

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, May 3, 2017

Committee Members Present: Chair Kjensmo Walker, Christopher Bates, Robert Platz, John Clark, Heidi Myhre, Lukus Zuker, Margot Imdieke Cross and Patty Thorsen.

Committee Members Absent: None.

Committee Members Excused: Sam Jasmine, Lisa Childs, Ken Rodgers, Dona Harris, Kari Sheldon, Bre Royer and David Fenley.

Council Staff Present: Pam Steffen, Jessica Kern, Berry Farrington, Ben Rajkowski and Tekia Jefferson from Metro Transit, Leslie Kandaras, Dan Marckel, Andy Streasick and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Steven Holes from MAC, Brent Visser from MDA and Mary Karlsson from Kimley-Horn.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Walker called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:32 p.m. on Wednesday, May 3, 2017.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Bates, seconded by Thorsen to approve the minutes of the Wednesday, April 5, 2017 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Legislative Update

Leslie Kandaras spoke to the TAAC committee. She is a Senior Project Coordinator in the Government Affairs Department of the Metropolitan Council. The legislature is heading into the final stretch. The legislature by constitutional requirement needs to be done with their business by May 22. If they don't finish they are going to have to look at a special session to wrap up their budget bills. As of now things are picking up pace in terms of honing in on the final details for each of the major finance pieces that need to be passed to keep the state government operational after the end of the current fiscal year. Met Council staff has been spending a lot of time focused on transportation.

Since she was last here in April the House and Senate had both passed their individual bills in late March. In April, they began the process of conducting the conference committee work. On Monday, they adopted an amendment to the bill that will set a framework for the final conference committee report. This week we got a peek at where they are headed in terms of funding and policy provisions in the bill. The bill that was adopted in the conference committee this week has more funding than either the House or the Senate individual bills had. But it would still leave the Metropolitan Council with about a \$30 million or \$40 million deficit in the 2018-2019 biennium. It would still result in service cuts of roughly 10 percent and would affect all services and would lead to an increase in fares as well. We continue to raise our concerns about cutting transit at a time when we have a state budget surplus.

In addition to the finance piece of the bill it has several policy provisions in it ranging from a wholesale restructuring of the metropolitan governance structure, which would not just affect transportation but would also impact how we provide wastewater services, housing services and the like. To other provisions restricting how local governments can spend their dollars if they are pursuing light rail projects, for instance.

The other piece she wanted to mention is Representative Koznick's and Senator Kiffmeyer's proposal for the Metro Mobility Enhancement Task Force. That is included in the bill that was taken up by the conference committee on Monday. It includes the membership duties and ultimately the task force would provide a report back to the legislature next year. Right now, everything is in flux. Now that the House and Senate are on the same page in terms of their transportation proposal the next step for them is to start meeting with the governor and negotiating the final deals.

Streasick said that Metro Mobility would be ADA compliant regardless of the service cuts. The non ADA service may be impacted by the service cuts. If cuts result in a constricting city bus service the ADA service area is going to constrict in a similar fashion. So rides that are currently ADA rides may not be ADA rides in the future if the service footprint for Metro Transit shrinks with the resulted cuts. Both fare increase options right now include bumping up the reduced fare for folks with disabilities to \$1.00 from \$0.75.

Kandaras said the Southwest line continues to be a flashpoint in the debate. There are many moving pieces. At the federal level with the new administration there are some different signals in terms of where they want to go with transit funding generally. How that will play out in the Southwest case is something they are monitoring closely. One piece of good news they received this week is the budget deal struck to keep federal government open. They included \$10 million for the Southwest project as part of that. It is something that they are monitoring at the state level.

At the state level the legislators have been visible in opposition to Southwest. Including sending a letter to the US Transportation Secretary outlining their opposition to sending this federal money to the state. Additionally, some of those policy provisions she mentioned in the Transportation Bill pertain to preventing local governments from spending local money constructing rail projects unless they are first approved by the legislature. Southwest would not meet that standard right now.

The Transportation Conference Committee bill that was introduced on Monday. Section 159 in the third article of that bill is the Metro Mobility Task Force. It outlines a different membership component. It talks about the duties which are to look at approaches to improve Metro Mobility service by using partnerships with transportation network companies. In committee when Representative Koznick was testifying in favor of his bill he said he was looking at what other cities in the country were doing and was seeing innovative partnerships with private companies and he wanted us to explore that here. When the provision was debated in the Senate Transportation Committee Senator Westrom included language about exploring taxi service options as well. So you will see that language. This task force was not initiated by the Metropolitan Council. Met Council staff has been in conversation with the authors about this. They also expressed some concern in terms of the composition of the task force. Just making sure that the people who could be appointed to this have some expertise in paratransit as well as don't have a conflict of interest in the outcome of the task force recommendations. It is now in the conference committee report.

Earlier in session there were several bills relating to the Metropolitan Council governance. They did receive hearings and were moving through the process. There is a bill by Representative Albright that changed the composition of the Metropolitan Council to be made up of elected officials. People who are already elected by counties or cities then would be additionally added to the Metropolitan Council in place of gubernatorial appointment. They wouldn't be directly elected to the Metropolitan Council. By virtue of being elected officials they could be named to the Metropolitan Council. That bill as a stand alone bill was being prepared for House debate. That was a provision that was largely added with some tweaks to the Transportation Conference Committee report on Monday. There hasn't been extensive discussion about it in the conference committee. But it did receive more attention earlier in the session as a stand alone bill. This would eliminate TAB.

The Metro Mobility Task Force will be made up of people from several places. One of them will be recommended by the Metropolitan Council from Metro Mobility staff. The TAAC committee will appoint somebody. There are several other members from elected officials from the counties. It would also include people who work for companies that would potentially be providing service to Metro Mobility customers.

2. Airport

Berry Farrington from Metro Transit, Ben Rajkowski from Metro Transit, Steve Holes from the Metropolitan Airports Commission and Mary Karlsson from Kimley-Horn spoke to the TAAC committee. Mary is on the design team for the airport. They will be sharing some information about some improvements at the airport transit center where Metro Transit's Route 54 serves. Holes invited the TAAC committee to an airport quarterly

meeting called the Travelers with Disabilities Advisory Committee. Margot Imdieke Cross and Ken Rodgers are part of that committee.

Farrington will give an overview of the presentation as a highlight of what is there at the airport today. Then Steve and Mary will talk about the airport's project which includes improvement to the transit center. Then Ben is going to talk specifically about the transit information that will be improved upon at the transit center and then wrap up how they are going to handle transit operations through the period of construction.

Today, on Route 54 that travels from downtown St. Paul to the airport at terminal one. It has an indoor waiting area as well as shelters outside. There is also the Blue Line LRT station which is two levels down from here. The transit center is the airport's. They own it. Metro Transit operates there. They have a partnership. Metro Mobility service does not use this space. Metro Mobility uses the roadway that goes right along the terminal. That is a highlight of what is there now.

They will start with talking about what the construction project is that is happening at the airport right now. Then they will work into what does transit operations look like during this construction phase. The improvements include the passenger terminal, a new 5,000 space parking ramp. There is a new hotel. Then there is a redesigned parking exit plaza. There is a new Delta Airline Administration building. This is a huge construction project for the airport. The cost is in the billions of dollars.

She discussed what the passenger improvements look like. They include new flooring and new lighting. There will be improved elevators and escalators. They showed the exterior of the hotel and the parking ramp. The new parking ramp will be next to the old parking ramp. The new parking structure will be built where the current transit center is and where the current Route 54 bus pick up and drop off is. The ground level of that structure will be the new transit center. The transit center will be completely covered.

The parking extension highlights. This is an airport project so this is a MAC project. They are the lead for this project. Metro Transit is providing design feedback on the transit facilities and has done a nice job with that. This is a multi-level parking structure with the bus on the ground level. There are no changes to Metro Mobility operations. During construction and after construction, Metro Mobility will continue to operate the way that it does today at Terminal one. Route 54 will operate similar to what it does today but out of the new transit center. There will be no changes to the Blue Line operations during construction and after construction.

She showed the inside. She showed what the inside of the transit center will look like. The waiting area, where the doors will be located, escalators, vending machines, concessions and the restrooms. This will be a shared space with the rental car area.

Transit information. There will be an internal real time display with departure information, rider alert information. They can customize the real time screens to include any type of information they want. That will be a prominent feature along the back wall near the main exit to the plaza. As customers would exit to the bus waiting area there will be a large three map display. This is a standard they have at all of their transit centers. One map is a general system map that shows the airport and connecting routes and rail and Metro Line service. Then certain schedules for that area along with a general content poster with fares.

As customers exit to wait for the bus there will be two gates (gates A and B). The Route 54 goes to the Mall of America and to downtown Saint Paul. There will be a new bus stop sign along with the Gates designation and route designation. It will have Route 54 directional information (to the Mall of America or downtown Saint Paul.) They will have two gate level real time displays. This will show real time departure information for buses. They would like to have them situated so they are gate specific so you would know which one is two minutes away or seven minutes away.

The transit center is set to open in August of 2019 or it could be later than that in 2020. They have an interim location for Route 54. They want to make sure they have the same level of amenities at the interim location. The interim location for Route 54 is located near where the Metro Mobility drop off location is. There will be a new bus stop sign and shelter set up at the bus stop location. There will be an indoor waiting facility across the cross walk. They will have transit information in the indoor waiting area. They will have the current screen, signage and seating area. The project does not affect the timing of the Route 54 bus. It just affects where the bus stop is located. As of June 17, they will have a new pocket schedule coming out that will make note of the change of the bus stop. But the timing is not altered. Instead of going into the current transit plaza it will go around the roadway, stop and continue on.

They will do customer outreach regarding these changes in advance of the June 17, switchover. There will be posted rider alerts at the transit area as well as inside the transit plaza at the airport. There will be updated signage at the interim stop and they will be removing the information at the current stop. They will have new wayfinding signage within the airport itself to direct customers as they get off the rails. Specifically, if they are coming out of baggage claim. Metrotransit.org will be updated with information. There will be a Route 54 page with information about this change. There will be social media messaging. There are subscription service text and email rider alerts will have information sent out to customers who take Route 54. There will be an updated rail audio message to direct customers.

There is an enunciator on the sign today. That sign is going to move. That enunciator will continue to work at the interim bus stop. Then in 2020 the new real time signs at the transit center will also have enunciators.

The presentation today does not impact Terminal two.

Riverview does not have anything at this time that goes to the airport.

There will be MAC staff that man operation booths or volunteers to help people during most of the day.

3. Wrap Up of Community Conversation

Andy Streasick, Customer Service Manager at Metro Mobility, spoke to the TAAC committee. The Community Conversation was on Monday, April 17, 2017. Of all of the ones they have done so far this was the most positive. Metro Mobility is doing better the last year or so. They are finally able to staff the right amount of drivers across all three zones. The newest zone in the south has a grasp of what the needs are with staffing of both the drivers and reservationists. With the situation at the legislature, cuts will be likely. The folks at the conversation wanted to make it known that service was important to them. They would rather have a fare increase than cuts in service. There was some feedback about the \$1.25 surcharge for non ADA trips over 15 miles. It would be a source of frustration.

Platz and Thorsen both were there and were impressed with the positive response they got. They gave feedback on how they can make things better.

Nick Thompson, Director of Metropolitan Transportation Services, spoke to the attendees.

The next one has not been scheduled at this time.

Streasick has spoken with providers about the reservationists repeating information back to the riders to confirm the information is correct when they are making the reservation to prevent problems later.

4. Metro Mobility Stats

Andy Streasick, Customer Service Manager at Metro Mobility, spoke to the TAAC committee. March is the busiest month of the last 12 months in terms of ridership. It is 31 days long and there are no major holidays in this month. The on-time performance was over 95 percent in all three zones. When they can staff enough drivers they do well. When they can't staff enough drivers they do not do well. Streasick believes that appointment times are more important than on-time pickup. They are hoping for something around 90 percent or above on-time for appointments.

The non-ADA agency rides. He has spoken with the manager about the standing orders. They don't get reimbursed the same way as they do on demand for agency. They are likely to restructure this in some way given the funding realities. There is likely going to be some changes with the agency contract. What it means to be an agency. Changing how many rides coming into your site you need to qualify. Shrink it a bit. Maybe have it changed to ADA only where people who are out of the ADA service area who wouldn't have standing orders would book rides on the demand side. There are some changes coming on the agency side. They need to improve the appointment times as a result of that.

They call the drop off time negotiated in the Trapeze database. It is not negotiated. If you call and say "I need to be there by 8:00", they don't say "We can get you there by 8:15". The 8:00 time is the negotiated time.

There is always a juggling act between wanting to make sure that you are hitting all of your customer service metrics. While at the same time having decent productivity with provider trips per hour. Probably the provider trips per hour productivity is a little bit lower than he would like to see it. It is likely when they get a new senior manager in here that they will be asking providers to take a look at what they can do to boost their productivity.

Streasick's role will be to make sure that that does not result in diminished customer service experiences with regard to on-time performance and maximum on board time.

Streasick spoke about a mandatory script that reservationists would have to read.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

This item was not presented.

2. Orange Line

This item was not presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MEMBER COMMENT

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. She sent out an email regarding Northstar mandatory FRA exercise that is June 3, from 9:00 a.m. till 12:00 noon. They are looking for people with disabilities to have on their train as part of their exercise. They will have a bus that will meet TAAC committee members either at the Heywood campus or at Target Field. They will take you up to the Ramsey Station. That is where the exercise will be. She will send an email to the TAAC members informing them about the pickup.

Steffen also spoke about a Raymond Street visit. Kim Zlimen put an offer out there for the potential Raymond Station visit for the in between car barriers and the tactile door indicators. They are going to have to remove those. They are going to be placing them at Lake Street as a pilot. If any committee members are interested in doing a Raymond Station visit, please let Steffen know.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary