

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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TRANSPORTATION **A**CCESSIBILITY **A**DVISORY **C**OMMITTEE **M**EETING
Wednesday, April 4, 2012

1. Call to Order

At 12:34 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Ron Biss. **Public present:** Karen Hubescher from H.S.I. and Andy Gitzlaff from Washington County. **Council staff present:** Tony Elina and Scott Thompson, from Metro Transit, David Russell, Paul Colton, Mike Kuehn and Alison Coleman.

Members Present: Ron Biss, Kim Kang, Margot Imdieke Cross, James Williams, Wayne Wittman, Bruce Lattu, Darrell Paulsen, Jerolyn Pofahl, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Diogo Reiss and Willie Daniels..

Members Absent: Christian Knights. **Members excused:** John Schatzlein, Heidi Myhre. Nichole Villavicencio

2. Approval of the Agenda

Item 7 will be changed from Metro Mobility Stats to Metropolitan Emergency Service Board. Kang moved to approve the agenda. Lund seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Approval of March 7, 2012 Minutes

Lattu moved to approve the minutes. Daniels seconded the motion. The motion carried.

4. Bus Service along Central Corridor LRT

Scott Thompson spoke to the TAAC committee. He is from Metro Transit Service Development. He is the project manager for the Central Corridor Transit Service Study. The Transit Service Study is a comprehensive review of the transit network. Over the last 11 years Metro Transit has restructured the bus service throughout the region using a sector study process. This approach looks at entire sub regions because the routes are interconnected. They look at integrating the new public facilities and future plans from cities. They aim to improve connections and reliability. In this case they are looking at the important connection to the new Green Line. They have enhanced timed transfers especially in off-peak hours. They have better neighborhood to neighborhood connections to both connect from the neighborhoods and to the light rail line. There is a grid route network where appropriate. That provides a cross town connection to the rail line.

They have already simplified the route structure. Before the route restructuring, they had 165 different route combinations, branches or terminals. After the restructuring they were left with 65 route combinations, terminals. Making the service simpler encourages people to ride it. The service is then faster, less complex and easier to understand, putting more service on fewer streets. This makes it go faster to major destinations. The standard is eight stops per mile. Sometimes there is more than that and sometimes there is less.

Some of the key considerations for the study area of the Central Corridor is the strong community interest in transit both the bus service and the coming rail service. The ridership forecast projects that about 40 percent of all the ridership on the Green Line will come from transfers from bus service.

In 2001 there was a technical advisory group that worked to develop a bus service concept plan that was used for modeling ridership to the Green Line. In the last 11 years since this was done significant changes to the rail plan have occurred, namely the addition of infill stations at Hamline, Victoria and Western. The Route 60 was in part designed to provide connections from the neighborhoods to the rail line with the station plan as it previously existed. They are starting over and creating a new plan.

Transit Service Study Timeline:

- Data Collection 2010
- Evaluate Existing Conditions Fall 2011
- Stakeholder/Community Engagement Early 2012
- Concept Plan Development Winter 2012
- Concept Plan Review, Public Comment Spring 2012
- Plan Revision Summer 2012
- Final Plan Approval Fall 2012
- Service Change Implementation 2013-2014
- Ongoing Service Evaluation Ongoing

Two arterial BRT are within the study area on West 7th Street. They are already operating a limited stop service on West 7th Street. It has been very successful. That is one of the candidate corridors for rapid bus. The one that is at the top of the list is Snelling Avenue.

The advocates are spread out geographically along the corridor. Their language backgrounds are Hmong, Somali, Vietnamese and Spanish. These individuals are employees of the District Council Collaborative. They are trained in basic transit planning concepts.

5. Gateway Corridor

Andy Gitzlaff spoke to the TAAC committee. The location of the Gateway Corridor is I-94 connecting St. Paul to St. Croix River with connections on one end of Minneapolis and the other end all the way to Eau Claire. The work along Gateway Corridor is Washington County working in partnership with Ramsey County as well as the Metropolitan Council to study the Gateway Corridor and advance it so at one point it can be turned into the Red Corridor to be another transitway as part of the regional system. This includes the rapid bus corridors as well as the fixed bus regular route routes and express route routes.

The Alternatives Analysis is the first step to tell what is the best transit solution for this particular corridor. It is a federal process that is followed. There are steps and checkpoints along the way where the documents are reviewed by the feds to make sure that the data is sound and it is comparable to the other end of the country. It is a three phase process where they have gone through initial screening that started a year and a half ago. They looked at all the different types of transit technologies that can be used and potential alignments. There were 28 options to begin with. They narrowed it down to what was feasible.

They are now at the evaluation of results. They looked at all the categories and all the options. They know what it costs. They estimated how many people will ride it. Then they will make the decision of what is best for the corridor.

The partnership consists of Ramsey County, Washington County and the cities along the corridor. It is elected officials that serve on that committee. There is also Met Council representation at the meetings. There is also membership from the Wisconsin side that consists of the different counties, the state DOT and the business committee with a few different chambers.

Project Goals:

- Improve mobility
- Provide a cost-effective, economically viable transit option
- Support economic development
- Protect the natural environment
- Preserve and protect community quality of life
- Improve safety

There are committees for the decision making process of the project. There is a technical advisory committee consisting of agency and municipality staff. There is a policy advisory committee consisting of elected officials. They recommend on up to the Gateway Corridor Commission. At the end of the study or what will most likely happen a little bit later in the process in the environmental work is there will be a recommendation on the locally preferred alternative. That will go up through the Met Council and the Transportation Policy Plan would have to be amended before a locally preferred alternative could be accepted. The feds would have to sign off on it as well.

There are six transit options. 1. Express Bus. 2. Light Rail Transit. 3. Commuter Rail. 4. Bus Rapid Transit. 5. BRT Managed Lane (like what is on I-35W). 6. TSM

On one alternative the Gateway corridor would start at the Union Depot and end at Manning Avenue in Woodbury. There is a bus connection that is the system plan. That has to do with a ruling from the DOT's about not wanting to take any more capacity on the river bridge to take away a lane to add a transit service. The other option was to build another bridge over the St. Croix River. The TSM shows a bus line all the way to Eau Claire with four park and ride stops along the way. There are eight alternative routes. The next phase is comparison and ranking.

A couple of facts are weekday ridership by alternatives. These facts only show the signature route not the feeder buses or the background buses that would still be operating. The LRT options would be about 10,000 riders. The BRT comes in at about 4,000 or 5,000 riders. The lowest two are the TSM and the commuter rail option. It is a station to station service to connect the destinations and an all day service as well. Most riders are in the morning and afternoon market.

The LRT options are the most expensive. Commuter rail is one of the higher costs but that is the only option that goes 90 miles. The BRT option is about half the cost of the LRT option.

The Cost Effectiveness Index is an FTA measurement that judges whether a project is cost effective. This is a comparison to other projects across the country. It determines the cost to build, the cost to maintain and putting that in a ratio against what the benefits are of people actually riding. That is time saved, money and convenience. The lower the score the better. They need a medium rating to advance into the Federal New Starts Funding Program. Right now all the CEI's for the Gateway alternatives are coming up high and need additional work to bring the cost down and increase the ridership.

They have had 70 or 80 meetings this last year for this project. They have had two rounds of open houses. Each time there are four of them. There are two on the Minnesota side and two on the Wisconsin side. They are using Facebook to get information out there fast and getting instant feedback from the public. They also have a You-tube page where they have visualizations that follow each of the alignments.

The funding for this study is Ramsey County Regional Rail Authority and then Washington County through a grant from CTIB. Then there are Federal funds that were received in an appropriation two years ago. Then the Council is kicking in some of their formula funds that they have for this project. The anticipated funding schedule is that they would hope to get 50 percent from the feds, 30 percent from CTIB (Counties Transit Improvement Board), the five county sales tax. The state would have a 10 percent share and then locals would have a 10 percent share.

They are looking at a summer finish date for the study. The next phase is preparing the Environmental Impact Statement. That will be a two year process. This puts them on schedule for PE from 2015 to 2016. Final design will be 2017. Then construction would be 2018 to 2021, with service operating thereabouts.

6. Legislative Update

Mike Kuehn spoke to the TAAC committee. The Legislature has yet to bring up on the floor their versions of the state bonding bill. It needs 60 percent to pass the bonding bill. In the House it is 81 votes. There are 72 Republicans so they need to pick up nine Democrats. It appears that the House bill is so lean there is not enough support to get the votes. Neither the House or Senate has brought up their bill. The House bill is at \$280 million in bonding. Plus a separate bill with \$220 million for the complete renovation of the State Capitol. The Senate bill came in at about \$498 million with \$25 million for capitol renovation. The governor's recommendation was at \$775 million.

There are 36 members who are not running for their current seats. Some are House members running for Senate. There is an average of about 15 or 20 electoral changes as well. So there could be about 50 different members next January. About 25 percent of the entire legislature probably will change over.

The state bonding bill House and Senate versions has zero in there for the Southwest LRT. The governor recommended and the Council had requested \$25 million to move that project forward. At a 10 percent match, the state would need to commit \$125 million to the Southwest project over a period of years in the bonding bill. They are going to try for a floor amendment on that when it comes up on the floors of each body.

What is in the two bonding bills for transit is very little. In the Senate bill there is \$5 million to the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority to move forward the Minneapolis interchange project which is where the Northstar, the Southwest and the Central/Hiawatha will come together near Target Field. The only money in the House bill for transit is \$1 million for the Gateway Corridor project.

A bill was submitted for our Regional Bonding Authorization to pay for transit capital projects for \$35.4 million. This is an annual request they make. It has been going on for about 20 years. This year they could not get the bill introduced in the Senate. It got introduced in the House but it was not heard. They are trying to amend it when it comes up on the floor, which will be after the Easter break. It will be offered to a technical tax bill which is SF2136. That bill has an article in it that deals with public financing. If it doesn't get passed this year they will double the request next year. This is the money used to buy buses. In this request there is the purchase of 166 regular route buses both articulated and 40 footers and a number of Metro Mobility buses. It impacts all the transit capital in the region. It includes the Opt Out programs, the Transit Link programs, some of our hardware and facilities. It is laid out in the RTC (Regional Transit Capital Plan) that lays out these purchases in a regular cycle. As we issue the new debt we are retiring debt. It is a revenue neutral process.

The next bill is the Transportation Policy Bill. That is SF2321 and HF2685. Both bills have in it authorization to allow the transit programs. In particular the suburban transit providers, the Opt Outs have requested this to look at a pilot program for distance based surcharges or fees. Metro Transit

services has no interest in this. The fare collection system won't allow a complex system. They can do fare zones. They could add a 25 or 50 cent surcharge. So they did some numbers to show what kind of impact that would have. The law says it has to be a line or run longer than 15 miles. That is in both of the House and Senate files of the Omnibus Transportation Bill.

In the House bill it still has the language that would reopen and allow communities until January or July 1st of 2016, if they meet other conditions that are still in law. Like at the end of the line they could reinstitute the Opt Out program where they could Opt Out of the Metro Transit service and formulate their own community based transit program either individually or in a joint powers arrangement. The Council opposes that legislation. Originally it did not add more money. It would take the pool from the MVST at 3.74 percent that is given to the Opt Out program. But they changed the language in the bill that now would allow the Opt Outs to be given money out of the regional pool of money that runs all of the other systems. This includes Metro Mobility, regular route service and Transit Link money and all the money that is used to run the bus systems that we currently use. This does not include the Opt Out money. They still keep that pool.

Also in that bill there is language that changes the 2011 Transportation Finance Bill. Back then the Opt Outs because they had large reserves they were reduced in this biennial budget an amount of \$1,650,000.00. Plus their money they were given was not increased. That has another impact of \$4.1 million, which would be out of the regional pool of money which would mean other services and programs would have to be reduced or other alternatives would have to be looked at if this bill became law.

There was a proposal that created a complex regional governance structure that Representative Beard had offered. It created a governance board. It would take the Council's responsibilities and keep them at the planning level. It would create a new MTC to operate Metro Transit and would also create a governing board that would oversee what the MTS staff does with the contract management and operational programs. It will not be introduced this session but Representative Beard plans to come back with significant details in the next legislative session.

The governor has on his desk a bill that would create staggered terms for Metro Council members. They would be four year terms. Eight of them would be up every two years. That has the support of the Metro Cities Organization. The Council has opposed this legislation largely because it would create for a two year period, when the administration changes, half of the Met Council members would not be the appointees of the current governor. They would have two years of being eight and eight split on the Council with the Chair in the middle. It is a part time Chair who would try to keep the peace between the two bodies. It doesn't present those new fresh ideas that a new administration brings forward.

There is another bill that would change the Council's budget process from a calendar year to a state fiscal year cycle. Most of the primary constituents that the Council deals with, particularly the local governments are on calendar year budgets. The Council still gets property taxes. If this bill would happen they would be approving the annual budget with the last six months of the budget based on property taxes yet to be gone through a truth and taxation process or to be adopted or even knowing what the county auditors would certify in property taxes. The Council opposed this bill.

7. Metropolitan Emergency Service Board

Paul Colton spoke to the TAAC committee. The radio system that operates the core of Metro Mobility service is on the Metropolitan Emergency Radio Service's board. That is the system that is used by police, fire, counties, cities, ambulances and Metro Transit. Metro Mobility has been on it for over 10 years. They use a lot of air time on that system. As they use more air time and more air time is required

on the system by all the different entities, it has created some conflict. There is some frustration on the Radio Board's part and some frustration on Metro Mobility in terms of how to move forward. The Radio Board had some proposals that were drastic. Metro Mobility has been able to address those issues today. The Council is committed to hiring a consultant that will help evaluate different options. They may need to look at the growing amount of air time needs and the limited amount of resources available to handle that amount that they may need to look at other options.

8. Member Comment

Bruce Lattu said that there is no one representing the TAAC or the disability community down University Avenue and the Saint Paul area. Someone is needed in that position.

9. Public Comment

None

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.