

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, March 7, 2018

Committee Members Present: Chair Kjensmo Walker, Ken Rodgers, Kari Sheldon, Heidi Myhre, Diane Graham-Raff, Margot Imdieke Cross and Patty Thorsen.

Committee Members Absent: None.

Committee Members Excused: Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Robert Platz, John Clark, Lukus Zuker and David Fenley.

Council Staff Present: Douglas Cook, Kim Zlimen, Ben Rajkowski, Barrett Clausen, Claire Schleichert, Mark Granlund and Elissn Erickson from Metro Transit. Christine Kuennen and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Joe Russell.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Walker called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:38 p.m. on Wednesday, March 7, 2018.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Rodgers, seconded by Thorsen to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2018 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Visual Accessibility Light Rail Features.

Kim Zlimen spoke to the TAAC committee. Today's topics are improvements completed to date or funded for future completion: Between-car barriers; door locator tiles; railing extensions, curb construction, ballast fill; continental crosswalks downtown and additional tactile pavers at crossings.

Between-car barriers. Flexible bollards from impact recovery systems in alternating 26-inch and 36-inch heights and 15-foot long array. To be installed at all light rail platforms in 2019-2020.

Per the code of federal regulations wherever there is level boarding at transit platforms there is the platform and the inside of the train that are at the same level. There is no step up. We are required to provide the license that deters people from inadvertently mistaking the gap. There are two parts coupled together at the doorway and potentially stepping off the platform and on to the track area. So while the Federal Transit Administration can require that we provide it, the code is open to what this looks like.

Several other transit agencies in the US are ahead of us in pursuing this requirement and had installed the system like the one that I will describe to you. The photograph on the slide is two light rail cars that are coupled together. The between car barrier system is short in height and is installed at the edge of the platform in two places where the first car and second car are joined together. The second and third car are joined together. On that curb there are 20 posts that are an inch and a half diameter. They alternate in height between 26 and 36 inches. Those are attached to that. The idea is to warn people and to prevent people for mistaking that for a doorway.

This particular system has been installed by other transit agencies in the US including LA Metro, Town Transit in Seattle, Saint Louis and Pittsburgh among others. We installed a test of this on the Green Line Raymond Avenue Station in 2016 and they still remain there. They have proven to be O.K. for doing snow removal

around. It is easy if some posts needed to be changed out. In terms of the maintenance side it is pretty easy to deal with. Other transit agencies have used this system that meet the requirements. We have funding that has been identified for 2019 when we will put these up on all existing light rail platforms. The Green and the Blue Line Extension project have this also in the plan.

Door locator tiles. Tactile paver with directional bar pattern placed at light rail vehicle door to indicate location. Completed tests of different paver size and locations at two light rail stations. Four-foot-wide x two inches deep, yellow tiles with directional bar pattern. One tile placed at front door of first light rail vehicle. To be installed at all light platforms in 2019-2020.

There are two test stations that we did. The first test station was at Raymond Avenue. Late 2016 we put in a four-foot wide by three-foot deep tactile paver, yellow in color. We did it at just the first door of the front vehicle. It was in place for just nine months. We surface mounted it for the test. We took it out because it started to peel up on the edges. We didn't want it to be a tripping hazard. But in that time, we got a lot of positive feedback. The State Services for the Blind Office is close to that station. We had an online survey and got feedback from them. Before implementing this system-wide, we wanted to test this out at a higher ridership station. We also wanted to see if we could do this at additional doors. If you have a three-car train, each car has four doors. So we did another trial at the Lake Street Station. It is a higher ridership station. Because our vehicle fleet has two different types of vehicles. One is slightly longer than the other and they have doors in slightly different places.

This time we put them at the four center doors at the center car. We had them in place for a few months. This time we also did a four-foot wide deep pile instead of a two-foot deep pile. That was partly based on the comments we got last time at the TAAC meeting where we talked about a three-foot wide deep pile taking a lot of space. Some of our narrow platforms we did two feet deep. What we found was because of those different car lengths and door locations. Often times those tiles just didn't line up very well. Sometimes it was just a couple of feet off and sometimes it was significant.

There is a stopping post where the operators stop at. They are supposed to line up with the window, but it was because of those car differences that we oftentimes ended up being off by quite a bit. What we have decided to do moving forward is go back to what we did at Raymond is a four-foot wide by two-foot deep pile at the front door of the light rail vehicle. Despite the two different vehicle doors they happened to line up well. We did talk a lot about color. I know this committee mentioned that, we did learn in doing our research that the California building code requires these at transit stations. That is where this design precedence came from.

We had a lot of talk internally about color. I think the idea is that you want to provide something that is visually contrasting. It has to do with the light reflectance value of pavement surrounding it and then whatever feature you are putting in. There were some concerns with the darker tile. Just because we had some stations with color concrete. When that gets wet it gets pretty dark. That is what we have decided to move forward with on door locator tiles.

Railings and curb extensions. She showed slides of the Marquette Avenue and the Nicollet Avenue stations. The railings ended about seven feet short of the crosswalks. We also restriped the crosswalks. They used to be just white stripes on either side of the crosswalk. The continental bar design which is two-foot deep bars that go all the way across. We preserved the pedestrian area. We did the crosswalk restriping at several stations downtown. The hope would be that as traffic signals are approved in downtown Minneapolis those improvements would have accessible pedestrian signals with a push button. Some of the things we wanted to do at some of these center platforms like this is to be able to add push buttons, so people would know when it is safe to cross.

The next slide is the Nicollet Avenue station. So these railings would be extended about 12 feet. The crosswalk before was kind of weird. It was in the middle of the intersection. We extended the railing to the edge of the crosswalk and again restriped and cut that pedestrian refuge area.

The following slide. We did this at several Blue Line stations. Back when those stations were constructed in the early to mid-2000's they often times ended the railing at the bottom of the ramp. Sometimes the crossing wasn't until several feet in the distance. So we extended those and we also routinely tried to fill in ballast in the corners where the drop off happens between the ramp and the crossing.

At some stations it wasn't feasible to extend the railings. In those cases, we added short curbs. The Franklin Avenue station is where the south end of the crossing meets the sidewalk or the path that runs along the station. A five-foot or so long curb that wraps around the corner to protect that drop off area.

Another item we identified is several of our crossings don't have tactile pavers indicating both before and after you cross over the rail. That would be the typical pattern. That is what the Green Line and the Blue Line Extension offices are implementing in their plans. The photograph on the left is the south end of the 46th Street Station. That doesn't have any tactile pavers right now. In this case it is a side platform station. So we would add those on to the side. The center isn't meant to be a refuge or waiting area.

The photograph on the right is a picture of the north end of the Fort Snelling Station. In this case it is a center platform. So we would add tactile pavers on the outside and the inside for you to come down the platform ramp.

The last slide that I have here are items that we don't currently have money for or committed or identified. There are concepts that are under evaluation based on comments we had received. The first one is door opening announcements. The announcement would indicate which side the door is going to open when the light rail vehicle stops. It is my understanding that we had this in the past. The announcements are automated. The driver opens the door manually and sometimes we do reverse operations where the train is running on the opposite track. It created issues with this automated announcement. It wasn't a hard no, but it was the response I got.

Platform access points missing accessible pedestrian signals. This is an issue where it is noisy. There is a lot of activity going on. There is a center platform with no indication to safely get from the platform to the crossing. As of 2016 we did an inventory of all those crossings. None of them had that technology at the intersection itself. But we will be monitoring as the city does street construction projects. They do have one coming up in 2020 or 2021 for Hennepin Avenue. If that includes traffic signal upgrades we would hope to integrate push buttons at the platform too.

Bluetooth beacon technology. We had committee member Ken Rodgers connect me with a company that does have Bluetooth beacon technology where they put beacons at various places at transit stations. Those connect with a smart phone app. They had provided proposals last year. Unfortunately, we didn't have funding to deal with it. So this is something that we haven't been able to pursue yet. But it is being considered to be tested as part of the work that Barrett Clausen and others will be presenting on following my presentation today.

Door opening sounds was another comment. Right now, the doors chime when they close but they don't have an indication when they are opening. I did follow up and that is a possibility to be back programmed into the doors. However, it doesn't get to the issue that the doors don't automatically open when it is really hot or cold outside.

Finally, the beacon sound for ticket machines and smart card validators. We had communicated with Cubic, which is the company that manufactures our ticket vending machines and our rail smart card validators. They said that this is a possibility to be programmed into the machine. They are also the vendor for several other transit agencies as well. It is not something they have done before but it is something that could be programmed into the machines. The fare collections contracts for three projects: The Orange Line BRT, the Green Line Extension and the Blue Line Extension are going to be developed this year and that is something that team will look into integrating.

Chair Walker asked her to go back to the Nicollet Station. It appears to be that if you are just walking, there is not any barrier to prevent you from walking into the middle of the intersection.

Zlimen said, you are right, there isn't.

Chair Walker said is that something you are going to be looking at?

Zlimen said I think that would integrate nicely with if and when we will be able to do it when we do the accessible pedestrian signals or push buttons. The Prospect Park Station on the Green Line is a good example where there is at the far end a little island that is a protection. On that island is where the push button is. I do think it is a logical next step.

Ken Rodgers said my main issue is what Chair Walker mentioned. I have been harping for over a year, ever since the Green Line opened, that there is an extreme danger for people that are blind that use a cane or a service dog about going too far off the platform and finding themselves in the middle of an intersection. That exists today. It existed when the line opened. And from what I understand it is going to exist for a long time. That is a huge safety risk for me that I encounter often. I am always having to try to judge where I think where the opening should be to cross the street. I don't want to have to rely on my own judgement. Because

sometimes I am daydreaming. Sometimes I am not as focused as I might otherwise need to be. But a physical barrier that would prevent someone from accidentally walking into that intersection is gravely needed. Not later. When the line first opened. That has been several years already. I urge whatever we need to do to move that along. If the Council needs to write a resolution, pass a resolution, whatever. That is a huge safety risk that we deal with every day we ride the light rail. I want to underscore that. That really is a critical need at this point.

The other thing I will add is in terms of two things: the automatic opening of the doors. When the weather gets cold or when it gets hot and we hear those messages that say that you have to push the button to open the door. For the most part there is always somebody else around to be able to find the button first of all and push it. I can't find the button on my own. I can touch all around the side of the train but in the winter I don't want to touch the side of the train. It is probably gooey and full of dirt and ice. That is not appropriate to ask someone to do. We have looked into having those buttons have some kind of sound. That wasn't possible. The chime of the door opening could help but the door has to open before that chime would be heard. That continues to be a problem. I understand for awhile there was work around that when the operators saw there was a visually impaired person on the platform as they pulled in, they would instigate an opening of the doors as their usual protocol. That took care of the problem most of the time. Now it is hit and miss. I always stand as close as I can to the opening, so I can be seen. But I don't always get the door to automatically open. I want to ask has that policy been operationalized as the standard practice? Or is it still just iffy?

Zlimen said that is something somebody else brought up to me the other day. I will have to follow up with rail operations and ask what their current policy is. Sure, they are told to look out for people on the platform that need additional time boarding.

Rodgers said it seemed to work really well when it was working. Now it is hit and miss. Sometimes it does and sometimes it doesn't.

Heidi Myhre asked when you put the yellow things in the door, how safe is it for slipperiness? It might be safe for wheelchairs and blind people but how safe is it for a crutch?

Zlimen said this tile meets the same height and radius and design requirements that the truncated domes do for ADA. It is a slightly different design. This material isn't the one we would use only because this is pretty thin. The ones we put out didn't hold up well with snow removal. What we have been putting at the platform is a polymer material on the newer ones. The ones we did originally were concrete and they didn't last very well. After awhile, the domes started to wear off from snow removal and people walking across them. The ones we are installing now are this polymer concrete material. It is the same as what is on the platform edges now, the two-foot edge. It is a slightly different pattern.

Indieke Cross said in your research to find out about the operations policy regarding opening the doors, would you make sure it includes people in wheelchairs? A lot of folks in chairs don't have the ability to reach the button or to press it.

Rodgers said this has been an issue that has been identified and reported many times before. It is the sound that is on the platform at the Hennepin Warehouse District Station. It does not extend to the side of the platform that is closest to Hennepin Avenue. I can hear the speaker on the other side of the platform when it is quiet. But how many times has Hennepin and 5th Street been quiet? Not very many times. Most of the time I have no idea which train is arriving and have to ask passengers who are standing by to identify the train.

I was told that because of that being a known issue at that station, the operators were announcing what train they were when they pulled into that station. Apparently, there were a few other downtown stations as well. But that is the one I use and that is the one I recognize as an issue. That has stopped now. Because after the last major upgrade that was done I was told that was going to be fixed. It has not been fixed. To me it sounds like there is no speaker at that end of the platform. Or that speaker is not working. It is just missing. When I stand on the same location at other platforms like at Capitol Rise, I hear the announcement just fine. It sounds like it is right above me. For whatever reason that Hennepin Warehouse District speaker is non-existent on the Hennepin side of the platform. If you get two trains coming at the same time you can't hear any announcement. Even the announcements that get the chime, that say danger when platform is slippery, those types of enhanced announcements, that still is only heard on the far side of the platform. It is as if there isn't a speaker on the Hennepin side.

About snow removal. Is there an official policy for snow removal on the platforms and what is that policy? To me it seems like there is no snow removal. We just wait for it to melt. It often takes two or three days for it to melt significantly enough that it is not a hazard. Is there a policy?

Zliven said there is Engineering and Facilities. This is the facilities part. I am the engineering part. I will definitely follow up on that. I am sure we have a policy on this. I am just not sure what it is.

Doug Cook said I can answer this. The light rail stations are a top priority. As far as I know the facilities takes care of the snow removal. If they are not doing a good enough job, you need to call us at Customer Relations and talk to the managers there. Facilities like that is our top priority. Not most of the bus stops that are along the line because they are city bus stops. I will look into that. If you call Metro Transit, it is option three.

2. Better Bus Stops: Community Centered Improvements.

Barrett Clausen spoke to the TAAC committee. I work for Metro Transit in the Transit Information Department. We are here today to introduce this new project to TAAC. And to ask for ongoing input and guidance from many members of this project moving forward. As an overview, this project is funded through the Ladders of Opportunity Grant. The Federal Transit Administration grant. This grant funded the Better Bus Stops' work. It was to expand where shelters were placed and to update the guidelines for where Metro Transit prioritized the shelter placement. So this project is going to be an extension of that work. But it is specifically to make improvements to transit information at bus stops.

We are focusing on using this project to learn how we can improve the accessibility of transit information at stops. Thinking about accessibility broadly both in terms of accessibility for riders with disabilities and accessibility for riders with limited English proficiency. One other focus or requirement of this grant is to reflect community identity and place making, which is a little harder to define but think of it as improvements that reflect the surrounding community and involve community members in the process. This could be like a community mural.

We are going to be incorporating that concept in this project. The specific focus of our project is to improve transit information and amenities at busy transfer points. So where someone would be switching between bus lines or between bus and train. We know that transfer points are particularly confusing and hard for customers. The concerns of the safety of street crossings. We know that there are some particular barriers at transfer points for some riders with disabilities. So we want to use this funding to create new materials we have never tried before to try to improve accessibility at transfer points.

There are two major pieces of this project. One of them is to develop accessible wayfinding materials to help people move between bus stops and transfer points. It would help someone figure out where am I now? Where am I trying to go? How do I get there?

Our focus on developing this would be on the concept of universal design. How we can create things that are clear and intuitive and take into account a variety of abilities or language abilities, that people interacting with materials have.

Another piece of this project is to improve amenities at transfer points. We know that for example, having seating can be a major accessibility consideration. We want to see how we can provide amenities that stops when there isn't a shelter. We want to create a variety of materials and see what works. This list is some ideas we have come up with at this point from looking at previous community input from the project that Kim just presented on and looking at what other transit agencies have done. So for example, accessible wayfinding could mean tactile area maps or beacon technology for wayfinding. Wayfinding signs that have symbols or icons. Or accessible area maps. So maybe incorporating more pictures and maps to help people understand where they are going.

For the amenities the idea is to perhaps create some type of seating and a bench that has a place where we could display transit information. Or to display schedule information at bus stops. Then lastly this idea of community identity and placemaking. That would be incorporated throughout.

A major focus of this is going to be community engagement. So, to this point we have incorporated feedback from engagement that has been done previously and have used that to shape this project plan. Moving forward we want to do engagement specifically hearing from people with disabilities and riders with limited English proficiency throughout the project. Before we begin developing those materials. Once we have new materials, usability testing and getting feedback on the actual materials. Once we have installed them on the street we

would evaluate them. This input would be a major piece of how we evaluate success on this project and the materials we create. So our process would be to work with design experts and community to develop testing materials. To install these new materials at just a few locations to evaluate the materials and then recommend how we could scale this up and expand it to other stops. If it is successful.

We are interested in working with TAAC members on this throughout the project. Coming to this meeting and providing updates could be one way but we are also interested in seeing if you all would be interested in providing input outside of this meeting where we could have brainstorming and get more into the details of it. Maybe that could be field visits and going out to transfer points and talking about what the barriers are and what improvements we could make. Once we have made the improvements, going out and evaluating how successful they are.

Another piece of this would be if you have any ideas or contacts or people you think that we should be hearing from about this. Some would definitely want to know that. She gave their contact information.

Barrett Clausen, Transit Information 612-349-7115

Ben Rajkowski, Transit Information 612-349-7397

Elissa Erickson, Creative Services 612-349-7795

Mark Granlund, Planning & Urban Design 612-349-7499

Heidi Myhre asked if this was just in Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Some of the suburbs get left out of these projects.

Clausen said this project is an extension of the Better Bus Stops project and it has the same geography to it. That project is defined by making improvements in areas that have historically been under invested in. It is defined by using census data by areas of concentrated poverty where there are at least 50 percent of the residents that are people of color. It is a set area based on that criteria. It is a lot in Saint Paul and Minneapolis. There are some suburban locations. Primarily in the Northwestern suburbs and a little bit in the Southern suburbs.

As far as the initial scope of this project we would have to use the money to make improvements in the same geography as the Better Bus Stops project and the shelters. What we want to do is test these and then see where it would be appropriate to build things up throughout the system.

Ken Rodgers said the extended workshops they have had have been very beneficial. The learning, outcome and results have been really positive. I think you should encourage that. I would be very willing to participate in that.

Myhre said to have a hands-on approach so that everyone can experience it in their own way.

Rodgers said that if murals had some tactile parts to it or sound to it that would be beneficial to those who cannot see it. Audio cues can be very helpful for someone who doesn't see, to navigate the space.

Diane Graham-Raff said as you are looking at some of the improved transit information pieces I hope that you will also think about how some of that information might then be ported to other situations. I am thinking of when a route has either a planned or unplanned change and there is no information for those who are not sighted in terms of where the new location is and how to get there. This can be particularly unnerving in large crowd situations. I see this often during the Green Line maintenance or Blue Line maintenance down at the Hennepin Warehouse station when you have large groups exiting the Target Center or likewise at Target Field and only a small percentage of folks can actually see the notice because of the large crowds. I have experienced large crowds of people wandering that three-block area looking for where the buses are picking up. If we could look at the technology that is being sought for improving these small stations with an eye for how we can then bring that back to some of these others for those temporary changes, that would be a real big help.

Clausen said one of the things I didn't mention is we can take these results to create guidelines that go beyond this project too. That fits in on thinking on how we can create the information to be more accessible.

3. Metro Mobility Task Force Update.

Christine Kuennen spoke to the TAAC committee. I am the Senior Manager of Metro Mobility. I am here to present on behalf of the Metro Mobility Task Force. This was a task force that was pulled together last year in special session by the Minnesota Legislature with defined roles. I was not part of the Task Force but a staff liaison to it. I can speak to the work of it and in general terms. At the end of the presentation here I will speak to

some of the things that we are already doing for proficiencies and some of the things that are next steps responding to the task force report. I want to point out that TAAC was represented on the task force by Ken Rodgers. I welcome, Ken, any additions or exclusions to what I am about to say. Please feel free to do that. But in general terms, I want to lay out what the task force did, the information they were presented and some of their findings in this presentation today.

The first slide talks about the goals of the task force and how it was organized. There were three identified goals. That was to increase program effectiveness and efficiency. Look at minimizing program costs. And improving service including through potential partnership with taxi service providers and transportation network companies. The TNC it is commonly called. The two providers in our region are called Uber and Lyft. The organization and the structure of the task force was defined by the Legislature. There are 18 members. Administrative support was provided by the Metropolitan Council including myself and several others from Regional Administration and Metro Mobility.

There were seven meetings of the task force. The first meeting was at the end of August. The last meeting was the first week of February. There were subgroups formed. I believe those were formed in November with the first meetings of the subgroups meeting in December and also in January.

The first three meetings were informational for the task force in August, September and October. A lot of information was shared about the Metro Mobility program, how it functions, what it costs, how it is funded and some of the gaps of services. The regulations of the service. In the first three meetings. Then the work of pulling together the recommendations and findings was done in the subgroups and then acted upon at the task force level in January and February.

Membership of the task force is named on a slide with the names and the affiliations. County commissioners, advocacy groups, the TAAC, the U of M, for research providers. Notably the current service providers were not invited as part of the task force. They were invited as a subgroup. Taxi companies, Uber and Lyft were represented. The task force was co-chaired by Council Member Barber and Commissioner Karla Bigham. The Legislature defined what was required in the report. The report itself was structured per that definition. It was said it had to be delivered by February 15. It was delivered on February 14. It described the Metro Mobility program. It summarized the work of the task force and its findings. It identified options for reducing program costs and improving efficiency. I will go through those options in this presentation. The task force was asked to identify at least three potential service level approaches. The task force presented four. I will go through that. That involved partnering with taxis or TNC's. Then also the report provided some recommendations for program and legislative changes.

The report itself is about 30 or 40 pages. There are several hundred appendices. It is all found online. If you want to see the whole thing.

The next several slides are included just to show you the kinds of information that was presented to the task force. This committee is fully aware of the Metro Mobility program. So we won't give the details. But it gives you a sense of the background that they had. The service provision itself. The shared ride is a civil right. it is governed by ADA and Minnesota Statute that was described.

The service areas. This was quite a lot of conversation around the differences in the service area. There was education about what is the ADA service versus the non-ADA service area. The ADA service area was presented up front. The fact that there are zero denials in ADA. There are denials in non-ADA and talking about and those differences took up a lot of time early on. The description of the applicable laws in ADA and Minnesota Statute and how that in particular impacts the individual customer. That was a good portion of the conversation at the task force meetings. What are the restrictions? What are the requirements? How does that impact the customer?

Same thing for program requirements. The fact that there can be no denials. The fact that there needs to be passenger escort. That there has to be a certain level of disability awareness training. That is in statute. The fact that our taxi service does not have to comply in any of the service models that the legislature was asking the task force to look at. Taxi's and TNC's wouldn't have to apply. That the current service provision does. Just sorting out of those differences was significant for the task force and the subgroups.

Then there was information about the program itself as far as how much it costs, who it serves. These numbers are updated from what was presented to the task force in September. They have been updated for 2017. Our operating budget has gone up. Our ridership has gone up. Weekday and riders count. The vehicles

are about the same although we are going under a service expansion this year. And the fact that we provide 93 communities. Our average trip length is 9.4 miles. We have seven contracts and five contractors.

The next slide is just a slide talking about our three demand contracts. Our agency contracts and our demand services. Eighty-three percent of rides are demand contractors. The one agency contract serves large day training and habilitation and day activity centers. There are 400,000 annual rides. That contract is currently being selected for renewal. The current agency contract expires in September. So we will be selecting a new contractor in the next month or so.

Then there was just a general description of our supplemental service contracts. We do have a taxi opt-in service for all Metro Mobility customers since 2004. It does provide some accessible vehicles although it is limited. Customers are authorized for subsidy if they have been approved in advance. Then it talks about the subsidy being a \$15.00 per ride subsidy.

This slide goes to our fleet and onboard technology. Basically, we have 574 revenue vehicles. They are mostly accessible buses. We are expanding about 24 this year. The average bus cost is \$83,000. There was some conversation in one of the subgroups about if efficacy of a leasing program versus a purchase. That was pretty well vetted through. There weren't any recommendations or findings to that result. Although there was a pilot program that I will discuss at the end of this presentation. We are pursuing a little bit of a pilot on a leasing subsidy.

This slide goes to ridership and operating costs. The blue line is the ridership dating back to 2006. Forecasting through to 2020. The green line is our operating costs. Back in 2010 or 2011 those lines start to diverge, and the operating costs out paces the ridership growth. Both are on a pretty high trajectory. In 2017 you will notice the green line slants up even higher. That cost is reflective of our \$2.00 per hour wage increase for our drivers in October. So that investment shot our operating costs up in 2017. That is why you see it diverge from our ridership growth.

The next slide is a peer comparison slide. There were several (six to eight) slides presented to the task force. As far as how we compare to our peers and a number of ways. It is important for folks to see because it really shows how lean we are even though it is expensive. Metro Mobility rides are the most expensive for the state to provide for public transit. There is a subsidy of about \$24.00 per trip. But when you compare that to other cities and their same ADA paratransit service provision it is actually much less. Boston was discussed quite a bit, especially in the subgroups because they have implemented a pilot project with Uber and Lyft as of October 2016. They are about 18 months in now. It shows where they were for their subsidy per passenger trip and how much they had to gain compared to us for a similar pilot.

The next slide I will spend a little time on. This goes to the four opt-in services that the task force has recommended that include a taxi or TNC. Listed on the left side of the chart are the base service provision. The first two columns are what is already Metro Mobility ADA service and non-ADA service. Then the four columns on the right would be new optional services. Separated into two buckets the thought is to have a shared option and then a premium option. Shared would be your choosing to take that ride and then other customers can share your ride with you. Premium would be a single passenger ride. That is basically what we have today with the premium same day taxis service. The taxi service is best represented under premium STS. Basically, you have a shared option and a premium option. Those are the two buckets. Within each bucket you have a STS bucket and a non-STS bucket. Basically, going to the level of service required in the provisions. Curb to curb versus door through door and shared. Whether or not there is accessible service provided. Whether or not there are strict training requirements for drivers required. Basically, if you need the level of service that is currently provided by Metro Mobility then a STS shared or premium service option is offered. If you don't need that level of service, always or ever, then perhaps a non-STS option could fit. So that would be a taxi or a TNC service provision.

With the optional services it was conceived that all of the Metro Mobility service area would be available to all service area not just non-ADA or ADA. That wasn't really a restriction that was presented.

In discussing the service options, there were clear advantages that were discussed for the customer and for the system as a whole. Some of those advantages are that by offering more services you are going to distribute the growing demand on the base system to other providers. That would mitigate the stress on the base service and potentially improve the service and reduce costs. Having a STS service option in one of the four models offers those kind of options for people who need the highest quality service. Having a premium

option offers a faster trip than a shared ride and just a potential for an overall lower cost per trip to the system as a whole, if we are distributing some of the most expensive trips on to less expensive options.

The risk exposures were also significantly discussed. The first subgroup was a cost and operations group. The second subgroup was an industry experience subgroup. This subgroup was where fundamentally the service options in the previous slide were mulled through. The third subgroup was a customer experience subgroup. They work together so that they didn't work in isolation. In particular I would say that the risk exposures for some of the services that the industry experience group came forward with were thought through the lens of impact to the individual customer in various scenarios.

Ken served on two subgroups. The customer experience and the industry experience. I was the staff liaison for the industry experience subgroup. He was representing well the point of view of the customer with all of the various options that were discussed. With those were some of the risk exposures. Having fundamentally four optional services on top of a base service provision introduces complexity to an already complex system. Just on a personal note. Coming to Metro Mobility in May of last year it has taken me quite a bit of time just to understand this system myself. I am on the inside now. I have access to all this data. I know in hearing the questions of the task force that policymakers took a while to understand some of the complexity of our system. I know when going out and speaking with customers they do not understand some of the fundamentals of our system already. What is ADA? What is non-ADA? What can they expect? What is the no-show policy? It is already a complex system. That was a risk. Just introducing that complexity.

Then just offering lower service level standards in any of the options introduces risk. We have a lower service standard with the taxis. It is not a door through door. An accessible fleet is not guaranteed. We are already exposing that but maybe it is not as adopted that it could be or would be if we started to promote these other options. Having more and more people go on to optional services introduces and inherent risk.

Safety and security concerns are heightened for vulnerable populations. There is no onboard camera system. There is no background check with fingerprints. Although the TNC's do require background checks, they have been vocal about their concern for fingerprinting. They are not really set up for random drug testing. Neither are the taxis. It introduces those kind of things as a risk that are currently regulated by the FTA and our system.

Accessible fleet limitation is a possible civil rights issue. We do have an accessible fleet in our taxi service provision, but it is limited. We are denying rides today for customers that want to use that service that need an accessible vehicle. The more people we put on to those options the more risk there is to have a pattern of practice of denials in one of our subsidized services. That is something that we want to keep an eye on if we expand to that.

The cost in operations group we dove into is how Metro Mobility is funded. We realized that almost 40 percent of our rides are funded by the Department of Human Services. Those rides are wholly funded by the State of Minnesota because it is coming out of the general fund. We know that those rides would be eligible for a federal match. If we were to tell the federal government which rides are funded by the state and which rides aren't we would be able to recapture some of that money for the state. But right now, there are legal restrictions against data sharing between Metro Mobility, the Council and DHS. So, one of the recommendations from the task force was that they examine those restrictions and lift them and allow data sharing between the Council and DHS so that we can go to the federal government and recapture some of that funding for what is now a wholly funded ride by the state.

The task force recommendations. As a whole, this slide goes to recommending that the Council go ahead and pilot by March 31, 2019, as the market allows, the service options that were in the previous table. We have four shared rides and premium STS and non-STS service options.

The task force recommended that the legislature provide enough funding to study and invest in technology innovations that would allow multiple providers in a system to be more transparent and accessible for the customer. There are apps that are being piloted in other cities that a customer can go in and put in their ride request and the application will shop across the various service options and present those options to the customer. Whether that option be on the fixed route, on the paratransit system or on the taxi system. We don't have anything like that in place or available, so we would need an investment in it.

Another recommendation is that the state provide incentives to increase the number of on demand accessible vehicles. So basically, to provide an incentive for taxis and TNC's to have more accessible vehicles in their fleet to mitigate the risk of those kind of trip denials. If we were to contract those providers.

The task force recommended that the Council explore that DHS waver criteria and the data sharing. Then also to evaluate options that exist in the current system in the non-ADA trip. So, evaluate whether or not we should enforce conditional eligibility. Look at different pricing structures. Look at the service quality standards and the span of service that exist in our non-ADA area in order to improve service in the ADA service area. Asking the Council to examine those options.

The task force recommended that the legislature facilitate the collaboration between DHS and Metro Mobility. To fund a study to determine how we can better coordinate those services. The task force recommended that the Council invest in a robust public information campaign so that we are providing sufficient education to customers about what the service options are and how they impact the individual rider. Making everyone aware that it is a curb to curb versus a door through door. Make everyone aware that there is limited fleet. That if there is that level of service required going to one of the optional services may be well suited. Basically, a marketing and information campaign.

Then a good recommendation from the legislature that they establish a dedicated funding source to ensure that Metro Mobility demand is met. This is a personal recommendation.

The industry experience. I put this slide in to talk about the model in Boston. They did look at Boston. They reached out to the administrators there and examined that pilot. It was initiated both with Uber and with Lyft in October of 2016. It was expanded through their entire system in April of 2017. They expect it to remain. It has had growing customer support. They report that there has been a significant reduction of trips on their regular paratransit system. A 19 percent reduction of their trips. They have increased their overall service provision as a whole by 31 percent. Basically, they are offering more trips to more people by adding TMC's into their service model. But because they are increasing their delivery while reducing trips on their base system. Those offset each other and the pilot has been cost neutral. They haven't saved anything much by offering the TNC's but they have provided more mobility.

Kansas City has a good pilot called KC Freedom on Demand. Basically, it is an integrated application where the customer is a one-stop shop and those service options are provided to them with one trip request. It is mobile friendly.

Industry sub proposal looked at and talked about autonomous vehicles and whether or not those technologies have a role with paratransit. It was noted that in Los Angeles California Access, the service there, announced a partnership with Baidu, a Chinese provider of autonomous vehicles. They are going to be launching a small-scale pilot at the end of this year with their paratransit service.

The next slide goes to some of the changes that Metro Mobility has already implemented or is in the process of implementing to reduce some inefficiencies in October. We did implement that \$2.00 an hour minimum driver wage. I thought the committee would be interested in some of the effects of that. We hoped that it would improve turnover. That it would improve retention applications. That is bearing true. For Transit Team, our largest provider, prior to October 1st, their turnover ratio was 42 percent. Their retention rate was 36 percent. Since October, their turnover ratio is down to 10 percent. Their retention rate is up to 67 percent. They have been able to hire more drivers since October of 2017 than in all of 2016. Overall their customer complaints are also down. You can retain a driver and hire better quality. You are going to turn that around for service improvement to the customer. Their complaints have decreased 32 percent since October 1st.

First Transit South also reports a strong uptick in their driver retention at the 30-day employment mark. It was at 56 percent. It is now at 80 percent. First Transit East has some mixed data. They say it is a little too early, but they have said that their class sizes have increased, and they have much stronger response to driver ads. I think it is too early to draw strong lines of conclusions here, but it is giving us hope for a more stable workforce for Metro Mobility contracted drivers and it also tells us that it is something we need to constantly monitor. We are tracking it monthly. If these things start to dip again we will examine that minimum driver wage again.

Another thing that we have implemented. It is not well known because we did a soft launch of it. We are just starting to talk about a marketing program around it. We introduced a group ride program in December. It is a group ride incentive. Basically, if you have a group of five or more and you are booking a ride in the off-peak from the same location to the same location and a return trip, you get the return trip free for everyone in the

group. Right now, we know that we have some folks in group homes. If a person in apartment one might be going to Cub Foods at 10:00 a.m. and the person in apartment two might be going to Cub Foods at 2:00 p.m. If they get together and decide to go at 11:00 or noon, not only do they have a companion, but it is more efficient for us to provide the ride. We are looking to incentivize the group rides with this.

We introduced a change to our Premium Same Day Service on February 1st. That was announced in our newsletter and our website where you can now book that Premium Same Day ride in advance up to four days. Ken mentioned that at a task force meeting when I was in the audience. That was interesting to me that we had limited our taxi option to just one day. So now we have that taxi option to book in advance as well.

A project is currently forming. We have a project team. We had four meetings. This is an incentive program for customers to transfer to fixed route. This in general terms would be a free or reduced ride on Metro Mobility if part of your trip includes a transfer to Metro Transit fixed route. So that is forming, and we hope to implement something in the late quarter of this year.

Then the van leasing pilot. We are just in progress to form that scope that in concept is a subsidized lease of vehicles with a large day training and habilitation center. Basically, improving the capacity of the agency to provide mid-day trips and mobility for Metro Mobility clients who are at that agency. That will be a small-scale pilot that goes to that van leasing idea.

Next steps for the task force and work of staff. We have been communicating about this a little bit. There was not only presentations to the Legislature and other groups including this one today. There was a Star Tribune interest in this. There was an article on Monday. Patty Thorsen was interviewed in the article. Just today I got forwarded an email from a customer who read the article and wanted to be a tester of an Uber and Lyft service. There is generally a strong interest in it. But also, some strong concerns about it. We need to wade our way through that and make sure we are communicating well.

This committee has good ideas. We want to make sure we move forward smartly and strongly on these ideas.

As far as an immediate work plan. We are working on technology improvements with Trapeze. There is a version upgrade at the end of May. That includes that application, online booking again. But it also includes an opportunity to integrate with a TNC. Trapeze has a partnership with Lyft. When they have a ride booked on Trapeze, that ride could be booked through Lyft and that customer gets the one stop shop experience on their application. So that ride is also reflected in the data.

We launched a new web page a couple of weeks ago and that provides us a better platform to communicate program information and changes to customers. It also includes an online feedback form. So that is a better and easier avenue for customers at any time to offer ideas, complaints and commendations.

We are setting exploratory meetings with the TNC companies. I have one this afternoon with Uber. It is a preliminary meeting outside the realm of the task force where we can ask some of the tough questions about what kinds of things they can offer our region that they don't currently offer, such as their accessible fleet service or their shared ride service. Both of those things are things they have in other cities but don't have in the Twin Cities. What they would do to ensure effective training and mitigate some of those risks. I have those conversations with both Uber and Lyft before we advance and scope out a pilot.

Then partnering with advocacy groups. Driver training. One of the things that came out in the customer experience group is some of the service quality concerns in the existing program. Some of them have to do with driver training and retention. So partnering with National Federation of the Blind to date to help us develop driver training that can be easily adopted by our providers.

That is what we have going on right now. It will change by the time I talk to you next. She gave a link to the full report.

Ken Rodgers said I was the only member of the task force that was a Metro Mobility user. There was a lot of education that needed to take place with a lot of the policy makers. They did pretty well with grasping some of the nuances that can only come from someone who has experienced the program from being a participant. It gave us the opportunity to discover our own program. Compared to our peers in other communities across the US, Metro Mobility is one of the most cost efficient programs of paratransit in all of the US. The Met Council staff work supporting the task force was huge. Everybody was willing to look at the program and see how we can tweak it and make it better.

Kuennen said I was very gratified early on that the task force as a whole was uniformly looking at this as how can we provide the same or better service more efficiently rather than how can we reduce costs by cutting service. There was no appetite to curb our service further. Offer more denials. It was we want as much or more. We need to figure out how to achieve that.

Myhre mentioned concerns for having backup to these programs.

Kuennen said the options that are being presented are just proposed service options. All of the risks that were identified earlier are true risks. There are mitigation strategies to those risks. Education. There could be some oversight as far as making sure that a customer who should never take an optional service doesn't mistakenly book a ride on one. Maybe there is some oversight. Marching slowly and smartly with customer feedback. Take the pilot approach however small that pilot needs to be to make sure it is implemented correctly. Those are the things we need to do as administrators to make sure that we don't break anything.

Thorsen asked if there was anything the TAAC committee or its members and do to help in any way.

Kuennen said this committee will be key to not only provide advise on training and service improvements for providers but also in helping form what should be a pilot. Maybe even a user group. If we dabble in a TNC I would sure like some feedback from a set of power users or interested users before we roll it out to 93 communities. I consider this committee to be key with that. I think it would be smart to get feedback from this committee and other groups.

We did some training a couple of years ago when we partnered with the deaf/blind community and produced some specialized training for our providers that augmented what they already do. I think we should do more of that. I think the providers are somewhat limited in the material or administration of training. Anything that we as a council and any of our partners in the community can help produce and provide to them and incorporate this into their program. It is quite easy. We do a lot of the work and they deliver the training. I am borrowing some of Metro Transits ideas from when I was in charge of the instruction center over there. Adult learning techniques, training, use of humor. Things that would capture a driver's attention. One hour of training time or a 15-minute video can produce an equivalent of a couple of hours of in class training time. Doug also worked on this training.

Myhre said regarding the website. If you could help me bring it back to The ARC. I need the people that came to our meeting. We wanted to see how the website rode out. We wanted to give our opinions and ideas. The self-advocacy group is willing to do that. If they could do a presentation. A lot of us are using the smart phone. We get calls on the smartphone telling us it is time to pick us up. We can give you feedback on how it does or doesn't work. If you are willing to talk to Guthrie. I just need to get the names of the people who can do that. They could come and do a show and we can give you feedback.

Kuennen said maybe the best thing I can do is send you an email.

Myhre said yes. Then I can give it to Guthrie and then Katie will pick a month that would be appropriate for it. then we will do it.

Kuennen said to the point that this committee can help. There is a lot of ways that real user experience can help. There are two different things. One is the notification on the phone and the other is the website.

Myhre said we wanted to do the whole website and cell phone thing. Then give you feedback. Can we transfer the stuff on the screen to a cell phone and then understand what you are saying?

Kuennen said I will reach out by email.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

This item was not presented. Ken Rodgers said there is a meeting scheduled for April. Everything has been put on hold for the Blue Line Extension because there is some reluctance by the BNSF Railway to engage in conversations with the Blue Line Project Office. That has to happen before we can move forward. We are not in any danger of the line at this point. It is all still within the timeline with this current year delay. We are watching it closely.

2. Orange Line

This item was not presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Claire Schleichert spoke to the TAAC committee. You asked before about a policy for operations for rail. For awhile, it was consistent. Lately it has been hit or miss. There is a policy on it but I don't feel the policy is clear enough. I will read it to you and then tell you what I am going to do to follow up.

The door operations during extreme temperatures (below 32 degrees and above 80 degrees). The policy is this: "We are in release mode. The PA is not working properly. It should be opening doors. If the announcements are not working properly they should be announcing opening it for everyone. Under no circumstances will a train depart a station leaving passengers standing until all people at the station have had ample opportunity to board the train. Operators may open doors at platforms as they deem necessary to assist with loading and unloading."

I think maybe there should be a clause in there. One of the things we do and what we have told operators in the past is when you are coming into a station at 20 to 25 miles per hour. They still should be scanning that station. We call it clearing your stop. They should be scanning that station for anyone that has a cane, a dog, a wheelchair who may need assistance. Waiting longer at those locations. I encourage them to just hit the door button and open the door. It looks like we need some retraining there. We may need to stiffen the policy up a little more on that to make sure the language is included. It is not my area. But I will talk to the people who are in charge of that and see what we can do.

I said it was my understanding that as an operator approaches the platform this is what you do. He said that is the case. In one recent incident there was a visually impaired person who was standing inside of the shelter and near the third car. If you are sitting in the passenger seat of the train and you are trying to look back in a mirror, that is 300 feet behind you. As you are coming in at 20 to 25 miles per hour someone may be in a shelter, it may be hard to see. This is not an excuse. It is what they are up against. Ken, I know you said you stand by the first car. What is your process?

Rodgers said when I pick up the train in the morning I stand at the front door.

Schleichert said you have the right to stand anywhere you choose. I think it makes it a little bit easier for operators. But I don't want to tell you that you have to do that. I asked if this is the case. How is it enforced? With a complaint like this that comes in, the operator gets a policy review. They will be told in this policy review: you missed this person. This is what you have to look for. Here is the policy. Make sure you are following it. If it would happen again, they would get a logged complaint. This is considered a very rudimentary form of discipline. And then a file complaint. There are a whole list of policies. If they get a number of file complaints this could result in additional discipline up to termination. It seems like it was happening more before. It is not happening as much now. We definitely need to do a refresher on that. I will talk to operations and make sure to get that on Mike's calendar.

Buses should also be clearing their stop before they leave. If you have a line up of buses and people are waiting at that station, they should not be pulling out ahead of time. They should be pulling all the way up, stopping, announcing that route, and then proceeding on. If there is anyone at that stop. I don't care if you have a wheelchair or a cane or you are just standing there and happen to not be wearing your glasses that day, they still need to clear the stop before they proceed on the route.

The second thing I was going to bring up is we are doing an extended training in our part time to full time fixed route operators. This would be the Metro Transit side of things. When we start training with our bus operators, our part timers come in and they are in class for awhile, they can only absorb so much at a time. We then go back when they go from part time to full time. We do a review with them. We go over everything including the ADA like we did before. A lot of it is focused on the ADA. A lot is focused on what we are legally required to do. What we at Metro Transit go above and beyond what we are required to do for our customers. What we expect of our drivers. We are going to continue doing that piece. Nothing is being cut from that. We are adding an additional half hour. In that half hour we start. We will be telling everyone that we are going out to the bus. You will have blindfolds with you. You are not necessarily going to be putting them on right away, but we will tell you when.

What we did today, I actually did it myself. We put on these black blindfolds. You stand about a quarter of the way down the bus. We walk up slowly to the bus. Turn and have to board the bus and pay their fare and then find a seat. We will have every driver do this individually. Once they get on, they are asked what did you experience? What did you think? What could have helped you? Could kneeling of the bus help you? Could the driver saying good morning have helped you use that sound to locate?

I realize that sound is extremely important. We sat down on the bus and took our blindfolds off and discussed. Then we put them back on, stood up and held on to the stanchions on the bus. We went slowly around the block. I didn't know we were going around the block because I didn't know where we were. It was very interesting. The driver did not jerk the bus but gave us enough of a not smooth ride to have us understand how truly a jerky ride can be. Especially for someone who is blind and not expecting it when the bus has a hard stop. We talked about that and got back off the bus. We discussed a little more. Came back to the driver's room.

Then we did a video on helping those who are deaf. We showed a person articulating. Generally speaking the statistic I have heard is people can only lip read about 50 percent of what you are saying. We show one person not articulating very well and standing off to the side mumbling. In the next video we show them facing forward and making eye contact while articulating very well. Seeing the difference between these two. What did you notice? Could you make out the words from one and not the other? At the end they played it back to them. It is Jack and Jill went up the hill. Aim high. Then Mary had a little lamb. I noticed that I was picking out certain phrases and I was able to build the rest of the context around it as I was reading those people's lips.

We talked about that experience. We showed three or four very small videos of Mohamed. He is a business assistant analyst. He works in Bus Operations. He is blind. He is not completely blind, but he is legally blind. He is going to talk about his genetic disorder. A little bit of his experience. What really irks him. What is helpful. In those videos they show a patronizing tone. Where someone tries to make the blind person sit down. The people really think they are being helpful but they are not. We go through those videos and then show a good one at the end. Where Mohamed gets on and the driver says: "If you need anything let me know".

We take people to the edge of being empathetic, understand what people are going through, and then back to but don't patronize people and treat them like kids.

If you want us to present on this or you want to come see it, let me know and we can work that out.

MEMBER COMMENT

Ken Rodgers spoke to the TAAC committee. I just wanted to make a plug for the Metro Transit app on the phone. One particular feature that I had to use recently that was excellent. There are emergency call boxes on the trains. If I am not sitting right next to one. If I need to use one I would first have to find it. That is not a good option for me. Now there is a way to text an issue that you are experiencing, on the app directly. Nobody else knows what you are doing. Nobody knows that you are reporting something because you are not at a public call box announcing it. You can discretely give your concern to the folks at Metro Transit Control.

Recently I was riding home. It was a light day. It must have been a Friday. I was at my regular time going home. I smelled smoke. Someone could be playing with a cigarette lighter. Somebody could be trying to light something on fire. In my head I tried to figure out how to exit so if I had to make a quick escape I would know where to go. I realized someone was smoking. I used the app to text Metro Transit that someone was smoking on the train. I told them which train I was on. What station I boarded the train and sent the text. I got an immediate response. Can you identify the train number? It is up on the ceiling. I identified that I was blind and can't see that. But I told him where I was and the station we had just left. At the next station, security jumped on the train. By then it had stopped. They were there. They responded quickly. I wanted to tell you all that there is a really good tool to use should you need that. We talked earlier about safety. It is all about safety.

Doug Cook said in May, Text for Safety, people who do that for us, are going to be presenting here. You can try it out and ask questions and see what is new about that.

Myhre and Thorsen said that they have problems texting.

Kuennen said that is a good question you can clarify with the project team. It is my understanding it is just like any application where you can voice text. It is a function of having a text that goes directly to staff that is in the Transit Control Center that can respond and dispatch law enforcement in the same manner they would if they received a phone call.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary