

# Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, September 3, 2014

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Ron Biss, Rozanne Severence, Kjensmo Walker, James Williams, Bob Anderson, Robert Platz, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Nichole Villavicencio and Patty Thorsen.

**Committee Members Absent:** None.

**Committee Members Excused:** Mark Hoisser and Margot Imdieke Cross.

**Council Staff Present:** Sam O'Connell and Robin Caufman from the Southwest Project Office, Clare Schleichert from OEO, Pam Steffen from Metro Transit, Cole Hiniker, David Russell, Andrew Krueger, Heidi Schallberg and Alison Coleman

**Public Present:** Claudia Fugile.

## CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Biss called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:35 p.m. on Wednesday, September 03, 2014.

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by Lund, seconded by McGuire to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Anderson, seconded by Thorsen to approve the minutes of the August 6, 2014 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

## INFORMATION & BUSINESS

### 1. Transportation Policy Plan Draft Public Comment

Cole Hiniker spoke to the TAAC committee. Today he focused on mainly the transit investment direction and plan, land use and local planning and the public comment period. The plan has a lot of different audiences: policy makers, transportation agencies, local governments and planners, community organizations and stakeholders, businesses and employers, advocates and residents. They structured it to respond to the different needs of the different groups. They are integrating the modes more. How the biking interacts with the road system. How transit and pedestrians interact. They are trying to make it more multi-modal in its focus.

There are three major sections:

Part I: Transportation for a Thriving Region

Part II: Implementing the Transportation Vision

Part III: Federal Requirements- the primary audience is the Federal government. It includes the equity and environmental justice piece.

There is an attempt to focus on plain language.

Part I is where you find things in a summary level.

Part II is where you find a lot of the plan in detail. There are strategies where they ask the local governments to utilize the planning of their systems. They do have the systems in the modes. In the Highway chapter they detail what the highway improvements will be throughout the region for the next 25 years. He is going to talk about transit today, a little bit about bike and pedestrians and the local systems.

The local systems do have a bike network that they have identified for the region along with freight investment and aviation. They do have a work program. They talk about things they continue to monitor and work on to improve the quality of the plan and the work program items. It will be relevant for topics going forward.

Transit investment direction and plan. Between highways and transit that is the majority of the focal point of the regional system in terms of level of investment. So it is about a \$34 billion plan over 25 years. That represents the current revenue scenario. Which is what can they do with the money they get today and that they reasonably expect to get in the future? It does not assume more money than they are getting today. They expect to be able to operate the regional system as it exists today. All of the existing regular route service, the transitways there are today, including the light rail, BRT and the Northstar. The existing levels of service for Transit Link and vanpool and the existing Metro Mobility.

They recognize that Metro Mobility use is growing substantially. That is representing demographic changes as well as the overall aging of the population. They did factor in the fact that Metro Mobility will continue to grow. While there is no growth in the rest of the system because there isn't any money to do it, they do expect to be able to fund the growth in Metro Mobility. There is also some expansion in the transitway system. They are primarily through investments made by CTIB and coordination with the Council. There are some limited opportunities for improving the bus system from a capital prospective that is primarily coming through funds that flow through the TAB. They do a regional solicitation every two years and there is some money set aside for transit. They have their own criteria for picking projects. It has to be consistent with the plan.

On the transitway side he showed transitways funded by the plan out through 2040. A number of them are currently operating: the Blue Line (Hiawatha), Green Line (Central Corridor) and the Red Line (Cedar Avenue) as well as Northstar. There are a few additional corridors in the plan. The Green Line extension (Southwest LRT) and the Blue Line extension (Bottineau). There are also a number of corridors in the East Metro that are still under study. They are planning to fund the Riverdale Corridor, Robert Street and Red Rock. There are also a number of arterial BRT projects. The one major update in this version of the plan is the Gateway Corridor. This is the first dedicated BRT that the region will build. As that project moves forward it will be important for this group to weigh in on what it looks like. It will be the first time that they have ever built a system like that in the region. It is meant to be BRT that mimics LRT. The inclusion of this corridor in the plan is picking the mode that has previously been under study. That is a big step for this corridor. They have a separate comment process for this corridor.

They don't limit the plan to what they currently have as the status quo. They do identify investment opportunities if they were to get more funding. You will probably see at the legislature a big push for more funding for transportation so more of these things can be done. On the bus side there is a scenario that includes one percent growth in bus service across the region annually. It is a pretty substantial amount of funding but it is slow. It happens over time and not up front in the plan. This would include a lot of different investments in service, a better frequency, more coverage across the region, suburban service, more express service, and overall a better customer experience. They would be providing better amenities, a better expansion of shelters and heat, expansion of the capital investment that make the transit system better. It also includes more transitways. Building more at one time and faster at a quicker time frame. Many corridors are being studied. They would balance those investments with the need and be able to deliver some transitway improvement in those corridors. There are 12 arterial BRT corridors. This will help Metro Transit to make the bus system faster and higher amenities. The level of need is substantial. It would include an increase in the overall bus system.

There will be an update to the Regional Service Improvement Plan. This is where they document all of the bus expansion needs the region has. They evaluate them against each other to try to identify the highest need. Metro Transit is currently updating their Service Improvement Plan for the territory that they serve. There will be some outreach opportunities coming in October and November. It will be important for this group to follow that. There is a preliminary draft of the improvements today. There is a network of buses and routes that looks much different and much more substantial than what is out there today.

Metro Transit will be working on the park-and-ride update. It looks like where there are existing park-and-rides and the future ones in the next year or two. Another one is the bus stop amenities guidelines plan. This will focus on what there is at the basic bus stop today and how can they improve those amenities that are provided at those bus stops. It will look at things like heat, shelters, what is the basic customer

information and try to give guidance toward the highest priority needs for those types of amenities are verses where there are gaps in the system that are not being met today. This will look at the standards and provide an approximate estimate on how much that will cost for the whole region. This will help them to have a better understanding where they can prioritize needs first.

Modern streetcar regional policy discussion. This group has had a few presentations on the Nicollet Central Project. They are looking at investing in streetcars in Minneapolis. This plan currently doesn't include this project in the fiscally constrained scenario. The Council is working on identifying how streetcars fit within the regional transit system. What are the different funding opportunities there and how might that be coordinated with the rest of the system from an operations perspective? They expect to address this in a future update of the plan.

The streetcars operate in mixed traffic. That would operate similar to a bus. It would be sharing lanes with cars. They have a smaller vehicle that can typically fit in the more constrained environment in the block structure and the urban street grid. They typically have smaller stations. They are more frequently spaced. It operates more similar to a bus. It has enhanced features. The better vehicle. The smoother ride. It has the benefits of light rail without the one to two mile spacing. The cities that currently have streetcars and light rail are Seattle, Portland and Salt Lake City. They serve very different travel markets and very different needs within those communities. The streetcar runs on rails and has the overhead power. It will look similar to the light rail lines. The vehicles and stations will be smaller. It will operate similar to a bus.

Bicycle and pedestrian investment direction. Biking and walking are effective transportation solutions within and near congested centers like downtowns and universities. Pedestrian planning is best performed at the local level. Pedestrian planning is integral to planning for other transportation modes. Bicycle planning to ensure regional continuity is an important regional role. They look at the regional system. There isn't a regional pedestrian system as much as there is a regional trail system that can also accommodate bicycles. They did a bicycle system study. They identified a regional system of bicycle transportation corridors. These are meant to be corridors that serve the travel needs of our residents. Not necessarily the recreational needs. It is not going to look the same as the regional trails map. This looks at where are people going, work, school, shopping and where a bicycle is most needed. This is the first regional bicycle network the region has ever produced. The primary purpose is to show corridors that need investment and help make sure there is a very efficient regional system. Identify the gaps in the system. The local governments can fill the gaps in the system. Provide a bike facility that is specific to bikes. Build a network where bikes have their own space. It will be done on a corridor by corridor basis. Bicycles and pedestrians are more vulnerable because the system today is not designed for those users. Help elevate those needs in the plan.

Transportation and land use is an area where they focus on what is the interaction between the places they are trying to get to and how transportation can best serve them. One of the big focal points is trying to make sure the local governments are planning for both land use and their local network of streets and roads that are not really influenced by the plan to be more supportive of transit and other modes instead of only serving cars as in the past. There are a couple of different strategies to help local governments do this. Part of the focal point is to educate local governments and people working on designing these facilities to help think about doing things differently. Developing a walkable street network. Design for a pedestrian friendly environment. Plan for a mixed-use development pattern. Manage parking and support travel options. Maintain and increase affordable housing options. Incorporate civic and public spaces. Support and leverage the private market investment. Identify where the market already wants to go. The Council will work to provide more details and best practices through the Local Planning Handbook and update the Guide for TOD.

Residential density requirements supporting transit investment stewardship. Depends on community designation level that relates to stage of development from Thrive MSP 2040. Minimums- rail dedicated BRT stations: 20-50 units per acre. Highway BRT stations: 10-25 units per acre. Arterial BRT: 15 units per acre. Targets – Rail dedicated ROW stations: 40-150 units per acre. Other BRT stations: 20-75+ units per acre. Arterial BRT: 15-60+ units per acre.

Elements of a good pedestrian experience: Well designed, well maintained, safe and secure pedestrian facilities. Access to a mix of destinations and uses. Manageable walking distances and crossings. This directly affects the amount of lanes you have in a road. Where the pedestrian islands are. Where the

bump-outs could be. A human-scale and visually interesting environment. Protection from climate and environment.

## 2. Southwest LRT Update

Sam O'Connell and Robin Cauffman spoke to the TAAC committee. Sam is the Manager for Public Involvement for Southwest. Robin is the Assistant Director for the Administration, Communications and Outreach for Central Corridor Southwest and most recently Bottineau or Blue Line extension going up to Brooklyn Park. Over the past year they have been focusing on big issues like where the stations are going to be, bridge structures, tunnel structures. In 2015 they are going to be focused on ground level design details. They have hit three major milestones within the past week. They have received municipal consent from all five communities as well as Hennepin County. This is approximately 12 months in the making. Hennepin County Regional Railroad Authority and the County's Transit Improvement Board have fulfilled their commitments in terms of the funding piece of it. They have committed \$700 million towards the project. They will be working towards the federal piece of this, which is 50 percent of the cost.

When the Community Advisory Committee was formed a couple of years ago, it is a committee comprised of community representatives all along the line, there was an appointment from the TAAC, Kim Kang. With the CAC as well as the Business Advisory Committee, when they achieved the municipal consent design, there wasn't a lot of feedback and direction they could receive until the cities approved it. So they will be looking to reestablish the Business Advisory Committee as well as the Community Advisory Committee and they would hope that the TAAC will also appoint a representative so when those groups begin to meet again that they are receiving the full voice of the community as they move forward.

The Southwest LRT line is 16 miles with 17 new stations. Revenue Service should start in 2019. It starts at Mitchell Station in Eden Prairie and goes into Minneapolis. It goes through five communities. It is the extension of the current Green Line. Folks can get on in St. Paul and go all the way to Mitchell Station and all the points in between without ever having to get off the light rail vehicle. This truly is a regional amenity. Between Mitchell Station and the St. Paul Union Depot Station on the Green Line there is access to about 21 percent of the region's population. Their hope is that they will have this extension up and running by 2019. They are hoping to do about 30,000 average weekday ridership in 2030. Their experience on the Green Line today is that those projections are more than robust in terms of what they are experiencing. Supporting that is the Blue Line in providing connections down to the airport, the VA and the Mall of America. The Green Line links a lot of the employment centers in the region, particularly those employment centers that are growing out in the Minnetonka and Eden Prairie area. Giving folks good access to those jobs. So folks can continue to live in the urban core. And also travel to those jobs. There are a lot of destinations that they don't have on this map.

You could not take the route by car that the LRT takes. Chair Biss asked if the TAAC committee could take a bus tour of the area that the LRT would take. O'Connell said that could be done.

The majority of the stations outside the City of Minneapolis do have park and ride facilities. They are making sure that everybody has access to these stations.

Ultimately this project is \$1.65 billion with half of that coming from the feds. They are in a good place with the local commitment. They are looking to secure that federal commitment within a couple of years. Part of that is they have a little more work to do. They have some advance engineering they have to do. They also have to secure some of the environmental clearances. They are in the federal project pipeline for funding. They also have to make sure that they are advancing and making the project as good as it can be.

The map represents 16 miles of the corridor. It was broken up into 25 distinctive pieces. Some of them are focused around stations. Out of the 25 technical issues there were 22 that were resolved. The advisory committees help along with some open houses and going out and meeting with folks on a one to one basis, getting feedback. The big three are comprised of the Eden Prairie alignment, the location of the Operation and Maintenance Facility and the location of the freight rail.

The first piece is the Eden Prairie alignment – there was still some discussion as to ultimately how we get through Eden Prairie.

The second piece is the Operations and Maintenance Facility will be located in Hopkins. It is in an industrial area. They are at capacity on the Blue Line facility as well as the current Green Line facility. They will be working very closely with the City of Hopkins on relocation for some of the businesses that are in this area as well and for the Operations and Maintenance Facility. If they cannot relocate in Hopkins they may be able to relocate somewhere on the corridor. So something more along the lines of the Blue Line Franklin OMF as opposed to what we have in Lowertown. Of the 18 potential sites they did land on one in Hopkins. It is mid line. It provides the best efficiencies in running the LRV's through the corridor.

The last issue is part of the corridor has active freight rail. That was the last of the big piece. They carried two alternatives as they were moving forward in design. One where there is the current freight rail corridor in Kenilworth, it would be located through St. Louis Park or what is existing today that they would keep the freight rail and also add light rail transit through there. Ultimately, earlier this year in April the Council decided that they would move forward with the Kenilworth design where they keep freight rail and where LRT is in a tunnel and then they have a bridge over the channel. Then they are at grade as they continue eastbound into Minneapolis. That is the design that they will pursue.

During the alternatives analysis there were many options that were looked at in terms of routes going through Uptown and up Route 100 and coming into Route 394 into Minneapolis. With light rail's footprint it would have been very disruptive to have LRT either on Nicollet coming down from Minneapolis. So you would be taking out a lot of the existing businesses and a lot of multi-family homes to accommodate light rail. You would also need to figure out how to snake through that 94/394 interchange. So it would require extensive structure overhead or below. Going through Uptown was one of the higher cost alternatives that was originally looked at. The Uptown area does receive extensive transit service today. You would be replacing one service for another.

The Southwest LRT is similar to the Blue Line as far as land use and size. They do not operate in mixed traffic. They have their own right of way. A lot of this follows trail. So they are behind certain buildings and certain areas. They are away from roadways and so they don't have as many roadway crossings. Streetcar may be a better fit for the Uptown and Nicollet market. They would make sure that there is good access from the Southwest through Midtown.

Like with the Green Line they will do an extensive bus study. As they get closer to actual operations a couple of years out they will be working with Metro Transit to make sure that they are maximizing their investments.

They have the green light from the five cities and from Hennepin County that they needed to acquire municipal consent, with the last approval on August 29. They will continue to work with the cities and local governments.

Southwest LRT Development Timeline: 2013 - project development. 2014 - Municipal consent. 2015 – advanced engineering, street scaping, station design, supplemental Draft Environmental Impact Statement, Final EIS. 2016 – Full Funding Grant Agreement (50 percent from the feds). 2016-2018 – Heavy Construction. 2019 – Passenger operations.

There are three Community Outreach Coordinators at the Southwest Project Office. They are the first resource on the project:

Daren Nyquist – Eden Prairie. (stations: City West, Golden Triangle, Eden Prairie Town Center, Southwest and Mitchell) 612-373-3894 [daren.nyquist@metrotransit.org](mailto:daren.nyquist@metrotransit.org)

Dan Pfeiffer – Minnetonka, Hopkins and Edina. (stations: Blake, Hopkins, Shady Oak and Opus) 612-373-3897 [daniel.pfeiffer@metrotransit.org](mailto:daniel.pfeiffer@metrotransit.org)

Sophia Ginis – St. Louis Park and Minneapolis. (stations: Royalston, Van White, Penn, West Lake, Beltline, Wooddale and Louisiana) 612-373-3895 [sophia.ginis@metrotransit.org](mailto:sophia.ginis@metrotransit.org)

They can provide status updates. The website will also have updates: [www.SWLRT.org](http://www.SWLRT.org) email is [swlrt@metrotransit.org](mailto:swlrt@metrotransit.org)

The trails, light rail and freight rail will all be there in the corridor. They will have to move the freight tracks in order to get the light rail in there. Freight rail will be on the north, then the light rail and then the Kenilworth Trail. You could use the bike trail to access the station.

### **3. Metro Transit Update**

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. She asked for feedback on the State Fair. Paulsen spoke about his experience getting there. Walker spoke about her experience. Myhre spoke about her experience.

Chair Biss said that he would contact the State Fair office to see if someone would come to the TAAC meeting early in the year. He asked the TAAC committee members to email him with some thoughts that they would like addressed.

Villavicencio suggested there be some signage on the trains and at the stations with directions on how to get from the light rail to the fair.

Steffen said that it is her goal to have on board information centers on the light rail trains. They are not sure where to put them.

Villavicencio suggested that the police who work at the fair know where the buses are and where they go.

Myhre asked if the hours of the information booths could stay open later.

### **MEMBER COMMENT**

Andrew Krueger asked that the TAAC members attend as many Metro Mobility public forums as possible and give as much feedback as they can. The 2014 Public Forum Schedule was given to the committee members.

The Minnesota Public Transit Association has an annual conference. As part of that conference they select an organization that demonstrates achievements in efficiency and effectiveness and honors them with an award called "The Transit System of the Year". Metro Mobility was selected as the "Minnesota Transit System of the Year." That award will be given out next Tuesday at their annual meeting. Chair Biss will be doing the honors of presenting that award.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary