regional Guidelines say stops should be between every eighth of a mile and every quarter mile. In many areas it is actually closer than every quarter mile. This program is saying, let's expand those out just a little bit to no more than a quarter mile apart. In So buses spend more time moving and less time stopping.

In many areas and more dense areas, we are retaining that eighth of a mile spacing. But there will be certain stretches where that is extended a quarter mile. This, for a sense of perspective, the BRT, those stations are planned for about half of a mile. This is a hybrid between your typical local route spacing and the Metro BRT program.

We often get asked, well how do we decide which stops to move or replace? This is a list of a few of the considerations: What is the stop spacing today? What does ridership look like at those stops? Is it a transfer point to other service? What are the adjacent land uses? Is there a library nearby or a drug store, a senior building or a school? Then looking at the limited mobility boarding at these stops. Those are probably the top five. I do want people to know that we, the project team really talks through every single stop. So there are other considerations. These are the top five. We do go through it stop by stop. When we are making our recommendations.

Next slide. Another strategy here is another key is the improvement of accessibility. This is an example of a new ADA pad installed on Route 63 last summer. Our goal is to make sure that every stop is ADA accessible. It seems like a pretty understandable goal. It is one we should be meeting already. We are not. And so as part of this process we do an audit of all the bus stops. We go out there. We take measurements. We look at the slope. We look at the width and the depth of each one. We will fix those that are not accessible today.

Next slide. Another strategy is improving the facilities. So, these are not BRT stations, but they are transit shelters. I think if you are out there in the snow or the rain. Anything would be better than nothing. These transit shelters are major improvements for many of our riders. Our goal as part of this is to have a shelter in place at each stop that meets the boarding requirements. We are not saying there will be a shelter at all stops. That is not possible today. But we do want to make sure that when we go through the ridership and the anticipation of the ridership, we are placing the shelters where they should already be placed or where they are not.

As part of stop consolidation, another benefit is that it often means that there are more riders boarding at any single stop. That gives us the ability to actually add more shelters over and above what we might already see in the route.

Next slide. Finally, Route Simplification. Our goal is to really make routes and schedules as easy to understand as possible. We do that by either reducing or eliminating the number of branches. And reducing or eliminating short line trips. So trips that don't all go to the final terminal. I can show you some examples here at three. But there are a lot of variations in the route. Other different branches. Different areas in the route that trips end. They really create a lot of confusion for customers. The schedule is extremely confusing. The routing is also confusing. I think Route 3 is a perfect example of one where we can make some substantial improvements to clean it up. To simplify it and make it easier for customers to understand.

Next slide. Key Improvements – Other Strategies. So here are other strategies we consider for each route. Transit signal priority is a way for the bus to communicate with the signaling system to make it through intersections faster. Increasing or changing the frequency of a route. Then looking for opportunities for other transit advantages. They might be bus lanes. They might be curb extensions so that the bus doesn't have to pull out of the lane of traffic to stop. There is a whole host of other advantages that we look at for each of those routes.

Next slide. Why Route 3? Pre pandemic, we had very strong ridership. It was one of our busiest routes in our network. If we want to make changes that benefit a lot of riders. It is the poster child for extremely complicated route alignment and schedule. It is certainly our goal to simplify that. We occasionally received complaints about frequent stops on Route 3, specifically. It had not as of last year, at that point, been identified for BRT improvements. As you may know, with the Network Next project and assessment. It is now the Como/Maryland line is the top tier of the future BRT corridors. This is just the first improvement that we will be seeing on the Route 3 in the next five or 10 years. So that is great news. The changes that we are making today, are completely consistent with the principals of BRT planning and programming., So, thinking about streamlining the route and simplifying the schedule. Improving accessibility and others. So, we will be working with the BRT

planner that will be taking this route over for a very clean pass-off of what we have learned and what we have experienced during this planning to what he should expect as he starts looking at this for the future H-line.

Next slide. Route 3 Route Map. This is a map of what Route 3 looks like today. I don't know if there are any Route 3 riders in this group. But what you will see on this map is a very complicated route. It has a lot of different destinations. It serves both downtowns. It serves the U of M. it travels along Como Avenue. It has a lot of different uses. This is one of those routes where it is not a single point where everybody is trying to get to. There are many different destinations along the way. But in turn, it is a very complicated route.

So you see this University of Minnesota branch, that just has a few trips a day, adding different route variance. You have got a branch on Energy Park Drive and one on Maryland adds a little confusion. Then you have a lot of these short lines where the trip ends, especially going in the eastbound direction before downtown Saint Paul. We have certain trips ending at Como and Eustis and Energy Park Drive. We have some ending and beginning at Como and Cleveland. So all these different schedule variations that add some needless complexity to the schedule. This is what the map looks like today. I will talk about some of the changes that we will see as part of this project.

Next slide. Notable Proposed Changes. These four things are the most notable changes we will see. I already mentioned that we will see some bus stop consolidation. We are planning a new route alignment through downtown Minneapolis. It currently operates on 3rd and 4th Streets in Downtown Minneapolis. We are proposing that it operates through downtown Washington Avenue. So that is a change. As part of that realignment, we are also proposing that Route 3 is extended to serve the North Loop neighborhood. Just west of downtown. So that would be a significant increase in service for North Loop residents. Finally, we are proposing to replace Elm/Kasota branch with a separate route. The thinking is schedule simplification and more service can be a variance on Como Avenue. Where most of the riders are.

Next slide. Proposed bus stop changes – West. This is a map of the proposed bus stop changes and alignment change through Downtown Minneapolis. If you are able to see the Downtown Minneapolis alignments. I mentioned proposing that it operate down Washington Avenue. That extension to the North Loop. And just in general, the bus stop changes.

Next slide. Proposed bus stop changes – East. Here is the other end of the route. It is a very long route. So we have to break this up into two different maps. To get to this level of detail. Very similar types of recommendations in terms of the stop consolidation. No changes to the route in Downtown Saint Paul.

Next slide. Downtown East Development. I have received this question about why we would reroute via Washington Avenue. So what is shown here is a map of the Downtown East neighborhood. This area has changed dramatically since I moved here in 2003. This was all surface parking lots. In the last 18 years or so, this area has really been transformed. There is new housing here. There is new parks. There are businesses and office towers. This is a renewal that has really continuing through today. One of the ideas here is that other than light rail, we have a stop there at the stadium. We, Metro Transit haven't really responded to the dramatic change in land use. More service out of Washington is totally warranted.

Next slide. North Loop Development. this is an aerial map of the North Loop neighborhood, identifying parcels that have redeveloped over the years. North Loop had certainly a jump start on the redevelopments relative to Downtown East. But even since 2004, when it was already in full swing, there was ever since then it continued to grow and to develop. In this area in particular, we were serving it with the Routes 14 and Route 7. Compared to the population, some of them were woefully underserved.

Next slide. Proposed Elm/Kasota Circulator. This circulator is going to affect a fairly modest number of riders. The Elm/Kasota branch really served employments. There are some light industrial areas back here. We are not cutting those people off. They will continue to be served. What we are proposing is a stand alone circulator route that will do a better job of serving their needs. It can be more tailored to a more specific work times and they have. I think it is going to connect with the Green Line. Then it also allows more trips on the 3 to go to Como Avenue north to the U of M. That stretch of Como is in a very busy area.

Next slide. Route 3 Project Timeline. What is showing here is the project timeline. We started this not quite a year ago. We started the initial planning. The project team includes staff from Saint Paul, Minneapolis and Ramsey County and Hennepin County and others. We really walked through a lot of our stop recommendations, ADA stuff. A lot of stuff happened over the summer. We had the plan out there. We are actually confirming it with public engagement. Right now we are in quarter 1 of 2021. We are in the final week

of public engagement. We definitely heard from a lot of people already. There is a survey that is out there. I haven't seen the results yet. That will conclude in another week or so. Moving forth from that, we are going to take those survey results, update the plan. In quarter 3, in August, we will be implementing the changes. So I think there is one more slide.

Next slide. Route 3 Next Steps. Maybe I am repeating myself a little bit. Public input ends on March 12. At that point, I know there is going to be a lot of feedback. We have close to 700 survey responses already. Really a tremendous level of feedback. Update the plan based on that feedback. Really for me, some of the big next steps are going to be coordinating with the city and county. Implementing those changes. Getting those signs up or taking them down. Lots of big efforts that we will rely on. City staff in particular.

In early August, we will start doing rider outreach. When the changes are coming. Here is our schedule and our alignment. Then on August 21, would be the implementation day. That is August 21 of this year.

3. Legislative Update

Brooke Bordson, Senior Project Coordinator Intergovernmental Relations, spoke to the TAAC committee. Things change so quickly at the legislature. I didn't want to put down anything on a powerpoint because yesterday, everything would be different. I know a lot of you are familiar with the State Legislature. We are two months into the 2021 session now. So I will just back up and do a really high level overview of the goals of this session and what has to be accomplished. And then get into something more specific. More into issues on what the Council is working on.

In the 2021 election, all of the State Legislative seats were on the ballot. After the election the DFL maintained the majority of the House. The Republicans retained the majority of the Senate. We are one of the only states in the country that have a divided legislature. Apparently in Minnesota we like that. We keep doing that.

Specific to 2021, it is a very strange year as we all know. That is no different for the legislature. Legislative committees are using Zoom to hold their meetings. So nobody is at the State Capitol. No one is at the state office building or Senate building. Everything is happening remotely. When everything is a little bad like that, more people have to get more processed. But it is getting people more active because they don't have to travel to the capitol to testify.

2021 is a budget year. So both the Legislature and the Governor will have to pass bills and enact bills that establish the state budget for the 2022 and 2023 biennium. That is the primary focus of the session, that is the number one thing that has to get accomplished.

In terms of how that plays out, with deadlines. The first deadline is March 12. And that is for individual bills to pass all of the policy committees they need to pass. The second deadline is March 19. And that deadline is for those bills to pass through the committees and pass through the other bodies.

Then the third deadline is the big deadline. That is the real deadline that applies to the omnibus project bills that were established with the state budget. That one is April 9. So that is when everybody will have to maybe not agree but have to. The House and Senate will have to have their budget proposal put together by April 9.

Speaking of the budget. The February forecast, which is the budget forecast that the legislature and governor need to establish the state budget. When updated just last week. The February forecast showed for the upcoming biennial, a \$1.6 billion surplus. What is interesting about that is the previous November forecast projected a \$1.3 billion deficit.

So if you go from anticipating a \$1.3 billion deficit to projecting a \$1.6 billion surplus. It is a really wild swing. You can imagine a lot of the preparation and planning that the governor and legislature were doing flipped over on its head.

It is better to have a surplus than a deficit of course to work through. But it just sort of changed the landscape of what was ahead of the legislature in putting in a budget. The big change that we saw in that forecast is due to improve the US Economic Outlook. That was also due to some federal actions that have emerged since November that have not incorporated into that earlier projection.

Revenue forecasts. Actual revenue that is coming in was higher than projected. In state spending that was projected. They actually came in a little bit lower. So that is how we arrived at the surplus.

Specific to the Council and the transportation budget. The governor's budget proposal. When the governor put his budget together, he considered a one time transit dedicated federal relief received by the Council. Those federal funds that were received were going to be used to fill in the operating deficits that the Council was contending with. You might remember the last budget that was put together in November 2019. Separated out general funds appropriations for Metro Mobility, which is a great accomplishment. To have Metro Mobility have its own line item in the budget instead of being grouped together with rail service.

In 2019, the projected deficit for the next two years filled with one time funding. So if not for the federal funds that we received, we would have needed to go to the state legislature and asked them to fill that funding need for the next year. Whereas now with the federal aid we were able to cover those operating expenses. As well as some capitol maintenance deficits that we were faced with. The federal aid will also provide some funding for some transit security initiatives that we were proposing at the legislature. If we are authorized to do that, with the federal funds, we can implement that as well.

Another part of the governor's budget authorized the Council to issue regional transit capital bonds. You have probably heard about these if you go to the legislature and ask for authority to issue RTC bonds every two years and those bonds pay for fleet replacement and buses or other transit facilities. Also for Metro Mobility vehicles. Those are very important. So we can maintain our fleet and keep up with the replacement vehicles.

The policy initiative would allow the Council to establish an administrative citations program for various agencies. What this means is that the Council would be authorized to set up a program where non sworn personnel would be able to issue an administrative citation if they find that somebody does not have a paid fare. Currently, police officers can do this kind of work because fare evasion is a criminal offense. It is a misdemeanor. So because it is a misdemeanor, the citation has to be issued by a sworn police officer and it has to be adjudicated by the court. A prosecutor gets that citation, and prosecutes it through the court system.

What we found is that prosecutors do not see this as a great use of their time. It is not uncommon if it does go to a judge, that the judge may throw it out. A misdemeanor has up to a \$180.00 fine attached to it. that would go on a person's record. That doesn't seem quite proportionate to the underlying conduct of not paying a \$2.00 fare to ride transit.

The other benefit that we see in this proposal and having civilian personnel do this kind of work is it just puts more official Metro Transit police presence to be more eyes and ears to answer questions that people might have about navigating the transit system. We think it is beneficial in that respect as well.

Those are the major points I wanted to hit but I wanted to leave time for questions. I wanted to hear what is of interest to you. To make the best use of your time in getting information to what you are interested in. I am happy to answer any questions about what I have talked about or other things happening at the legislature.

Vice Chair Paulsen said as far as the non-sworn personnel, when would they be able to start that and if they will. Does that lessen the crime right now. Right now, it is a \$180.00 crime if it is fare evasion. Does that put the crime in a misdemeanor level 5 or is that a typical offense if they pay it, then it is not on their record? It is going to affect their right to a place to live. It would affect their ability to get a job. So does it take that crime and move it to a lesser element?

Bordson said your first question on when this would be implemented. What we are doing right now is asking the legislature for authority to establish this program. Right now we are not able to do that under current law. So if we get the authority granted to us by the legislature and signed by the governor, the next step would be for the Council to develop the program. And we would want a lot of public input into what that would look like. It is nothing that would go into effect the day after the bill was passed. It would take some time to build a program.

But to your second question about the criminal nature of the current system. That is a great point you raised about having this as a criminal offense creates a lot of secondary problems. In terms of having a criminal record. For not paying the fare and the consequences of not having a fine in those circumstances.

If we are given this authority, the citation we would issue would not be a criminal offense. It would be an administrative ticket. That would be handled internally by the Council. It wouldn't go through the court system. There would not be a court record given. The fine would be determined through this public process by the Council. I think it would be pretty safe to say that they would be nowhere near \$150.00. but that is something that we would have the ability to do a public process.

Rodgers said I heard a rumor at a meeting earlier today that the feds reduced funding to Metro Mobility. Is there anything you can share that you are aware of anything like that?

Bordson said I am not aware of that rumor. Metro Mobility is funded through the state with the general fund primarily. With the hole that was left by having one-time funding in the last budget, we are able to backfill that with the difference in the general fund. The governor's budget has a plan that will fully make sure that Metro Mobility is wholly funded.

Myhre said my question is because you were giving fines to people, when it comes to the last thing we talked about, has anybody ever been caught and had to pay a fine? they say that in the next couple of years we are going to have to wear a mask. I know people are wearing them on the bus a bit more but they are not always on the bus. Has anybody been fined for not wearing one? What does the governor say about this?

Bordson said I would have to check in with Metro Transit on an operations perspective about how they are enforcing that. We have had a mask requirement for coming up to a year now. In January, the federal Department of Transportation also required masks to be worn on transit. That kind of gave us an opportunity to refresh that message. But it is a federal requirement. I would have to check in with Metro Transit to see how that is being handled. I am not aware of a criminal penalty. I don't want to say anything in case I was wrong.

Myhre said I am going on what I hear on the bus when it advertises it. Sounds like you are going to get into trouble. I don't know if you are going to get a ticket or you don't ride the bus. I am just following what it says. I didn't know. I haven't heard of anybody getting caught. I just know that when they are on the bus, they are not always properly wearing their mask. At least they are getting on the bus with one.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I would like to give you a standing invitation to come back next month to talk about the legislative session.

Bordson said I would be happy to do that.

Streasick said I do have a couple of things I could clarify. If people would like me to do that right now, just in response to a couple of questions I can answer. To Ken's question. No. The feds haven't done anything to the Metro Mobility budget. They obviously don't contribute much of anything there. So they wouldn't have much impact. I think, if I were to speculate on where that rumor started. The recommendation did come out from the review panel that the governor put in place just to suggest that Metro Mobility funding be separated from. Brought our transit funding. But that was supported by the Council. Metro Mobility would still be funded in full. The only difference is that if we had an unanticipated bump in cost that they wouldn't have a negative impact on other transit funding. So that separation does not hurt Metro Mobility. But it does potentially help Metro Transit service. That is the only thing I can think of that people might have misinterpreted to start that rumor.

Then to Heidi's question about the mask mandate. I can speak to that too. Metro Mobility is subject to the same use of the federal order. That does not punish riders. That punishes transit organizations who transport people without masks. People don't get a fine or a ticket but transit agencies can be fined by the feds. What the obligation is if you have somebody who is refusing to wear a mask. Who doesn't have documentation modification in place, that you need to remove them at the next available opportunity from the bus. But then also in the case of fixed route. If people are inhabiting transit stations without masks, and an operator becomes aware of that, people need to be removed from transit stops and shelters for miss use unless they have a mask modification in place. So it shifts a formal responsibility to the MPO or the transit provider.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

Ken Rodgers spoke to the TAAC committee

2. Green Line

This item was not presented.

3. Gold Line

This item was not presented.

4. Rush Line

This item was not presented.

LEFT OFF AT 2:02:21

CHAIRS REPORT

PUBLIC COMMENT

MEMBER COMMENT

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:32 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary