

# **Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, October 07, 2015

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Kjensmo Walker, Christopher Bates, Adora Sage, Ken Rodgers, Douglas Moody, Robert Platz, Kari Sheldon, Heidi Myhre, Nichole Villavicencio, Margot Imdieke Cross, David Fenley and Patty Thorsen.

**Committee Members Absent:** Julianne Bina.

**Committee Members Excused:** Kim Trenary and Bob Anderson

**Council Staff Present:** Christina Morrison and Pam Steffen from Metro Transit, Michelle Fure, Claudia Fuentes, Heidi Schallberg, Andrew Krueger, Andy Streasick and Alison Coleman.

**Public Present:** Jasna Hadzic, Kristie Billiar, Max Holdhusen, Nick Guilliams, Natalie Westberg, Chris Kartheiser, Ellen Pillsbury and Joel Fox.

## **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, October 07, 2015.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

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

It was moved by Thorsen, seconded by Bates to approve the minutes of the September 2, 2015 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

## **INFORMATION & BUSINESS**

### **1. Metro Mobility Public Meeting Update**

Claudia Fuentes spoke to the TAAC committee. She is an Outreach Coordinator for the Metropolitan Council. She worked with Metro Mobility staff to conduct an engagement effort for some feedback they hoped to obtain from Metro Mobility customers. They identified a place, a date and time. They are in the process of distributing the invitations to people. It will take place on Thursday, October 29, at the Oxboro Library in Bloomington, from 10:00 to 11:30. They are looking at a fall theme and doing whatever they can within their control to make it a welcoming event. R.S.V.P.'s are starting to roll in. She has communicated with 14 organizations and persons with disabilities. The response has been enthusiastic. R.S.V.P.'s are welcome but not necessary. The focus is on the South Zone riders.

### **2. Metro Transit Orange Line**

Christina Morrison spoke to the TAAC committee. She is a Senior Planner with Metro Transit BRT/ Small Starts Project's Office. She is working on the Orange Line on I-35W between downtown Minneapolis and Burnsville. They are looking at a 17 mile route with 11 planned stations. They have a number of station improvements that are focused around access, comfort and technology. They want to provide people with a more positive experience. They will be looking at 10 minute service during the peak hour and adding that span of service time to 20 hours a day. Today they do a very good job of getting people into downtown during the peak hour and getting people out of downtown during the afternoon. They provide all day bi directional service that they have seen to be very successful on other lines. Helping go get people to jobs and other destinations and visiting people on the weekends. This will be the first weekend service on I-35W as well. The timeline is starting construction in 2017 and looking into opening in late 2019.

She showed station designs. They are similar to what would be found on the light rail platforms but right at the street level. They are just beginning the engineering process. They will have input on how these stations will look and feel. The BRT buses are 60 foot articulated buses. They will have a little more open layout inside. There are a couple fewer seats planned. As with the A-Line, they are looking at a passive restraint system. The wheelchair could back into a space. There still could be an option to secure the chair with seatbelts as they have today. They are looking at more options for the customers.

The Orange Line utilizes a few already existing stations. Downtown will be operating on Marquette and Second, which is where all of the existing I-35W express service runs on. Then they will be using the 46<sup>th</sup> Street station that was built as part of the Crosstown Commons project. The keystone of the Orange Line is a new Lake Street station. There will be a complete reconstruction of the bridges on the roadway on Lake Street and I-35W. This is integrated into a larger I-35W project. It would move the station to the center of the freeway much like 46<sup>th</sup> Street. Then it would have fully accessible elevators and stairs down to Lake Street on both sides (North and South). It would have a glass enclosure station and then you would use stairs or elevators to get up to the freeway level to catch the Orange Line and the I-35W express bus there. They have about 26 routes that would be coming through the station. All of those would have this as a mandatory stop in their route. This would open it up to expand the opportunities for people to make connections to South Minneapolis. As part of this there is also a city/county funded project as a green trail connection from the Lake Street station at the street level to the trail.

Another place where they are having quite a bit of investment is at Knox Avenue in Bloomington/Richfield. If you are familiar with Route 535, which is the BRT precursor in the corridor. They come off of I-35W and make a number of stops at these local destinations like Penn Avenue, Best Buy, Southtown Shopping Center and Knox Avenue park and ride. There are so many people who want to go to this area that live along 75<sup>th</sup> and Penn that are trying to get on a bus going downtown or south like Burnsville.

They are going to continue to come off of the freeway and stop once on the Southtown Shopping Center side. They will create a new underpass under I-494 and stop once at Best Buy/76<sup>th</sup> Street side and then reenter the freeway. This allows them to keep providing the front door service but it makes it about 50 percent faster than the trip they have today. It would include as part of this a trail connection or sidewalk under I-494 because if you are building something under a freeway, it is a good opportunity to do that. This project will bring together the redevelopment on the Bloomington side with the existing housing and employment on the north side.

They are currently in the project development phase. They will be beginning engineering this month. They are in the process of issuing the engineering contract. A lot of things have been conceptual to date as far as what the stations will look like, roughly where they are going to be. Now they are ready to move into a phase where they want to define those things and the set design plans and work their way towards construction. They are going to start construction during the third quarter of 2017.

Public engagement. They are trying to find people where they are. It could be at a block party, a community meeting or a street festival. There are a few different options to engage people from the TAAC committee. They are asking TAAC members to become involved in the internal working group or the staff group of Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit employees or to the Technical Advisory Committee. They could also continue to come to the TAAC meetings and bring updates on the project.

The platforms are about 100 feet long so they have the opportunity to build different kinds of station configurations. It is all very open right now.

Lake Street is the only station they are building that has two stories. In that case there are stairs because it is a constrained right of way. It is directly above Lake Street itself. None of the other stations will have stairs. Everything else will be at street level and fully accessible. The Lake Street station will have elevators on each side of Lake Street. There is a ramp option as well as a stair option.

Pam Steffen said that the Orange Line will have the restraint system that is the Q-Strait system that some of the TAAC members saw at the Light Rail facility. It will be on the A-Line coming up this spring. It is the three tie-downs.

Imdieke Cross asked about the passive restraint wheelchair option. Since it is used on the west coast, could there be a legislative change that needs to be made before they can be approved for use here? Could Judd Schetnan come to one of the TAAC meetings to discuss this?

Steffen will talk with someone who is responsible for fleet purchases and double check with him where they are at with that. That will determine on whether to get Judd involved or not. They did pursue that option for the A-Line but it was not available.

Indieke Cross asked if there are power door operators into that facility. She made a recommendation that they be installed.

The Orange Line will have three door boarding. It will have off board collections like the Light Rail.

Rodgers asked that there be some audible indicator like a click, buzz or chime that makes a noise to locate the validating machines so that someone who is blind can find them. Chicago has them at all of their elevated train stations and subway stations. He also asked if they can consider I beacons for the buses. They can distribute the bus information at a bus stop that any smart phone can pick up.

Chair Walker asked if the TAAC committee members could go to I-35W and see what they are talking about. They could coordinate it through Max Holdhusen, who is the tour specialist right now. They will figure out a day and time. They may be able to take a Metro Transit bus or other vehicles.

### **3. Public Participation Plan**

Michelle Fure spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Manager of Public Involvement at the Metropolitan Council. She will talk about a fairly specific application of a broader plan they have and the work they are doing with public participation planning.

She will talk about the last 18 months and then the process for building the specific public participation strategies that surround the transportation planning work they do. The Council has the authority to put together a long range plan that is updated every 10 years. This is specifically after each census. It is still a 30-year plan. The Thrive MSP 2040 plan the Council adopted in 2014 is really the long range plan for the entire region. It has a lot of detail in it about how they should grow, where they should be thinking about development, specific goals around transportation and housing and water resources. One of the things that they learned in the last process to update the regional plan was that they need to do a better job in engaging the public. They also need to do things differently than they have in the past.

They had a number of different organizations that came before the Council to tell the Council members this great news but specifically as it related to their communities. This is where the broad range of constituencies that include communities of color, people with disabilities, housing advocates, folks who are concerned about the environment and developers. The consistent message was that they need to do things differently. They also heard from a lot of local organizations that do planning around different elements of community amenities, particularly transportation. They said the same things based with their experiences with the Corridors of Opportunity effort. They learned a lot of lessons as it related to how to build an understanding in community about decisions that are being made that connect people to those decisions. They took all of these lessons and put them together and developed a strategy that is much different from the way they approached it before. It is really about people and the decisions that are made about people. These are decisions that the TAAC committee has a stake in and how they connect to things.

In the past they haven't been as concerned about removing barriers in ways that they do things. It is pretty easy to plan meetings that are good for them. They are not necessarily good for the public. They need to reshape their thinking and focus things around people and what works for them. They want to find a way to get broader input by focusing on what people need and building relationships with people. To have an ongoing conversation and really dig in to what those needs are. They are taking a project by project approach or an effort by effort approach so they can be more flexible on how they engage different audiences in the work that they do. What may work for one project may not work for another one. They have to be specific about that. It prioritizes interacting with the key people who are affected by a decision very early in the process so they can be part of how they engage. Say they are taking on a particular project that affects a neighborhood in St. Paul, they would talk to the people in that neighborhood and ask them how they could be engaged so they can be effective in the process. Then they would structure the engagement around the needs of those people. It is being more intentional about putting those discussions at the beginning of a process.

Thrive MSP is the regional plan. Several sub plans come out of that. The one key plan that comes out of the

Thrive MSP 2040 that affects the work that the TAAC does is the Transportation Policy Plan. The public engagement work that they were doing was still emerging at the time the Transportation Policy Plan was created. That was adopted earlier this year.

Within the Transportation Policy Plan is a specific strategy around engagement that reflects this idea that they have to do more to get more participation. She read Strategy E6:

“Regional transportation partners will use a variety of communication methods and eliminate barriers to foster public engagement in transportation planning that will include special efforts to engage members of historically underrepresented communities, including communities of color, low-income communities and those with disabilities to ensure their concerns and issues are considered in regional and local transportation decision making.”

So there is a commitment in this Transportation Policy Plan as well as in the Council’s overall work by putting people in the forefront of their work. The Council is federally mandated to do this. As part of the federal mandate transportation funds come to the Council and they are dispersed out for various purposes. In order to make sure that they are in compliance during that process they have to create a specific public participation plan around transportation planning work. The previous transportation public participation plan is still effective. It still works and is still in place. Given this new direction the Council is employing with public engagement it is time to update it. It will reflect a lot of the things in the public engagement plan but there may be some specific things that they want to include for transportation purposes. There are specific audiences they want to engage around certain kinds of decisions. This specific public participation plan really does get at those specific tactics that they might use in the transportation context. That is why they do this.

They are doing presentations to all of the formal groups that advise the Council. They will be seeking input from now through the end of the year on some of the ideas that the TAAC members might have. They could issue drafts and the TAAC members would provide feedback or have a small group that meets and talks about things. It is up to the TAAC members how much involvement they want to have. It might be helpful to see how much work is involved, an outline and context so they have a sense of the direction it is taking. They are hoping to have a draft of this for more formal public comment early next year. They would like to formalize it at the end of the first quarter of 2016. They will start putting those practices in place in the next couple of years. She will share the outline with the TAAC.

Rodgers said there used to be a website called Ticket to Work that has an extensive breakdown by zip code of how many of each category of disability they have in each zip code. They break it down by system (circulatory system, respiratory issues, mobility issues, etc.). They have vision maps where they have a map of the area they are working with an overlay on top of that with different pieces of information like high density populations live or high rise buildings or senior buildings. They keep overlaying important pieces that give a different picture graphically to help shape the direction you are moving.

#### **4. Statewide Pedestrian System Plan**

Jasna Hadzic, Kristie Billiar and Chris Kartheiser spoke to the TAAC committee. Jasna is a planner at MnDOT. Kristie is MnDOT’s ADA Implementation Coordinator. Chris is the Active Living Planner at the Minnesota Department of Health. This is a statewide plan regarding walking and rolling. MnDOT developed a 50 year vision to maximize the house of the people, the economy and the environment. This 50 year vision is going to be guided by the family of plans. At the DOT they have plans for all the different modes. A few years ago they decided there has never been a plan for walking. Sometimes walking is the only mode people can use.

The first thing they did was to take a look at the national environment of walking and what other states have done. What they found was only four other states has done a pedestrian plan. Hawaii is the most recent. They did speak with them. It is a smaller state than Minnesota. They completed a “Minnesota Walks” background document that talks about the current and future steps towards creating a walkable Minnesota. What this brought them towards is four different sections. That walking is important. Sometimes it is the only way some people can get around. It is important for health. It is also important for economic liability. Having restaurants and shops nearby is much more accessible if you can walk there.

Walking should be easier. There are environmental factors, built, cultural and social factors on how easy it is to walk. It is harder for some people to walk. There are some populations have less access and fewer opportunities to safely walk. Minnesota is on track to improve walking. They want to make sure that they

address in this plan the priority populations such as the American Indian, children and youth, low income urban, older adults, people with disabilities and small rural communities under 5,000.

With this they launched into their statewide pedestrian plan. They also realized that this is going to take more than just MnDOT to address. So they brought along the Minnesota Department of Health. They are going to be able to address the walking environment that is very local. They have a lot of public health people that work on these issues. Once they are done with this plan and are down the road that walking will be easy, safe and desirable for all in Minnesota. Through the plan by improving walking for all purposes, which means they hope that people will see more people walking down the road. They also want to improve safety. This means there will be a lot more healthier people. They want to improve accessibility. This is both access and accessibility and encourage connections.

The purpose of the plan is to develop and prioritize recommendations for new projects, policies and programs that would improve the pedestrian environment at the state, regional and local levels. It is also to gain a better understanding of pedestrian needs and challenges in Minnesota from public and external stakeholders to help MnDOT and MDH better address pedestrian needs. It will provide recommendations to clarify the various roles and responsibilities of partners involved with creating better pedestrian environments in Minnesota.

There was some discussion about transit. There are multi modal modes where people who walk and roll may have to take a train or bus. How to make these connections easier. They are working with the Office of Transportation at MnDOT. They do have the MnSHIP plan. It is their 20-year Minnesota State Highway investment plan. There is a pie chart that has some money towards pedestrian connections. Right now that money is being used towards ADA. They need to prioritize how that money is used.

Community engagement approaches. They are still collecting public input. They are doing community gatherings and focus groups. They are doing walking and rolling workshops in November and December. They also have a project advisory committee. Heidi Schallberg is on this committee. There are over 25 people from AARP, design and engineering and other places. They also have an internal advisory committee at MnDOT and MDH who are aware of the challenges they are hearing. So people from maintenance and operations can hear what people are saying. They also have some online engagements.

The guiding principles are to harness existing relationships, make it convenient, foster peer-to-peer conversations and an ongoing review and evaluation of engagement process.

They work with the metro and greater Minnesota, regional development commissions, local agencies and MPO's. They want to harness those and empower the locals. They want to make it convenient by going to the people. They are having teenager commentators leading the discussion. They are doing ongoing review and engagement process so they are covering their bases.

They have done two poster board activities taken out to community gatherings. The first activity is "It is important that I am able to talk to.." People select three of their top destinations. Parks, grocery stores and transit are the top three.

The second activity is "Hey, that looks like my street!" This activity has a number of different images. Since they are working with the entire state. A variety of different neighborhoods and places to live. They ask them to identify what makes their community safe, desirable and convenient for walking. They have a number of themes. Also what makes it unsafe, inconvenient and undesirable. Right now what they are hearing for safe, desirable and convenient is people like having good sidewalks, trails, the presence of other people and many destinations and businesses within walking distance. For unsafe, they are hearing sidewalks have barriers, difficult pedestrian crossings, fast car speeds, poor driver behavior, crime and theft.

The third activity is a map for children that lets children find their way to the park using sidewalks and crosswalks and has a plug for the website. All of this is available online.

They have one other survey that asks people for features that improve the walking experience along and when crossing roads. MnDOT is looking to install a raised crosswalk or a curb bump out that shortens the crossing distance. They can't cover it all so they are asking the public which treatments makes them feel safer. Those are the ones that they will pick first when they do projects.

They created a community gathering engagement toolkit. All of these activities are wrapped up in their website. They are having a lot of their partners who may be going to an event at a nursing home or local public

health or farmers market. They can print this out and talk to the public. They have a place where they can enter the survey online.

Earlier in the presentation they mentioned MnSHIP, the 20-year investment program. That has a 20-year time horizon. They are in the process of doing that right now. It also has a public involvement component as well. The area of funding that was being talked about was accessible pedestrian facilities. That is where right now they are spending the bulk of the monies on completing the transition plan. That is really where that resides. Right now they are not as focused this much with the connection and expansion. Things that are beyond their right of way is going to be a different conversation.

There is another plan that MnDOT is updating as well. It is a state multi modal transportation plan, which is their 20-year plan. It is being done in concert with MnSHIP. There are a lot of plans and a lot of opportunity to be involved.

Suggestions from the TAAC members:

Take care of the sidewalks and streets. Repair them.

Diagonal curb cuts are still a problem. They shoot people into ongoing traffic. Stop making new ones and repair old ones. Enforcement of shoveling snow on curb cuts.

Engage the League of Minnesota Cities, the League of Small Cities and the Associated Minnesota Counties. The state needs local money.

Use the textured tape on the crosswalks instead of powder or paint.

Enforcement of pedestrian crosswalks

Conscious effort to include bus stops into the plan of pedestrian ways. People use these pedestrian ways to get to the bus stops.

Questions from presenters:

How does walking help or hinder your use of transit? What are the barriers you are experiencing?

Answers:

They use it for grocery shopping, malls, parks, the lakes, the beach, etc.

They didn't put new knobs on the crosswalks. They didn't level the sidewalks correctly. They didn't shovel the sidewalks correctly. They didn't trim the trees. Sidewalks change when they do road construction.

Usability has to be a component of accessibility.

The Cedar/Riverside station on the Blue Line LRT is very populated is not maintained. The sidewalks and curb cuts are not maintained. If it were more open, available and accessible it would be a much more popular stop. The lack of maintenance deters people from using that stop.

The ramp exiting the bus can be too steep causing the wheelchair to fall over. Sometimes the driver only uses one or two of the tie downs for the wheelchair.

Winter time conditions. Ice and snow on sidewalks.

Every trip begins and ends with a walking trip. Need wider sidewalks and boulevard lighting.

Some urban areas do not have sidewalks.

Question from Christopher Bates:

Is there a universal code for pedestrians? A standard that the counties, cities and the state have to abide by? Why is it not enforced?

Answer from presenters:

We are not an enforcement agency. We can propose policies. Every city, county and state agencies is a Title II agency. The minimum design requirements under ADA are what we must all adhere to. It does not matter what the funding source is. We all have the same obligations to maintenance. The enforcement comes at the federal level. It is still a complaint driven process. Until there are federal dollars attached to a project called federal aid projects, there is no enforcement relationship the state has with the city or county.

Do not allow the transition plan to become your defacto pedestrian plan. It is an incredibly important piece that has an enforcement component behind it. It doesn't talk about where we could be going and what we need to be. The transition plan deals largely with what is in place and making that accessible. ADA does not obligate us to do much more beyond that other than to build more to be accessible. The question is what is more?

Question from presenters:

How would you like to be involved? The plan won't be done until summer.

Answers:

Come back and talk to the TAAC committee again.

Question from David Fenley:

The City of Minneapolis will warn the property owner, make a fix and then bill them. Is that something that the state or counties has the capability of doing?

Answers from the presenters:

More often than not when we have a sidewalk going through a community, we will build it, there is a cost participation agreement of which portions we will pay for. Then we have a maintenance agreement. Our upkeep of the maintenance agreements oversights is anything but stellar. We are in the middle of a conversation of what that needs to be looking like going forward. Maintenance continues to be an issue. The ADA has to change our approach. We can't delegate away our ADA obligations. We have the authority but we need to talk about it more.

## **MEMBER COMMENT**

Chair Walker is looking for two TAAC volunteers to assist in the implementation and the recap of the Metro Mobility fall community forum. Introduce yourselves at the event and be a TAAC representative at the event. Also be a part of the recap discussion on what went well and what can be done differently next time. Then report back to TAAC.

Kari Sheldon, Heidi Myhre, Patty Thorsen and Adora Sage volunteered to do this.

The A-Line tour that was scheduled for October 21 is postponed until the spring when the stations are put together and we will have something to look at.

Christopher Bates made a motion to add some additions to the bylaws. In article one, #2 and 3 after assist insert "and advise"

Then add after Council insert "its Transportation Committee"

"Under 1: In accordance with our by-laws to assist and advise the Metropolitan Council and its Transportation Committee, the TAAC chair will establish public hearing meetings at various times throughout the year and in specified regions, not to exceed three in any given calendar year and schedule site visits to be concurrent with the monthly meetings at the discretion of the TAAC chair."

Thorsen seconded the motion. The motion was tabled until the next TAAC meeting.

Villavicencio suggested that to change passive restraints to passive securements. She wants drivers to be in on this conversation. They have a lot of perspective to make the system better.

Rodgers said that the drivers should have their own discussion that is not associated with the TAAC meeting.

Rodgers mentioned the Blue line extension advisory committee. Right now it is in a technical phase. They are working on ground contamination. As soon as that is cleared away, they will have a Draft Environmental Statement at the end of the year. In January they will begin to talk about accessibility and the location of stations.

Steffen said that all of the Green Line trains have been retrofitted. The companion seating has been done.

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

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

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary