

## Minutes of the

### MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, May 16, 2017

**Committee Members Present:** Co-Chair; Acooa Ellis, Co-Chair; Edward Reynoso, David Ketroser, Kadra Abdi, Ishmael Israel, Ruthie Johnson, Steven Chavez, Rebecca Stratton, Tie Oei

**Committee Members Excused:** Harry Melander, Kimberly Carpenter, Shirley Cain, Jennifer Munt, Sindy Garcia Morales, Elham Ashkar

**Committee Members Absent:** Leslie Redmond, Leon Rodrigues, Metric Giles, Nelima Sitati Munene

A quorum not being present, Co-Chair Edward Reynoso started the meeting at 6:12 pm.

### EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE PROCESS REVIEW

Co-Chair Acooa Ellis wanted for the committee to recap how an item comes from an individual (EAC member, Council Staff, community member etc.) to reach an EAC meeting agenda. The process outlined was a result of the EAC's extended planning session in February 2017, as well as the work plan subgroups that started work in late 2016.

Equity Manager C Terrence Anderson outlined two documents that outlined the general process. The EAC process is different because of the long deliberative process used for each item. This is in contrast to other Council committees, where an item is presented and feedback is provided in a single committee meeting. The EAC process is intentional in expanding this process to allow for greater deliberation among EAC members. The general process is as follows:

- An individual suggesting an item for the EAC would submit an informational memo to staff at least two months before the intended EAC meeting
- This memo is then sent out to all EAC members, after staff in the Office of Equal Opportunity reviews and suggests added/change information
- The memo would then progress to the EAC Standing Committee. These meetings are open to every member of the full committee. This group utilizes the evaluation rubric that was created in the work plan creation process
- If deemed appropriate by the Standing Committee, the item would then come to the full committee, with a detailed timeline and plan for how the EAC will provide feedback for the item

A discussion on this process then followed:

- This process should be baked into amended EAC bylaws.
- How much flexibility is allowed for in this process? If an item is urgent and time-sensitive, how could it still be brought to the EAC?
- What is the role of Council Members in accompanying an item from the EAC to Council Standing Committees? It seems to be an unwritten process of Council Members from the EAC voicing the committee's perspective as it progresses to other Council committees.
- Perhaps there should be a spot on business items that proceed to the Council or its Standing Committees that states whether an item has gone to the EAC.
- On the subject of a last minute addition, it would be up to the discretion of the Co-Chairs to add something to an agenda.
- Would co-chairs then have the discretion to remove something at the last minute? If something were to be removed from the agenda, it should be noted that it was removed and the explanation for why.

## REGIONAL FARE CHANGE – SCENARIO REVIEW AND DISCUSSION

Nicholas Eull, Senior Manager of Revenue Collection at Metro Transit, and Michelle Fure, Public Involvement Manager presented about the [two scenarios under consideration for a regional fare change increase](#). The public comment process started with a meeting in Chanhassen, along with eleven other public meetings or hearings. In these events, the Council is seeking public input on a proposal to raise transit fares either by 25 or 50 cents, along with other changes including increases in fares for Metro Mobility and Transit Link. The final adjustments are scheduled to be approved in June or July, and the goal is for the changes to be implemented on September 1<sup>st</sup>. After the presentation, discussion and questions from the members of the committee ensued:

1. Have alternatives been weighed for Transit Link or Metro mobility service? What about services like Uber?

These scenarios have been looked at, but Metro Mobility requires that there is a handicap accessible vehicle for door-to-door service.

2. What is the difference between a public hearing and a public meeting?

A public hearing is designed for formal public testimony. The goal is to have as many members of the Metropolitan Council present at these hearings, and the final hearing will take place during the Council meeting on June 14<sup>th</sup>. Public meetings are designed for more interaction between Council members or staff and members of the committee. Both types of events offer the opportunity for members of the public to share their opinion, but public meetings are preferable because they allow for questions to be answered and for discussion. Council Member Steven Chavez stated his preference for public meetings because they allow for dialogue. Council Member Chavez is attending the public events in his district, at meetings in Savage, Eagan and Burnsville.

3. What are the “pop-up” meetings that will supplement the public meetings? Do people who are surveyed at these events take transit?

Pop-up meetings are more flexible meetings that take place at transit stations throughout the area. There are questions on the survey that ask what mode of transit, if any, is used. All of the survey respondents from pop-up meetings so far are transit users. Many of their questions have focused on service changes over potential fare increases.

4. How robust is the reporting on public comments received through the survey? Is it simply a summary or are individual responses tracked?

The reporting is quite robust. The Council ultimately receives an extensive summary that details many of the hundreds of survey responses. However, many members of the Council ask for more detailed information about survey responses. Co-Chair Edward Reynoso shared that he normally asks for the comments that were provided by members of his Council district.

5. Are these two scenarios the two final scenarios? During the presentation at the EAC in March, there was an additional scenario where local routes would increase by 25 cents, and express fares would increase by 50 cents. Is this scenario still being considered?

These are not necessarily the two final scenarios, but they show the differences in impacts with regard to ridership. The values of increase represent the maximum fare increases that would be allowed if that particular scenario is chosen. For example, if there is a 50-cent increase across the board, the scenario where local routes only increase by 25 cents is still possible.

Within the discussion of these scenarios, Nicholas Eull reiterated that if Metro Transit could keep fares stable, they would. It is important that customers still provide some of the transit revenue, and the last few years have seen a lower farebox-recovery rate at Metro Transit. The bills being considered at the Minnesota legislature made stable fares impossible, and necessitated an increase. In addition, some

bills at the legislature could also force a 40% service reduction, and increasing fares can help address that gap.

6. Is there demographic information on projected ridership loss?

Ridership loss is only calculated based off of modeling, but estimates could be created by looking at what types of transit fare sets represent the largest portions of ridership loss. Generally, much of the ridership loss comes from people who are low-income or are transit reliant.

7. It seems that some of the attrition from ridership loss come from the highest revenue-producing routes. Are there any alternative price changes being considered? What about distance-based pricing?

Metro Transit is not considering distance-based pricing. Previously, a scenario with a 25-cent increase on local routes and a 50 cent increase on express routes was considered. Express routes do cost more for Metro Transit, and this scenario looked at transferring some of the increased cost burden to those more expensive routes.

8. How are public locations chosen?

Locations are chosen based off of their transit accessibility, where people are in community, and logistics like space rental and advertising. There are also different times for meetings that try to reach different portions of the public. For example, the public hearing on May 31<sup>st</sup> at the Minneapolis Central Library is held from 12-1 p.m. in an effort to reach members of the public who work in downtown during their lunch hour. There are also several events that are meant to engage with suburban transit providers, who have fewer engagement staff.

9. How would the fare increase impact the Transit Assistance Pass (TAP) program?

The TAP program's inclusion in any fare change is still being discussed. The Federal Transit Administration requires a Title VI impact study to see if certain populations are disproportionately impacted. The fare change passed this impact study. The TAP program also depends on the transportation budget bills being considered in the legislature. There are some ways that money could be found for the TAP program, including reallocating money that allows for a 10% bonus on Go-To cards that are loaded with more than \$10 at a time. The hope is that the TAP program has more solid funding as things progress. Michelle Fure reminded the committee that if the TAP program were to be added as a permanent program in the future, it would require a similar public comment process. It makes sense for any establishment of this program to take place during the public comment process already being conducted for fare increases.

10. Can the EAC receive more detailed data on losses in ridership, particularly about fare sets and potential demographics?

Yes. Nicholas Eull agreed to share some of that data with the EAC.

11. Although the fare increase passed the Title VI impact study, it seems counterintuitive that there would not be an impact on low-income communities or communities of color. What does this analysis look for?

This process looks for a disproportionate impact. This process is defined by the FTA to look for a disparate impact on different communities. Nicholas Eull shared an example where a potential scenario failed a Title VI impact study. This involved eliminating peak fares for the groups for the reduced-fare groups. This change had a disparate impact because it disproportionately helped white riders, and thus failed the Title VI impact study.

12. How are suburban opt-out providers impacted by the fare increase?

This would result in an increase in fares for suburban transit providers, as well. Their numbers are included in the figures provided regarding ridership loss.

13. Have lower fares been considered? The logic seems to be that lower fares would result in increased ridership. Would this potential increase in revenue address the gap?

Previous programs at Metro Transit have shown that there isn't much of an increase in ridership with lower fares. Some programs have involved giving free fares to certain groups as a promotion, but these often do not result in much success. These types of promotions, where people are given free Go-To cards, usually result in over 90% of the cards remaining unused after the promotion ends.

Equity Manager C Terrence Anderson reminded the committee that Metro Transit is hoping to come to a decision by the end of June 2017. As a result, the EAC's recommendation would need to come at the June committee meeting. Committee members then provided feedback on what further information they would require before making recommendations:

- A summary of survey responses throughout the public comment process
- A summary of the Title VI analysis on the two scenarios
- Information about the fare increase's overall goals
- Data that shows which fare sets represent the loss in ridership under each scenario, along with the demographic information of those fare sets

Council staff agreed to provide the information by May 26<sup>th</sup> to the members of the EAC. With this information, EAC members will provide their individual recommendations by June 9<sup>th</sup>, which will then be provided to the rest of the committee. After reviewing these recommendations, the EAC will vote on their formal recommendation at the June 20<sup>th</sup> meeting.

## REPORTS

### Committee Members –

A quorum not being present at the beginning of the meeting, Co-Chair Edward Reynoso opened a discussion of members of the committee to discuss how different issues, including the regional fare change discussion, were being discussed in their communities.

- Ruthie Johnson shared that most conversations have pertained to potential service cuts of bus routes, rather than an increase in fares
- Kadra Abdi shared some issues that had surfaced through working with the Somali community in the Cedar-Riverside area of Minneapolis. The community would like to hear more about the Fare Increase, and suggested that the Council hold a public meeting in that neighborhood. Kadra also shared community concern about the Metro Transit Police Department seeking Countering Violent Extremism (CVE) funding through the Department of Homeland Security. The concern is that this initiative specifically targets the Somali community, particularly Somali youth. Kadra suggested that the EAC receive more information regarding Metro Transit seeking this funding.

### Co-Chairs –

Co-Chair Acooa Ellis brought up a discussion that took place at the April meeting of the EAC. Members of the EAC had said that the rotating location of EAC members makes it difficult to attend meetings. To address this problem, future meetings could be held at the Metropolitan Council in Saint Paul. Parking at the Council's facility would be available to members of the committee, as well. Council Member Steven Chavez suggested that occasional meetings still be held in the community, as rotating meetings was one of the main suggestions in the charter of the Equity Advisory Committee.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 8:02 p.m.

Kevin Murphy  
Recording Secretary

## **ACTION ITEMS FOR EAC MEMBERS**

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