

## Minutes of the

### REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

January 10, 2022

LOCATION: Due to COVID-19 this meeting was held electronically.

**Committee Members Present: Deb Barber, Reva Chamblis, Molly Cummings, Christopher Ferguson, Kris Fredson, Francisco Gonzalez, Phillip Sterner, Raymond Zeran**

**Committee Members Absent:**

**TAAC Liaison Present: David Fenley**

### CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was present when Chair Barber called the regular meeting of the Council's Transportation Committee to order at 4:01p.m. on Monday, January 10, 2022.

### AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

### TPP Public Hearing

Chair Barber opened the public hearing for public comments on the TPP Amendment. These public comments will be recorded and compiled into a report to be available after the public comment period ends.

### APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Fredson, seconded by Cummings to approve the minutes of the December 13, 2021 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

Aye:	8	Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran
Nay:	0	
Absent:	0	

### TAAC REPORT

Fenley reported that the most important thing discussed at the last TAAC meeting was the ARIA pilot project which is slated to end in March 2022. ARIA is an essential way finding application for folks who are blind or low vision and has been expanded to other disabilities. The app is a service that the Metropolitan Council is providing to riders at their transit locations. TAAC members are very excited that this pilot project was chosen, even though it is not the best time due to the ongoing pandemic. Fenley asked that staff and Council members keep in mind that the pilot project numbers won't reflect what a non-pandemic ridership would look like and reflect the usage of this fantastic resource for folks with disabilities. This service is available free of charge at the MSP airport and has been a great resource. Chair Barber asked what the next steps are and potential timeline. Fenley answered that the next step would be to evaluate the data and decide if it's something that should be implemented on an ongoing basis or potentially extend the pilot period. Chamblis stated that we need to consider in March about potentially extending the pilot to allow for more information and strategies, so users are more aware of the tool. Chair Barber asked when the pilot started and Fenley responded it started June 7<sup>th</sup> and was originally meant to end December 7<sup>th</sup> but was extended through March.

## **METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS**

Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Charles Carlson reported:

### Regional Solicitation Workshop

The Metropolitan Council will hold a workshop to introduce prospective applicants to the 2022 Regional Solicitation for Transportation Projects. Approximately \$180 million in federal transportation funds are expected to be available for allocation in 2026 and 2027. The application period will run from mid-February through April 14<sup>th</sup>. The virtual workshop for prospective applicants is scheduled Friday, January 21<sup>st</sup>, 9:30-11:00 am to provide an overview of the Regional Solicitation and answer questions. The workshop will be recorded and posted online. A link is available on the Regional Solicitation website.

### MVST

Met Council net Auto Receipts for November 2021 were \$26.9M, a 39.4% increase from November 2020. The Council's receipts for December 2021 are \$27.6M, flat from 2020 but a 2.7% increase from November 2021. CY2021 Receipts were \$360.1M, which is \$20.6M above forecasted (\$339.5M).

### Contracted Services

Last month in the committee's Metro Mobility information item staff reported on a driver shortage in contracted services. Staffing levels are currently about 15% below desired count, with well over 100 vacancies across all service contracts. In December 2021 and continuing in January, this shortage has been compounded by an increase in COVID-related absences as testing and case counts have increased. Combined, these factors have begun to effect on-time performance on Metro Mobility. While trips have not been denied, we have seen on-time performance begin to decrease and anticipated increase in challenges in the weeks ahead to deliver these critical services on-time. Both in response and in preparation, last week it was asked that Metro Mobility riders to consider cancelling or not scheduling non-essential travel. Even a small reduction in trips helps preserve and improve service quality with our limited number of drivers. MTS is also increasing measures to recruit and hire operators by continuing safe practices including testing, mask compliance, cleaning, and other efforts. The grocery delivery efforts continue as a critical need and to reduce exposure. A KSTP news story last Friday shared one of our contractors' efforts and job opportunities across all paratransit providers. Staff are working with our contracted service providers to offer competitive pay. Currently the contracted service operator starting wage is around \$18. This is not competitive against package or school bus driver rates and incentives, so staff are working to increase starting pay to \$20 minimum wage for drivers. This remains more than \$1 below Metro Transit's starting wage. Corresponding contract amendments will enact these changes. Increases will vary by contract but are expected to remain below 5% of each contract's value.

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

### COVID

Since the last Transportation Committee meeting Metro Transit has had 134 cases reported. There have been 100 cases reported in December, which is the second highest total of any month since the start of the pandemic. Metro Transit ended 2021 with 420 positive cases compared to 342 cases in 2020. January is proving to be even more active with more than 70 cases reported through the first 10 days. Like many businesses, Metro Transit is experiencing some staff shortages. This is affecting bus and train operators, facilities maintenance workers, and police officers. Metro Transit's intent is to ensure that all areas are continuing to address critical tasks in their respective divisions. Operations staff works night and day to match available operators to the work assignments that need to be filled. Metro Transit uses Rider Alerts, social media, and the website to communicate with customers when not able to meet that obligation.

### Operator Hiring Update

As of this morning, Metro Transit is 16 operators below the ideal level but also currently down 80 operators due to COVID, making a total operator shortage near 100 and growing. The next bus operator hiring events are January 15<sup>th</sup> from 9am to Noon and January 19<sup>th</sup> from 4 to 7pm at Metro Transit's Instruction Center in Minneapolis.

### New Year's Eve Free Rides

For the 10<sup>th</sup> year, Metro Transit partnered with Molson Coors to encourage residents and visitors to celebrate New Year's Eve responsibly with Miller Free Rides on all Metro Transit bus and rail routes. And despite some last-minute New Year's Eve event cancelations and smaller crowds, **13,636 riders** took advantage of the free rides. This is more than a ridership promotion, it is a chance to show one of the many ways Metro Transit helps make our community safer and better throughout the year, and it has the support of our local and state law enforcement communities. Metro Transit offers a similar program on St. Patrick's Day and that partnership also with Molson Coors was started in 1997.

## **BUSINESS**

### **Consent Items:**

Motion was made by Cummings, seconded by Fredson and carried, to approve the following consent items:

Aye: 8 Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran  
Nay: 0  
Absent: 0

1. **2022-6 SW:** 2022-2025 TIP Amendment: MN 55 Intersection and Drainage Project

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council adopt an amendment to the 2022-2025 TIP to adjust the cost to MnDOT's MN 55/Doyle Path intersection improvement and drainage repair project.

2. **2022-7 SW:** 2022-2025 TIP Amendment: MN 55 Intersection Preservation Project in Minneapolis

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council adopt an amendment to the 2022-2025 TIP to reduce the cost and scope of MnDOT's MN 55 maintenance project in Minneapolis.

3. **2022-8 SW:** 2022-2025 TIP Amendment: Woodbury Lake Road Safety Project

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council adopt an amendment to the 2022-2025 TIP to extend the length of Woodbury's Lake Road 4-lane-to-3-lane conversion and add mill and overlay, signals, and ADA improvements.

### **Non-Consent Items:**

1. **2022-9:** Review of Metropolitan Airports Commission 2022-2028 Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Metropolitan Transportation Services Senior Planner Russ Owen presented this item. There were no questions or comments from Council members.

Motion by Ferguson, seconded by Fredson:

That the Metropolitan Council:

- 1) Find that the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) had an adequate public participation process for the development and review of its 2022-2028 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), including preparation of an assessment of environmental effects (AOEE) for 2022 projects with potential environmental effects.

- 2) Find that the 2022 CIP projects are in conformance with the region's Aviation System Plan in the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan and consistent with Council policy.

Motion carried.

Aye: 8 Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran  
Nay: 0  
Absent: 0

2. **2021-329:** Gold Line 2022-2026 Capital Grant Agreement #21I042 with the Joint Powers Board Metro Transit BRT Projects Assistant Director Chris Beckwith presented this item. There was no questions or comments from Council members.

Motion by Fredson, seconded by Cummings:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute METRO Gold line Bus Rapid Transit (Gold Line) Capital Grant Agreement #21I042 with the Gold Line Joint Powers Board (JPB) in the total amount not to exceed \$148,840,529 for calendar years 2022 through 2026.

Motion carried.

Aye: 8 Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran  
Nay: 0  
Absent: 0

## INFORMATION

1. TPP Modification: RBTN, Regional Bike Barriers, and Regional Truck Freight Corriders Metropolitan Transportation Services Planning Analyst Steve Elmer presented this item. Fredson asked about the barriers to communities and if those were oversights from pervious processes, growth in possibly constructed, etc. Elmer answered that to be a regional expressway barrier you need to have four lanes divided by a median and a minimum speed of 45mph and basically there was construction that completed parts of Highway 212 through Carver County. Elmer added that the rail corridors were just outside the perimeter of the original study area, but we allowed them. Fredson asked about why the route on the RBTN map was rerouted. Elmer stated this is a Regional Trail plan and the old segment was considered many years ago but was never adopted in the master final plan for the regional trial and does not have support from Scott County. Elmer continued that the corridor is consistent with the existing master plan. Chair Barber stated it was nice to see this work evolving and the continued communication with the communities.

## ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:19p.m.

Becky Gorell  
Recording Secretary