

# Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



**Meeting Date:** Month April 06, 2022  
Virtual

**Time:** 12:30 PM

**Location:**

## Members Present:

- Chair, David Fenley, at-large
- Sam Jasmine, Precinct A
- Christopher Bates, Precinct B
- Patsy Murphy, Precinct C
- Ken Rodgers, Precinct D
- Jeffrey Dains, Precinct E
- Darrell Paulsen, Precinct F
- Kari Sheldon, Precinct G
- Rachel Garaghty, Precinct H

Trevor Turner, MCD

- Erik Henriksen, MCD
- Diane Graham-Raff, MAAA
- Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- Heidi Myhre, MCCD
- Claudia Fuglie, MCCD
- Richard Rowen, AARP MN

## Ex-Officio:

- Phillip Sterner, Council Member Liaison
  - Andy Streasick, Metro Mobility
  - Douglas Cook, Metro Transit Advocate
  - Guthrie Byard, ADA & Title IX Administrator
- = present, E = excused

Members Absent Trevor Turner

Members Excused Christopher Bates,  
Ken Rodgers, Rachel Garaghty,  
Patty Thorsen, Claudia Fuglie and  
Richard Rowan

Staff Present Leah Janz, Doug Cook, Jason Tintes, Bre Grand, Guthrie Byard, Christine Kuennen, Andy Streasick and Alison Coleman

## Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:35 p.m.

## Agenda Approved

It was moved by Henriksen, seconded by Jasmine to approve the agenda of the April 6, 2022 regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

## Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Jasmine, seconded by Dains to approve the minutes of the March 2, 2022, regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Streasick said for the Bylaws. Once anyone has been in attendance for any portion of the meeting, it counts as an attendance.

## Business & Information Items

### Metro Transit Integrating Accessibility Project

Bre Grand, Project Management Specialist

Leah Janz, Senior Graphic Designer

Bre Grand spoke to the TAAC committee. I am a Project Management Specialist at Metro Transit's Information Department. I use she/her pronouns and I have long brown hair and I am wearing a white sweater and glasses today. I will ask my colleague to introduce herself as well.

Leah Janz spoke to the TAAC committee. I use she/her pronouns. I am a Senior Graphic Designer. I am at Metro Transit within the Creative Services Division. I am wearing a pink shirt and I have brown hair. You can continue, Bre.

Janz said today we are planning to give an update on the Integrating Accessibility Project that our division undertook the previous year, which we worked with some of the members of this TAAC committee who worked with that. We want to provide an overall update on where things are at. And what has come out of that effort.

So we will start by giving a quick overview with the departments within our division. Some background and some overview about what the scope of the project was and then get into the different takeaways and recommendations that came out of the workgroup. As well as some next steps.

Next slide. It has been a year from when we last were at TAAC. We wanted to give a brief background of our division and our project as well as set the tone. So Marketing and Transit Information is a division within Metro Transit. It is separate from any work that Metro Mobility does. Our division supports Metro Transit Operations and Programs by working to attract new customers. Whether it is bus, train, carpool, vanpool or bike. And to retain and increase the satisfaction and riding frequency of existing customers through strategic marketing, powerful branding and effective customer information.

We are made up of four departments. One is Transit Information, and they operate the Call Center for trip planning assistance. They help produce the system maps. They maintain bus stop signs. Manage the electronic rider alerts among many other things. Commuter programs deals with the Guaranteed Ride Home Program. They do ride matching for carpools and vanpools. Bike locker rentals and also work with employer partnerships.

Market Development does media planning. They do marketing campaigns for fare programs, route marketing, sports partnerships and technology promotions. They also do awareness campaigns for Safety Operator recruitment, transit improvement projects. They also have event and community partnerships, do marketing research.

And then the other department is Creative Services. That is the design side. They do writing and editing copy for projects. Designing projects such as advertisements, post cards, pocket schedules, maps, emails, signage. We also do photography and videography. We manage our social media accounts and the design, test and development website and assets and other screen-based media.

Next slide. This project began with an internal work group in our division focused on equity and inclusion back in September 2020. After collecting ideas that would help our division more to really integrate equity into our work. This group presented six project recommendations in December of 2020 to the Marketing Director. So this project, Integrating Accessibility was one of those six projects.

Next slide. This project identified the need to ensure the work of our division. It serves customers who have physical, sensory, and cognitive disabilities. Our scope is limited to our division's work. So all the things that I just outlined within Metro Transit and not Metro Mobility. We wanted to identify the gaps and determine best practices and opportunities.

The benefits of doing this project would ultimately be the customers who receive the information they need in a manner they can understand. Our goal for this project in the Marketing and Transit Information Division has clear and actionable accessibility goals and can track progress toward meeting them.



Next slide. We formed a working group with three TAAC members. Claudia, Trevor and Heidi were our three members. We greatly appreciate their time and feedback in this project. We held a series of sessions with them in 2021 to review our division's tools and services. That gave us time to discuss and explore those gaps and what opportunities we had to explore. Now Bre is going to go over those recommendations that we uncovered.

Grand said next slide. Out of those sessions came some great feedback and a number of themes in particular, came to light. Mostly specifically related to communications and tactics related to the division as well as accessibility of information that our division provides on vehicles and at stops. So some of the general take aways related to our communication methods and tactics and included the idea that some marketing messages have not been targeted to customers with disabilities such as information for half priced fares that we had last year.

The representation of the disability community and marketing materials is significantly lacking. And transit tools are not intuitive for all abilities and are not well known as an option to help people with their trips.

Next slide. Regarding some take aways that came out of discussion about accessibility of information that our division provides on vehicles and at stops. One of the things that was noted is that customers often rely on the audio announcements when they are at a platform or on a bus. In particular on a bus to know to exit and there is concern that these are not always consistent, and we could use some enhancements to ensure some consistency.

Accessibility at stops is also critical for customers with disabilities. Many encounter situations where the accessibility can be improved. But customers do not have a way to easily report these issues. There is a need for better reporting and tracking. Additionally, we discussed that navigating to alternate stops when an unexpected closure occurs is very challenging. Information provided for that can also be inconsistent.

Next slide. From these take aways, our work group discussed some proposed recommendations for making improvements. So as far as making improvements to communications, methods and tactics for our division, one of the items was the desire to create a communication guidelines/template for marketing and communication plan. So that the more consistent may reflect information that is important for customers with accessibility challenges, etc.

We also want to partner with community organizations that serve customers with disabilities. Recruit individuals to be in Riders Club. Which is a group that was formed that allows customers to provide more feedback on various new initiatives that our division and Metro Transit is undertaking. We want to ensure that there is good representation for customers' disabilities as part of that group.

We also want to create trainings, tutorials and videos for individuals and organizations on how to use the transit tools we offer. To make sure that that information is clear and there is a simpler way of explaining how to use different tools and understanding of what those tools can do. Then we also want to create a dark mode or high contrast mode for the website and mobile app.

Next slide. There are also several recommendations that came out of the working group's related to the accessibility of the information that our division provides on vehicles and at stops. Those included exploring how to improve our transit information accessibility by ensuring consistency with those audio announcements. Enhancing on-vehicle audio announcements to include next stop. Not just the current stop. Seeking out how to provide a visual confirmation of the location while riding on a vehicle.

Surveying the inconsistencies with how our information is displayed at shelters and at stops. And ensuring that some of those inconsistencies are rectified. Incorporating guidelines for better directions and wayfinding an accessibility at alternate stops when there are unexpected closures or detours.

We also discussed considering ways to allow for better or easier reporting and tracking when there are issues at stops so that customers have clear and easy ways to report those issues and that they are tracked more consistently so that they can be resolved.



Next slide. Leah is going to cover some of the next steps.

Janz said after we collected all of that feedback, and the riders' recommendations. The group met and we went over some priorities and then delivered these prioritized recommendations to the Director of Marketing and Transit Information in February. We recently discussed them with him and the other managers in the division. We will be currently discussing timelines and resources as they all support these recommendations.

We realize that some of these will not happen until next year. But some initial work may begin this year and some projects that are slated for this year will fit into some of these recommendations already.

Next slide. If there are any questions or feedback, we are open to hearing them.

Chair Fenley said that was a good synopsis of what you all have been working with us on the past almost a year and a half now. Does anybody have any questions or comments?

Myhre said are we going to be working on signage and how we place them in different places? We have all different heights for them, and we talked about this just to make sure. All different heights for reading the time and when the bus comes. We talked about this just to make sure. All different heights for reading the times or when the bus comes. And also where they put them, becoming very inappropriate for certain bus stops. If we are going to put them in shelters, you should put them on the side walls and not in the back of the wall where wheelchairs will be leaning against it or a bench will be there. So I am hoping that Marketing, when they come up with new advertising or new signs or new ideas, how to do it so when our buses are coming they put them in the appropriate locations. That everybody can be a part of the experience of taking the bus or the train. You have all these different types of shelters and different ideas, and you need a spot where everybody gets a place that is safe and not dangerous. There is a trend where it is not safe. Too high or too low and not right. So that is something to think about.

Grand said one of the recommendations was to better audit and survey what inconsistencies exist. And how our signages are displayed. So we definitely want to take a look at that so we can reduce the consistencies and make sure that it is accessible for everyone.

Myhre said and also with the advertising. Sometimes you put the advertising where the bus schedules should be because it seems more appropriate. So just keep that in mind.

Chair Fenley said keep us posted. Let us know if you want to come back to report on updates.

Chair Fenley said I am sure that many of you have seen that Robert Street is reopening in about two weeks. The Metropolitan Council members are required to meet in person. So Robert Street will be opening at the end of the month. Andy is here to talk to us about that and what the options are for in person or the potential for conducting hybrid meetings. I will turn it over to Andy and then we can have a discussion about it.

Myhre said if there is any rain or snow, can we still use this as a backup?

Chair Fenley said that is exactly what we are here to discuss.

### **Robert Street Opening**

Andy Streasick, Manager, Customer Service, Metro Mobility

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. As Chair Fenley pointed out, Robert Street and other Council facilities are opening on the 18<sup>th</sup> for workers who have been working remotely and are reopening to the public on April 25. On the 25<sup>th</sup> and thereafter, all Council meetings are back subject to a public meeting law, which means that all participants, who are not members of the public, are required to attend in person or have their whereabouts if they are attending remotely posted in advance and have those whereabouts open to the public,

We did have Legal check to see whether or not it is still the case that TAAC is subject to the public meeting law. And it is.

So, typically in a non-modified environment, what that means is that starting on the next meeting.



TAAC meetings will be held in person at Robert Street. And will be that way going forward until further notice. Now, that said, obviously, all laws are subject to the ADA and a reasonable modification.

So what I wanted to talk about today, since I know a lot of people have feelings about coming back into an in person setting right now, is that if anyone feels like it is a reasonable modification for them to continue the TAAC via telepresence, please request that reasonable modification to me and I will take that and move forward from there. One of the things that the Council has reported is that they appreciated the increased public attendance that some of our advisory committees have seen with the virtual meeting option. So the virtual meeting option will remain in place for the public. And therefore, should not be any kind of undue hardship to keep that in place for members of committees should they need a reasonable modification to continue to attend remotely.

So with that, I would say that you can shoot me an email. It doesn't have to be anything formal. But if you, for any reason, need a reasonable modification, let me know and we can work with that. I do want to say, before I yield to questions, don't think about this just in terms of a disability that might impact you. Being a respiratory system. If you are blind and are therefore have a hard time maintaining physical distancing some of the time. If someone encroaches on the physical space. Maybe that is grounds for a reasonable modification. If you are not able to independently put on or remove a mask. Maybe that is grounds for a reasonable modification.

With that, I will go ahead if there are any questions you might have.

Henricksen said with the public attending virtually. Will we be monitoring that for questions during the public comment period? Or will the public have to be in attendance to enter into public comment?

Streasick said no, we will still be the same technology we have in place. So if we see questions come up in a chat, that is certainly something we should be able to address going forward.

Myhre said are we separating? Because in some places are when you go to meetings, they are not sitting close to each other anymore. We are still in the same room. Doing what we need to do.

Streasick said the Council is not enforcing any distancing requirements or mask requirements. After the 25<sup>th</sup> when the building is open to the public. Or after the 18<sup>th</sup> when it is open to staff. So if that weighs on your decision whether or not to request a modification, know there is no requirement for masks. Obviously, you have the right to wear them. And there is no requirement of physical distancing. But people can try to maintain that as much as they can.

Myhre said we can wear our masks at the meeting if we want to?

Streasick said absolutely.

Dains said just to follow up on what Heidi said about masks. Are they recommending people wear masks? Or is that just not a part of overall recommendations in terms of what the Met Council is doing? I am on a couple of other boards where they are recommending people wear masks. But it is optional.

Streasick said the Council has not taken a formal stance to recommend ongoing mask usage.

Jasmine said so if we want to request accommodations then that means, I think I heard that the TAAC must know the location of where we are attending the meeting. Does this mean that the public has to know too? And if so, where do you post that?

Streasick said what I would say the reasonable modification is here for folks with disabilities is that your disability makes it an unreasonable expectation for you to attend a meeting publicly at this time and it is also unreasonable for you to post that public setting and make it available to the public. Anybody right now can attend remotely if they post it ahead of time and make it open to the public. But if you are staying home, because you are still concerned about the pandemic, or you have folks in your home or you, yourself, who are not able to get vaccinated, or are otherwise at risk, it doesn't make a lot of sense for you to be making your home open to the public under the terms of Open Meeting Law. So I think the reasonable modification here would be to allow for



ongoing remote attendance without the requirement that your physical location be posted or open to the public.

Jasmine said so who approves that?

Streasick said I can approve that.

Sheldon said first I want to reiterate a thank you to Andy for the information about the bus stops closing. I was also concerned about the masking. Because drivers are required to have people wear masks. I, myself have seen people take masks but they don't even put them on. So is it the 18<sup>th</sup> referring to the bus stops and not the mask mandate for Metro Transit? Am I correct, Andy?

Streasick said there are two different things we are talking about. We are talking about the opening of Robert Street and other Council facilities on the 18<sup>th</sup>. And it being open to the public for in person meetings starting on the 25<sup>th</sup>. Also, on the 18<sup>th</sup> the current executive order requiring that masks be worn on public transit is also set to end. So if that were not to be extended, then the mask requirement would also end on the 18<sup>th</sup>.

Dains said on the Open Meeting Law. In terms of an ongoing situation, the ADA or disability. I know that under the Open Meeting Law, if you have a medical condition. Say you have cancer. You have to get a doctor's approval. Is there a specified period of time that you can attend the meeting via Zoom or some other mechanism? The ongoing thing. Is that going to change in the law? I am just trying to understand that. That is different than what I have heard about the Open Meeting Law.

Streasick said an ADA reasonable modification is just different from the sort of normal terms outlined in the law. So this is not going to change, although I should add that there are bills that have been offered to the House and Senate to tweak the Open Meeting Law, which may or may not have impact on whether or not the TAAC falls under it. To look at providing some more leeway just into the letter of the law. But no, the letter of the law does have specific timelines in place. A reasonable modification is something above and beyond those.

Myhre said who decides all of this? Because you can start a war with this. At the same time. To clarify for safety reasons. Using video or using a mask. I still wear a mask for safety reasons. So who decides besides you about what you are talking about is O.K. to do? Without starting a problem. The last person was talking about laws and the rules and regulations. How do they approve that or who gets the accommodations and who doesn't and how does that fall under without causing a war? How are we handling this?

Chair Fenley said so masking is your personal preference? I will make sure that in the meeting. if some people are wearing masks and some people aren't. That there is no conflict in that. I think that masking is a personal preference and is totally acceptable. As it pertains to Open Meeting Law, which was written well before any pandemic or Covid related issues came up. Now that it has come up, there is a good thing we have the federal civil rights legislation, that is the Americans with Disabilities Act that does allow folks who have a disability to request either reasonable accommodation or a reasonable modification. In this case, we are going with the reasonable modification of the law or policy. So therefore, you can, as an individual with a disability request a modification of the Open Meeting Law. So that you can attend the meetings remotely and not have to abide by what I would consider antiquated now that we have had a pandemic. The sort of outdated Open Meeting Law that would require that if an individual remotely attends a meeting and they are a member of TAAC. Their location has to be posted and that location has to be open to the public, which puts people in danger in this world. So I think that it's a pretty cut and dried case for individuals with disabilities to be able to request a modification to the Open Meeting Law so they can attend TAAC meetings remotely and still feel 100 percent safe.

Myhre said my question was, is that, if we get a new person that comes in and decides that that is not an accommodation. I don't know how it is going to be carried out in the future. So that it would be done correctly so that it is fair for everyone.

Streasick said so in talking to occupational health and legal staff at the Council. I can go ahead and approve a reasonable modification. However, if I, or whoever was making that initial



determination were to not, or deem it inappropriate, it does not end there. It needs to go to review by Occupational Health or possibly OEO under guidance from Legal. While there is leeway to approve here, at the staff level for committees. If somebody were to decide because they were a new member, that something was not a reasonable modification around that, it does need to go through a formal process. Including Occupational Health and potentially as well as Legal and OEO departments.

Graham-Raff said it sounds to me like we have at least some members of TAAC that have concerns about sitting next to people who don't have masks on. And I wonder if we have any way that we can, as a friendly agreement, agree that for the time being that folks will wear masks if they are able and that if people feel uncomfortable sitting next to someone with a mask that we will all understand that if they say: "Would you please move away from me?"

And then if we could just as a committee commit to being as Heidi said people who get along and just be there for each other and continue to take care of each other. That might be just a useful thing for us to do. Because we can't require it. As an agreement among us.

Chair Fenley said I would say that we are a pretty cordial group amongst ourselves. I wouldn't be mandating our own committee to wear masks. I don't know if that is possible. I would try to veer away from that. I think that with a reasonable modification in place, and also the ability to wear masks and just being respectful of folks. I am not going to tolerate any disrespect. Whether it is from social distancing or from the desire to or not to wear a mask. But yes, Diane, thank you for bringing that up.

Myhre said so are you saying that we can or cannot wear masks?

Chair Fenley said you can do whatever you want. You can wear a mask and I will fully support everybody's decision to wear a mask.

Graham-Raff said we generally all get along. If anybody has an issue where they don't feel comfortable sitting next to someone that is unmasked, then hopefully they would feel comfortable saying: "Can you sit further away from me or can you put on a mask?" I will bring and wear a mask because it sounds like there are people who are still concerned, and I do wear them sporadically. It depends. I gauge the room whenever I walk in. So I am one of those who carry it in my back pocket. If I don't feel comfortable, I stick it on. I hear where you are at, Heidi.

Myhre said that is what I was getting at because you never know when you have to. And even in stores, I wear them just to be on the safe side.

Dains said so you will be present as well as people who don't have accommodations. Then the public can come in? Or can the public come in on Zoom? I am just trying to understand the layout of what this is going to look like because I know that other groups I work with are struggling with the same issues.

Streasick said the public can come in in person. I will be attending in person. Others who do not have Reasonable Modification Requests will be there in person. In addition to the public attending in person. It sounds like there will be an ongoing option to attend via Webex.

Chair Fenley said to answer one small part of your question, yes, I will be attending in person as well.

Myhre said is this going to be out in the public? So they know in newsletters and emails. Because this is a lot to take in. If you want to make a complaint or you want to go in front of us and say something.

Streasick said folks are being notified that meetings are going to be public after the 25<sup>th</sup>. And that Council buildings are going to be open again.

Myhre said I am talking about if they have to use video. You said there are different ways you can do it. Do they know all those options or how do they know how to do that? That is what I was getting at.

Streasick said we have advertised up to this point online that folks can attend Council meetings



and advisory committee meetings remotely. Those instructions and notifications I am assuming will remain on the Council's public facing websites.

Chair Fenley said to clarify a little more. Open Meeting Law applies differently to the public than it does to the members of the committee. They wouldn't have to have a reasonable modification. We are just giving them another way to attend the meeting. whereas members would have to submit a reasonable modification in order to attend remotely.

Vice Chair Paulsen said if someone has a reasonable accommodation or an ADA accommodation, will they be given full privileges to vote and participate in committee functions and duties of the TAAC?

Streasick said yes.

Chair Fenley said there might be some technology issues that need to be worked out but what is nice about the room is that each person has a mike. And I think there is a camera in the room if memory serves me correctly. But I don't know, Andy, if you can speak to technology or if that is happening later. Because I have been aware that hybrid meetings are unique, in terms of accessibility. Has unique accessibility concerns as it pertains to people being able to participate the same way they do either when it is fully online or fully in person. If you don't know the answer, Andy, that is fine. I am sure that the Met Council is installing new technology because of this.

Streasick said yes, we have full mikes. We do have cameras. I think that every Council meeting room that is currently equipped with video conferencing equipment will be able to use Webex and Teams. The Council Chambers, obviously being the nerve center, has some additional bells and whistles that might prove useful from an accommodation's standpoint, including what you raised that each individual that is seated at the table has a mike.

Chair Fenley said I will go out of my way to make sure that folks who are calling in or videoing in can participate as seamlessly and equally as possible. As if they were in the room or as if they were all online. But especially for the first couple of meetings, there might be a learning curve.

So Darrell has a second part of his question. He wants to know if TAAC members do not have a reasonable accommodation request, will they be required to call in and get an excused absence? Or can we maybe say they forgot to request the ADA accommodation?

Chair Fenley said I would say, please, if you are not able to attend, let us know so we can have an excused absence. If you do need to attend remotely, please submit that ADA reasonable accommodation request. I don't think it is a meeting-by-meeting basis. I think that once you have it in, you are good.

I just got a thumbs up from Andy.

So to members who are submitting reasonable accommodation requests, I would say do that. So we don't run into excused absences or potential legal issues.

Streasick said I do want to point out here too that it is not an all or nothing thing here. There are all sorts of ways that a person's disability might fluctuate, or their functional abilities might fluctuate based on access to a variety of assistive elements. I know folks that are awfully independent and are a lot quicker than me in getting around, who are totally blind and use a service animal. They might be able to maintain physical distancing with that service animal. But if that service animal has a vet appointment, that happens to overlap with the TAAC, it doesn't make sense for them to be coming in that day.

If somebody does have a respiratory condition. That doesn't mean that they got it all day, every day. But if there are days that they are feeling particularly vulnerable, or have a difficulty with moving, then it would be appropriate to stay home because of their disability. So, it is not an all or nothing thing. You have to decide if you ever want to come back in person again. Just let me know if you want to attend remotely, and still participate as a full member.

Chair Fenley said that is what is nice about the ADA. It is highly individualized. It does give room for differences. Again, in an individual from day to day. But also, between individuals that may





have the same disability. One may submit a Reasonable Modification Request and that doesn't mean that somebody else will or won't. It is highly individualized and can change as time goes on.

Myhre said what about, this is a great example. The weather has been like a yoyo lately. Most of us take Metro Mobility or the city bus. So, what do we do on bad weather days? Can we still use the video? Because maybe we really can have a meeting. it is just that we all can't get there.

Streasick said the meetings are public, as the general rule. So if you think the weather is going to impact your ability to attend, you would need to put forth a Reasonable Modification Request. We would never again have. Unless there is another State of Emergency declared, we would never again have a meeting that is exclusively virtual. But if individual participants wanted to stay home. We would not go back just because of a normal Minnesota winter to having a meeting that took place exclusively remotely. However, it is hard to claim undue hardship for a Reasonable Modification Request when we have the technology in place and have been doing remote meetings successfully. So, if you feel like you, personally, would need to attend from home, you can put in that modification request. But it would not be like the meeting would be like it is now, where everybody is attending from home.

Chair Fenley said so I would say, not thinking about the weather. But maybe get your Reasonable Modification Request in. So then you can determine on a meeting by meeting basis.

### 3. Metro Mobility Service Adjustments

Andy Streasick, Manager, Customer Service, Metro Mobility

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. I am going to skim through these first for slides. These are largely for people who are not real familiar with Metro Mobility. Or why it works like it does. I know that we have gotten probably more than one new member since the last time I really did an in-depth Metro Mobility 101. So if it is something people are interested in, please let me know. I am going to assume that the vast majority. If not all of you, know most of what is contained here in the first few slides.

Metro Mobility has two different service areas. We have the federally mandated ADA service area. Then we have the non-ADA service area, which is state mandated. The federally mandated area is defined as just a ¾ mile corridor along where the city bus local service is running. When the local city bus service is running there.

The non-ADA service area is defined by the Transit Taxing District as it existed in 2006. Plus, Lakeville. The primary difference right now between the two different service areas is the ADA rides don't ever get put on standby. And the non-ADA rides almost always get put on standby. It is also occasionally the case if we are experiencing atypical capacity constraints that some non-ADA rides might get denied occasionally. But obviously we work to try to avoid that whenever possible. And also work to try to make sure that no particular riders get disproportionately impacted by repeated denials whenever possible.

Next slide. This just goes on to explain a little bit more about the fact that paratransit is a complement to the fixed routes service. It talks again about the service area and that we must match the hours and days of service that local fixed route is running.

Next slide. This just shows a map of our current service area. That includes both the ADA and the non-ADA service area. The blue splotches are the ADA service area. where the entirety of the black outline includes our non-ADA service area. You will note oddly that there is a bump out there in the northern portion of Anoka proper and Ramsey where the ADA service area actually goes out a little bit further than our non-ADA service area. That is simply because of the ¾ mile rule. It just so happens there is a local fixed route that bumps right up against the border of the Transit Taxing District. So then it triggers service within a ¾ mile corridor of that route.

Next slide. Metro Mobility is looking at calibrating to fixed route. Meaning that in response to some cuts of regular local fixed route. Some of what is now ADA service is being proposed to go to non-ADA service. There are a few different things that our staff looked at. One of course was no deductions. Keep everything in place as it currently exists. Two was to adopt all current cuts but



grandfathering in standing orders. So if you have a standing order going into a non-ADA area, you would continue to keep that. Three was adopted the current fixed route service but recognize only the switch from ADA to non-ADA. So don't touch any time related stuff. Then four, was adopted a 2019 era cuts and grandfather in standing orders in existing ADA area. That is what we ended up supporting. We recognize that from an ADA perspective, it just is a requirement for a resource allocation standpoint that our ADA service area mirror what the fixed route is doing. That is what the ADA service area is. It is important that we keep up with that.

However, it is not important that we go chasing our tails with this unprecedented time where we know that Metro Transit has done a lot of cuts related to Covid. And the shifts in demand that were the result of Covid.

So we don't think it makes sense to be altering our service negatively as a result of Covid related changes. Which makes us think we should really just look at 2009 era cuts. We, again would look at grandfathering in all standing orders. So that if someone had a standing order in a service area that was in the ADA service area at the time. So their standing order was approved. But now it is the non-ADA service area. Any standing orders that would not have been granted based on service area adjustments would be grandfathering in.

Next slide. This map shows our service area again but breaks it down a little bit differently. The entire black line indicates our service area as it existed last year. In February we went live with a variety of expansions, which are those blue dots. And then these red spots are spots that under the proposed 2019 analysis, would go from ADA service to non-ADA service during weekdays.

Next slide. So the first thing I need to point out here. This is a slide that illustrates potential impact. We are still working on refining all of this data. I will tell you explicitly, weekday demand. That first line. The numbers are still a little too high. With regard to percentages impacted. The data that I am getting from that. I was working on refining this right up until the meeting. You have a variety of inflated statistics here that I am about to correct verbally. But that top line for weekday demand, I do not yet have improved, refined data. So I am going to walk through what each of these says. Again, this is a thumbnail sketch. It was off-based based on some errors when we pulled data in the first place.

So weekday demand I can't speak to but I can tell you that based on the demand ridership that I was able to refine further for Saturday and Sunday. It will drop a bit in terms of percentage impacted in all likelihood. Then there will be an additional refining that goes on to drop it further in all likelihood when we look at it on a trip-by-trip basis. But basically, what this tells us is we date demand ridership. If we were to go forward with instituting the 2019 service adjustments, it would impact somewhere south of 4.3 percent of trips. That is somewhere south of 4 percent of riders.

Weekday standing orders. When I look at it now, what is there for the total number of clients, that remains the same in my analysis? But the origin/destination no longer in the ADA, that is a miscalculation. It included rides that were never in the ADA to begin with. When I look at actual changes, that number drops from 971 to 124. For a new percentage of about 4.5 percent impacted. And when you look over at the origin/destination, no longer in the ADA, again, the percent impacted falls similarly because we stopped including standing orders in our analysis that were never ADA to begin with. That percentage impacted falls to about 3.7. Again, I need to call out explicitly for all the standing order analysis, we are recommending grandfathering it. So even though we say yes, 3.7 percent of all the standing order trips that are impacted that much or 4.5 percent of the riders impacted not that much. We are proposing grandfathering in all those folks so they can keep their standing orders. Based on service area adjustments.

Saturday demand. Similar to what is there, I think. What to expect with regard to demand. Percent impacted with regard to total trips falls to about 5.8 with a little bit of refined analysis. Sunday demand. Each standing order similarly falls we are looking at instead of that. If I jump back to Saturday because the standing order percentages are the biggest. If I look at Saturday's standing orders. We are looking at probably roughly 8 percent of the



customers with Saturday's standing orders impacted. Not 47 percent. And we are looking at, for Saturday's standing orders, somewhere around 9 percent, not 46 percent being impacted.

Similarly, when we look at Sunday, we see a change that is pretty large on the standing orders side of things. Percent impacted of trips with regards to standing orders for Sundays looking at about 4.1 percent, not 44 percent. And percent of customers impacted drops from 46 percent down to 5.4 percent.

Next slide. We have talked now about service area adjustments. Shifting from ADA to non-ADA. Obviously, the other part we have to look at when adjusting when the local fixed route is running, is hours we serve. So this is a slide that kind of gives a rough estimate of what we can do right now to what precisely those cut times would look like in which communities. So if a community is not listed here, we don't think it is going to be impacted at all. And the communities that are listed here show which days of the week there might be a service hour cut. And which days of the week there wouldn't be. So for example, if you take Apple Valley. Our initial analysis would indicate that there would be no Apple Valley weekday cut or Sunday cut if we adopted the Metro Transit service adjustments that were implemented in 2019. But there would be a cut in Saturday hours. The hours that would be cut are from 3:45 a.m. to 6:30 a.m. And from 8:45 p.m., to 12:30 a.m. after midnight.

Next slide. This gives a similar analysis of percent's impacted based on hours cut. You could see that those, since we are really talking about late night hours, are drastically smaller percentages. I think every category south of one percent. It is important that I should call out here that while we can grandparent in service and standing orders for service area adjustments. Our hours of service themselves. Obviously, I need to reflect when the fixed route is running. If it is just a question of whether Metro Mobility is even running or not in a given community based on when the fixed route is running. We could not grandfather in the standing order or any service that is outside of our hours of operation. We can offer somebody an adjusted standing order with times adjusted to meet our newer hours of operation. But we can't grandparent something based on times.

Next slide. This is all subject to significant change. But we do want to give an absolute minimum of six months' notice to inform impacted customers of any change. I don't think that necessarily May 2-6 is going to get hit. Which might push this back. We are planning on doing a newsletter story in the September newsletter and will do a website alert. Gov-deliveries, targeted letters to every customer, who, based on 2019 ridership would have been impacted. Then if everything were to go according to the proposed plan, we would be looking at implementation of changes sometime in the week of November 14<sup>th</sup>.

To Ken's point at the last meeting, we really wanted to get this before you guys before it went to Transportation. I would be happy to take any questions.

Chair Fenley said I think it was about two slides back. The slide with the percentages that had them impacted that were all less than one percent. Is it fair to say that those numbers are equivalent to the red in the last map that was displayed? About the service areas that are going to be turned from ADA to non-ADA?

Streasick said no, those numbers are about time adjustments. So you make two different adjustments when you match fixed route service. You are obviously adjusting the service area that they cover. But then also you are adjusting for the times that those buses are running. So this has nothing to do with any areas of the map. This is just about who would be impacted by imposing the new time adjustments. It would be reality if we went based off Metro Transit as it existed in December of 2019.



This presentation with questions will be placed on pause so that the next presentation, Legislative Update can be presented.

## Legislative Update

Brooke Bordson, Government Affairs Liaison

Brooke Bordson spoke to the TAAC committee. The Transportation Bill is up right now in the House Transportation Committee and in the Senate. The Senate Transportation Bill is in Senate Finance right now. So we are trying to cover a lot of bases this afternoon.

I just wanted to provide a brief update on what is in those transportation bills. This is the week that these big omnibus bills are moving. So this is hot off the press. It could be changing as we speak. Or in the next few days as the bills are marked up and moved to the House and Senate floor. I will just hit the bullet points for each bill, starting with the Senate.

The Senate Transportation Bill is Senate File 1154. There are a number of provisions in that bill that are related to transit planning and operations. I will hit the major points. There is a reduction of the general fund appropriations to the Council for Transit System Operations in fiscal year 23 for \$10 million. The bill later appropriated \$10 million in fiscal year 2022 and 2023 to the Council through MnDOT to provide a match for federal infrastructure matching funds. So that is money that has moved around for different purposes. We did express a concern that reducing our general fund appropriations would set a new base moving forward into the next biennium and a \$10 million reduction would be obviously a big concern there. So we noted that for the committee.

The bill requires that matching infrastructure funds for the IJJA. That is the Federal Infrastructure Bill. For electric vehicles must come from non-state sources. Electric buses are one of the program areas that we would be applying for. So we want to make sure that we are able to do that and use any available funds we could get from the State for those programs.

The bill requires the Council to report and post on our website, information on ridership and crime data. This is information we have, and we can and do provide. We would just need to clarify if there was a different way that the legislature wanted us to do that. So that is something that we will be looking at moving forward as well.

The bill requires a pretty stringent municipal consent process for guideways. Currently that is required for light rail projects. I am sure many people are familiar with that process. That would require similar process for guideways. It would also allow revocation of municipal consent. That had been approved. That would be problematic for us in submitting federal applications knowing that the approval that we have could be revoked at some point during the process would be problematic for us in going after those federal funds. We noted that for the committee.

The Senate bill also requires a Cost Benefit Analysis for guideway projects that requires a number of specific elements. We believe many of these elements are already included in the design process and the Municipal Consent process and the Locally Preferred Alternatives process. Though we are open to working through those and where there are redundancies working to make sure that we have a clear process there.

The bill would also make host counties responsible for guideway funding. Including construction operations and capital maintenance. And state funding would be prohibited for those purposes. And the Gold Line is exempted from this provision of the bill. The bill also requires the Council and MnDOT to request approval from the FTA to discontinue Northstar operations. Something that there are currently two studies going on at Metro Transit that are examining commuter and public transit use post pandemic. So our position is that we should see what those studies have to say before we make any permanent decisions that would impact those services that are being studied.

The Senate bill also requires a suspension of all guideway activities until the Green Line Extension is in revenue operations. That would be a problematic provision for us as we are working future guideways and a delay in planning. And any delay in any part of the process tends to add to the cost of those processes. And that would put a lot of work on hold that is happening right now.



I am going to forward to the House bill. I know that this is a lot. We are sort of reviewing these now, ourselves, internally, to go through these bills that were just released this week. In the case of the House Transportation Bill that was released on Monday. That is what they are reviewing right now in Committee. The House Transportation Bill would provide \$20 million to the Council for matching funds for Federal IIJA. That is the Federal Infrastructure Bill. It would provide matching funds for that and for transit systems to fill. It sets aside \$5 million for zero emission bus procurements and related infrastructure. And \$5 million would continue to be appropriated in fiscal years 2024 and 2025 for that low emission bus plan.

The House bill provides \$500,000 for arterial bus rapid transit planning. That would look forward to the J, K, and L Lines. So that would let us take on. Sort of build our bandwidth for Bus Rapid Transit planning. The bill appropriates \$2 million for transit shelter improvements. It appropriates \$1.3 million to replacement service providers. You might also hear those referred to as the Opt Out Providers or Suburban Transit Providers. That would be for a micro transit service. That they have been working on implementing.

The bill would set a uniform fare schedule requirement for bus and light rail service. From July 1<sup>st</sup> to August 31<sup>st</sup> this summer, where we would have one-dollar fares for regular route bus and BRT and light rail. The bill would appropriate \$2.3 million to backfill foregone revenue from those lower fare amounts.

On the policy side. The House bill requires the Council to establish a signal priority system planning workgroup. That would gather Metro Transit, some city officials, county officials and MnDOT to discuss transit signal priority systems to get transit vehicles moving more quickly through stop lights, essentially. And the group would have to report back to the Legislature in December with their findings on that.

This is something that there is current dialogue happening. Our only flag on that provision would be that we don't want anything that would duplicate work that has been done or is being done on that front that might slow down or change that process.

The final thing I will note. Included in the House bill and added to the Senate bill is the provision that would have Metro Transit consults with your committee, with the TAAC, on the training that our bus drivers get to assist passengers getting on and off of the bus. In circumstances where there is snow and ice that makes some difficulty in doing that for passengers that might need assistance.

So that was a lot of information that I just threw out there rather quickly. But that gives you a high-level overview of the House and Senate transportation proposals. You may have noticed that they are quite different. They are the work of the next essentially month and a half will be trying to come to an agreement where there an agreement can be found on a transportation bill. I am happy to try to answer questions. I can't speak for the House and Senate with what their intentions are. As I mentioned, the committees are still hearing these bills. So, this is all subject to change. But I am happy to try to answer questions that the committee might have today.

Chair Fenley said given that the House and Senate are so far apart, and there is a lot of negotiation to be happening, I have a lot of questions that I want to ask. But I am not going to. Given this will all be resolved in the coming weeks as they work these differences out in conference committee. I am pretty sure that most TAAC members feel the same about reducing funding and making it harder for new projects to start up. And also, on the other side of that, I am sure that most folks here would be in support of some of the money that is going into transit through the House File. But, to avoid a wonky policy discussion, I am going to request that members don't get into what could be or what might be or where do you think people are going to go on this particular issue or topic in conference committee. Especially given that we want to get you back to these committees. So you can participate and hear everything you need to hear. So, with that request, I will start with Heidi.

Myhre said last night on the news, they said the Northstar is going to be cut in funding or it is not going to the baseball games anymore. How is that going to affect people? Has the community come to the Legislature and said anything? They did talk to a person who as autism. And the

mother said that the train was the best thing for the kid to get out in the community. So, it is something to think about. People with disabilities that rely on different kinds of transportation. You are not getting a lot of people using it and now they can't go to a baseball game. Or go to a concert. Or go to an activity. So I don't know how that is going to hurt our economy or our people. I don't know if the legislators are getting bombarded with people saying they don't appreciate it.

Bordson said the points that we have made is that we know, especially during the pandemic, that ridership has changed. Travel patterns have changed. Their commutes have changed. We want to study that and get some good information about that before we make permanent decisions. Because things might change back. They might be different. But we don't want to make permanent decisions right now knowing that we are going to have some better information coming through these studies.

Chair Fenley said it is not set in stone, yet. They still have to reach an agreement. But they are not very close. Folks, if you have concerns about where these bills are at, or if you know folks who do, then talk to your legislator. Talk to your Senator. Talk to your Representative. Let them know how this will benefit or hurt you.

Dains said on the bill. My phone cut out, Brooke. You said \$10 million was being cut for Metro Transit?

Bordson said Jeff, that was a \$10 million reduction to our general fund appropriation for what is called in the bill is transit system operations. So that is really just our core function of. I believe light rail operations are primarily funded through that state appropriations. So we have expressed concern that that would be reduced and reappropriated for another purpose. But because the bill reduces our general fund appropriation in the second year of the biennium, the way that the state finances work is that that last amount carries forward as the base. So our concern is that, well, first of all, we don't want a \$10 million reduction to that appropriation in 2023. And we certainly don't want a \$10 million reduction to carry forward each year as our base funding amount in the next biennium.

Chair Fenley said these are proposals. The House and the Senate still have to agree on a bill and the governor still has to sign that bill. It has a long way to go.

Vice Chair Paulsen said is the training bill still in the House and the Senate? Or is it just in the House?

Bordson said I will just echo the Chair's comments on that. This is the preliminary goal for the House and the Senate. Things probably won't look like either one of these proposals by the end. There is a long way to go. The state two-year budget was enacted last year. So really the legislature doesn't have to do anything at all. So, if they can't reach agreement on anything, they could do nothing. If there are only a few things they reach agreement on, they could do a few things. There is really no way at this point to say how things will shake out. I just want to make that really clear.

To the question on the training. That was included in the House bill as the House Chair released his proposal. And then in the Senate, Senator Kent proposed it as an amendment to the bill and that was adopted by the committee. So it currently is in both the House and Senate bills.

Chair Fenley said and then another question from Darrell about the administrative citation. Is that in both bills as well?

Bordson said that was just posted as an amendment to the House bill. It appears to be an author's amendment. So that is likely to be added to the House bill when they mark it up tomorrow. So that is our understanding, is that it will be going to the House bill. It is not in the Senate bill yet. But it was discussed during their hearing and the Chair indicated she is willing to keep having discussions, on that proposal. So we are hoping we can get that in.

Myhre said my question is, in the bill for training for the bus drivers? Do they have real life experience or did all behind a desk where they get the training? So they know how to react to different types of disabilities. In the disability community, sometimes it is all desk stuff. Then when



they come out and actually do it, it is a whole new world for them. In the disability community for different types of disability programs that the legislators have to work on. And tweak in different communities.

Bordson said I am not sure how that is implemented in our current bus operator training. That is a question that I could bring over to Metro Transit Operations to see how that is actually implemented. I am sorry, I don't know personally, the answer to that training involves today.

Chair Fenley said I can speak to it a little more, Heidi, if you want. The bill is very non descriptive of what is in the training. It just says that they should receive training. But also, in the bill, it said that they consult with TAAC too. So we can have some say in that.

Let's go back to Andy's presentation on **Metro Mobility Service Adjustments**. Does anyone have any questions?

Jasmine said I know that Plymouth had some changes to their fixed route express buses. And I know I am in the non-ADA. Does this change my times at all?

Streasick said no, express buses are something totally separate from ADA paratransit calculations. You are looking at local fixed route. So, express service exists beyond that. and any changes to fixed route will not change times or service areas.

Jasmine said I don't know if there were any changes in my fixed route at Plymouth, though. I haven't been doing it because of the pandemic. You have your little chart there, right? So there are no changes in time in Plymouth, right?

Streasick said looking at the map and trying to eyeball it. I don't really see anything here. North of Minnetonka. South of here?

Chair Fenley said we should take questions about specific routes offline.

Jasmine said with these cuts. I know you said that you are going to try to make sure that the customers were notified. But I am finding that when times have changed that people have told me that they were not notified and that some of these times had widened for them. And they didn't know that. So I am wondering if it wouldn't be a good place to start off when you have those little Spring Talks and Fall Talks with Metro Mobility. If you wouldn't just make those quick announcements like: "These are the times that have changed. These are the times that have been shortened." And the places. Would that be something that you guys could do because it seems like people are missing this?

Streasick said absolutely. And i should point out for everybody that we communicate very differently on expansions verses cuts. Particularly in this environment. Where we went live with an expansion during an unprecedented driver shortage. We threw it on the website and hoped it didn't totally kill our service. For expansions, we do not advertise. Basically, we want people to be able to book a ride if they have to book a ride. But at that point, we were still communicating essential trips only. Again, we are experiencing some significant capacity constraints. So we put that out there and let it sit. Other things are very, very different. We have got an ethical and legal obligation to give people notice so that they are aware that something that they have had previously, may not be available going forward. A very different deal.

Myhre said what about the buses that don't have a lot of drivers and they keep getting cuts. And some of us use it to go to medical appointments. And Metro Mobility is the only way you can do it nowadays? So how do we work with that? Because we get the alerts in our email boxes if you are signed up. Saying that this route is being cut. So many times. Does that impact how you figure out your strategy? Because the drivers and Covid and so on.

Streasick said the answer is sort of, but not exactly. If a route is pulling runs throughout the day because of intermittent driver shortages, that does not impact us. We deal with Metro Transit's scheduled service. If they have to deviate from their scheduled service because of a driver shortage, it does not impact Metro Mobility service. But, if because of ridership or driver shortage or whatever, Metro Transit pulls a fully scheduled line altogether. Like the bus I used to take to



work is gone. The 70 no longer exists. And that would have a bearing on our service if we were doing an up-to-date recommendation. But again, we are suggesting that we use pre-coded data from 2019 to inform our service adjustments.

Sheldon said on slides 7, 8 and 9. I am a little confused. Based on these charts, they are based on the 2019 numbers. But, as of today, because of the shortage of drivers, are they cutting out the on demand? Where you can't get a ride if you are requesting it? One day you have a meeting and you forgot to make a ride.

Streasick said demand service in the nomenclature of these slides, just means not a standing order. Not a standing order ride is a ride that you call in and book in advance. The Premium on Demand Service. A cab ride where if you forget a ride, you can call in and book it. It's' hours of availability will match our hours. There might be some slight adjustments in some communities for overnights. But no, the Premium on Demand Service with the cab companies will continue to be available.

Sheldon said the last couple of rides that I requested changes to my ride. I haven't been able to get. They have been telling me, we no longer take those type of rides because of the shortage of drivers.

Streasick said two different things. We would encourage all of our providers not to do same day changes. The amount of time that that takes dispatch. The amount of time it takes for staff at the providers to look for rides that they usually can't accommodate anyway. And what that means for people on hold and wait times, etc. Our normal recommendation to contractors, pre pandemic, was don't be messing with same day changes beyond, of course, the important rule that we are not interested in leaving anyone stranded. We will pick somebody up eventually. But in terms of other same day rides or modifications to ride requests, we would encourage providers not to do that.

There was definitely more leeway during the pandemic. And our advice changed. Look, if you have got the ride available, give the ride. The issue that our contractors went into is they spent minutes. Sometimes a bunch of minutes. Looking into whether or not they could accommodate a same day ride, or a ride change that they usually can't. Most of the customers requesting then get nothing and those staff resources were wasted while people sat on hold. Or dispatchers were not properly routing trips that were booked in advance.

Same day Metro Mobility rides, as our ridership returns closer to normal, we will go back to being something that don't happen very often. Typically, if you want to book a ride the same day. Or you want to change a ride that was booked in advance. They are going to refer you to the Premium on Demand service.

## Reports

### **Subcommittee**

1. **Blue Line – Ken Rodgers**  
This item was not presented.
2. **Green Line – Christopher Bates**  
This item was not presented.
3. **Gold Line – Darrell Paulsen**  
This item was not presented.
4. **Purple Line – Darrell Paulsen**  
This item was not presented.

### **Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group**

This item was not presented.





## Chairs Report

Chair Fenley spoke to the TAAC committee. Darrell Paulsen has served as TAAC representative to the Purple Line. He is up for reappointment to that. I would support that. I don't think we need to vote unless somebody would like to propose someone else to be the Purple Line representative. If nobody has any alternatives for that, I will just say we continue to have Darrell be our Purple Line representative since he has done such a good job over the last couple of years, now. Does anybody have any questions or ideas about that? Darrell, you can text me if you have anything to add to it.

## Public Comment

Cynthia Kelley spoke to the TAAC committee. Patsy invited me to give more context to the Driver Training Bill. That was included now in the Senate Transportation Omnibus Bill and in the House side. It sounds like folks already answered some questions about it. We don't need to take up more time unless people have some specific questions about the advocacy that went into it. And that sort of thing.

I can talk about the advocacy that went into it. My name is Cynthia Kelley. I am the public advocate with the Minnesota Brain Injury Alliance. This legislation came about because we worked with an advocate who had fell backwards disembarking from a bus, trying to make a transfer to another bus. She suffered a stroke as a result and spent 25 days in the hospital. She connected with us. And has been working on the legislation. She is very passionate about the legislation. She worked with Senator Housley and Senator Torres Ray in the summit and Representative Davnie in the House and got the bill passed after about five years.

Myhre said do you know when we go back to our regular meeting, is the skyway going to be open? Or do we have to bring food ahead of time to eat lunch?

Streasick said I have no idea what businesses might be open. The physical skyways are open, but I don't know what businesses will be there.

Chair Fenley said I do know that some of the businesses have closed, but some are open. I would check with the business before. Just to doublecheck if they are still serving food.

## Member Comment

None.

## Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

## Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of April 6, 2022.

Approved this 4<sup>th</sup> day of May 2022.

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