

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

April 27, 2020

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

Committee Members Present: Chair Deb Barber, Lynnea Atlas-Ingebretson, Reva Chamblis, Molly Cummings, Christopher Ferguson, Kris Fredson, Francisco Gonzalez, Phillip Sterner, Raymond Zeran

Committee Members Absent:

TAB Liaison Present: Peter Dugan

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was present when Chair Barber called the regular meeting of the Council's Transportation Committee to order at 4:04 p.m. on Monday, April 27, 2020.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Motion by Cummings seconded by Chamblis to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

Not Recorded: 1 Atlas-Ingebretson

Motion by Gonzalez seconded by Sterner to approve the minutes of the April 13, 2020 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

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

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

Not Recorded: 1 Atlas-Ingebretson

TAB LIAISON REPORT

Dugan reported that there is a MnDOT-issued COVID-19 impact report to travel in Minnesota, Jenna has the link if members would like it. MAC reports that air traffic is down 90% and forecasts predict it will take at least a year to get back to pre-COVID-19 levels. The TAB added flexibility to the Regional Solicitation in relation to: traffic turning count data, outreach meetings, and required letters of support.

Chamblis asked about tracking and incentivizing organizations that go beyond a good faith effort. Barber shared that this has been added to the equity portion of the regional solicitation. Atlas-Ingebretson stated that engagement is only one part of equity work. Chamblis said the tools being used now lend themselves to better communication in some respects.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson reported:

Operations Update

Ridership has been stable but down about 70%. The healthcare worker essential transit service ridership has been growing since it started two weeks ago, 300 rides were provided on Friday. 150-200 food delivery trips have taken place as well. Staff is evaluating the option of expanding healthcare worker essential transit service. Masks have been delivered to all Metro Mobility drivers, the same masks as the Metro Transit operators have been provided. Workforce continues to be stable; 14 drivers are in self-quarantine and two confirmed cases of COVID-19 but both presented a low risk to passengers based on when they last worked. Transportation data continues to be tracked, 45-50% of normal travel levels are seen in the Metro but travel is increasing outside of the Metro.

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

Workforce Update

COVID-19 continues to hit home, staff is closely monitoring and responding to COVID cases at Metro Transit. Five confirmed cases: 4 operators, 1 police officer. Each situation is different, but in general, we are, working closely with managers and HR, identifying others who have been in close contact with the person, identifying spaces that need enhanced cleaning, communicating to staff as deemed appropriate, checking in with employees regularly to see how they are doing, making sure employees have access to Sand Creek, our employee assistance program, and “Telephone townhall” today with office staff today to keep in touch with staff who are working remotely. Metro Transit is continuously evaluating what more we can do to reduce risks. Every decision we’ve made has prioritized the health of our riders, our employees, and the general public. We continue to urge customers to use transit only for essential travel and we continue to see low ridership:

- Week of April 20th to April 26th:
 - Bus down 69%
 - LRT Blue down 82%
 - LRT Green down 76%
 - Northstar down 98%
 - System down 72%

In addition to urging the use of transit for essential travel only, we continue to encourage social distancing for people who must ride:

- Limits on buses went into effect about 1.5 weeks ago
 - 10 riders on a 40’ bus
 - 15 riders on a 60’ articulated bus

When possible, we are deploying articulated buses to routes with highest ridership. We continue rear door boarding to limit interaction with operators. Between riders and operators, we can maintain the 6-foot distance for interactions over 10 min. We are now cleaning buses daily, as previously shared with you, we partnered with ATU to distribute masks to operators and strongly encouraging riders to cover their nose and mouth. Last Tuesday, the lights at Target Field Station went blue to show support for Metro Transit’s on-site essential staff. In addition, the large video screen at the station featured Metro Transit’s “In This Together” logo, there’s a photo in last Friday’s Insights. We invite you to also share your support for frontline staff: Staff are collecting self-recorded videos thanking and encouraging frontline staff, if you record yourself, send the message to insights@metrotransit.org. We are continuously monitoring and discussing what this means for service plans, balancing serving essential travel needs, operator availability, and security of the system. Light rail hours have been further

reduced due to operator absences; LRT is currently closed from 9PM to 6AM. The June pick goes into effect on June 13, we are developing two scenarios: one scenario – approximately 65% of regular service, other scenario – approximately 80% of regular service. The service scenarios being developed allow us to stay focused on many of our core local routes where demand has remained highest, and it demonstrates our ongoing commitment to the community members who need us the most. This approach gives us flexibility to manage operator absences and increased ridership demand as we anticipate the Governor will gradually allow businesses to open over May-June and beyond. We will decide what scenario to implement in the June pick by mid-May. Once the pick is in effect, if we have more operators available, we can add in more service back in if ridership warrants it, but what we want to avoid is having too much service scheduled and then have to cut trips because we don't have the operators to cover it. With ridership down approximately 75% systemwide and with suspending on-board fare payment, fare revenues are forecasted to be very low. We will have a better forecast on revenues and various employee passes with the close of April Financials but anticipate revenue declines to exceed the ridership decline. MVST is about 60% below the February Forecast for the first three weeks of April. Working with MnDOT, we have forecasted a decline in MVST of 60% through June 30, 2020 and 25% in SFY 2021. We will monitor actual MVST receipts and will adjust forecasts as necessary. The CARES Act included \$25 billion for transit agencies nationwide, of this \$25 billion, Minnesota is receiving approximately \$308 million. Of Minnesota's share, the metropolitan region will receive \$226 million. Metro Transit and MTS Finance staff have submitted our consolidated \$226M Operating Assistance Grant for CARES Act funding to FTA Region 5: Breakdown of the \$226M: \$12M Regional Providers and \$214M Council Services. All funds will follow the federal funding guidelines and rules of Federal 5307 Funding, they can be used for Operating Assistance and Capital Projects like bus replacement and the Federal Share will be 100%. Expenses eligible beginning January 20, 2020 and after. Funds available until expended and all grant receipts will be based on a reimbursement basis. To be eligible for reimbursement, Operating or Capital expenses must be reviewed for compliance with applicable federal requirements. Council prepared the CARES ACT GRANT application and submitted to FTA Region 5 where it is going through Final Review. Once the Final Review is completed it will be submitted to the Department of Labor. A normal grant takes about 90 days for FTA and Department of Labor review before the funds are awarded in the final grant to the Council. We anticipate this process will be streamlined to approximately 60 days from the date the grant is submitted to FTA. Electric Bus and Charger Update: on March 24, we agreed upon acceptable warranty terms, all chargers now have a 5-year Parts & Labor warranty. The chargers previously had a 2-year warranty. Buses now have 8-year warranties on the propulsion and energy storage systems. These major components previously had 5 and 6 year respective warranty periods. The warranty period for chargers and buses started March 30, 2020. New Flyer Connect (in service operational data acquisition) 4-years; previously had 2-years. Brooklyn Center Transit Center (BCTC): One charger is available; one charger is unavailable. Transformer failed during the week of April 20, Siemens has been on-site and has provided a Field Service report to document their findings and are conducting a failure analysis, replacement parts are also being sourced. Heywood: 7 of 8 depot chargers are currently available. Heywood Garage chargers generally operating more reliably over last three months with minimal issues. The electric buses are continuing to run in service on C Line even when experiencing BCTC charger issues. When necessary, the buses charge only at Heywood and return when the charge is depleted. This is the same mode of operation used since the C-line opening in June 2019 up to when the BCTC chargers became available in January. The warmer weather has reduced the amount of electric heater demand which allows for some 90-mile blocks of work to be completed on a single charge. On colder days, the buses were swapped out on-route after about 70 miles to ensure the charge wasn't depleted too low. In general, the buses are performing well, however we continue to experience some difficulties as currently 2 of the 8 are unavailable. 8700 has a battery string isolation fault and 8702 has speed sensor faults in the rear electric motor. Metro Transit and New Flyer continue to work diligently on the issues as they surface. Wrapping up about a week of a partial closure on the Blue Line, from April 20 through April 27, we closed some parts of the line and offered replacement bus service. Did this in collaboration with MNDOT for bridge painting over Hwy. 9 and also completed a rail line repair on 11th Ave. A couple of

weeks ago, crews poured the new bridge deck for the new transit station at I-35W and Lake Street, this new station will be served by the METRO Orange Line and I-35W express routes. The ramp from southbound I-35W to westbound I-494 is now closed to allow for construction of another Orange Line feature – a new transitway under I-494. The transitway will allow Orange Line buses to bypass traffic, improving travel times in the corridor. Southwest received its third Letter of No Prejudice this month, this allows work to continue as we wait for the full funding grant agreement. As I wrote about in my Insights column last Friday, we expect that transit will change forever in the aftermath of this pandemic, service demand and service expectations will change. We are starting to talk about how we can not only respond to these changes but be on the leading edge of transit service design in the new norm. This is will be a long journey, and we will engage with you and our stakeholders in this process. We are just in early stages of discussing how we go about this work, but I want you to know that we are going to be deliberate about building a better system, not simply returning to the pre-pandemic status quo.

Chamblis asked about social distancing and what action is taken if it is not maintained. Kooistra said bus operators will pass riders if the bus is too full, but passengers are supposed to maintain distance. Chamblis brought up masks for the public. Zeran asked if issues related to taking breaks and bathroom breaks have been resolved. Kooistra said porta-potties have been put at a number of sites to address this but he will follow up at the next meeting. Chamblis asked about MnDOT timelines. Thompson said MnDOT has not delayed any projects so far, but an update can be provided at the next meeting based on what happens.

BUSINESS

Consent Items:

1. There were no items on the consent agenda.

Non-Consent Items:

1. **2020-135:** 2020-2023 TIP Amendment for MnDOT: Transit Vehicle Purchase for Rise, Inc. (Sect. 5310 MnDOT Capital)

Metropolitan Transportation Services Senior Planner Joe Barbeau presented this item.

There were no questions or comments from Council Members.

Motion by Atlas-Ingebretson, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council approve an amendment to the 2020-2023 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to add a purchase of transit vehicles for Rise, Inc.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection, Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as Consent to Council.

Aye: 9 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

2. **2020-128:** Southwest Light Rail Transit (Green Line Extension) Appraisal Services Contract Amendment

Metro Transit Transit System Development Director Robin Cauffman presented this item.

Cummings asked about the third contractor needing an extension as well. Cauffman said the one left has more to work with, she added that appraisers need to be kept and dollar amounts will be based on who did the initial appraisal.

Motion by Chamblis, seconded by Cummings:

That the Metropolitan Council (Council) authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute amendments to two of the three master contracts for Condemnation Appraisal Services for the Southwest LRT Project as follows:

- Integra Realty Resources (17P253A) to add \$75,000 for a new total not to exceed \$570,000; and
- Patchin Messner Dodd & Brumm (17P253B) to add \$325,000 for a new total not to exceed \$825,000.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection, Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as Consent to Council.

Aye: 9 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

3. **2020-129:** Hennepin Avenue Downtown Reconstruction Cooperative Construction Agreement, #19I088

Metro Transit Engineering and Facilities Assistant Director James Harwood presented this item.

Chamblis asked for the contractor name and Harwood said it is T-Zack Concrete. Chamblis asked if this contractor will be handling the Real Time signs. Harwood said it will be done through a different contract.

Motion by Atlas-Ingebretson, seconded by Chamblis:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute Contract #19I088, a Cooperative Construction Agreement with the City of Minneapolis for construction of eight (8) enhanced bus stops as part of the City's Hennepin Downtown Reconstruction project in the amount of \$2,281,200.00.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection, Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as Consent to Council.

Aye: 9 Atlas-Ingebretson, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

INFORMATION

1. Travel Behavior Inventory Data Highlights

Metropolitan Transportation Services Data Scientist Ashley Asmus presented this item.

Atlas-Ingebretson said we should examine what we define as “normal” travel, since income has a lot to do with travel behavior. Atlas-Ingebretson asked for data to be presented disclosing if the data is not representative of the population. Barber asked about the distribution of surveys. Travel Modeling & Research Manager Jonathan Ehrlich said the survey design, increasing and maintaining representativeness has been a priority. Ehrlich added that targeted outreach was done, multicultural paid media, translating the survey, partnering with community-based organizations and stakeholders. Ehrlich said that to try to get better representation staff tried targeted oversampling, increased incentives, multiple contacts, as well as door-to-door outreach. Ehrlich said the data is weighted when necessary to ensure the data is as representative as possible. Atlas-Ingebretson said other vendors should be worked with who have true ties to the communities desired to be reached. Ehrlich shared that probability sampling is the basis for surveys like this. Fredson asked about income impacting commute. Ehrlich said both fares and level of transit service are impacted by the time of day, so this is something to study.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

Jenna Ernst
Recording Secretary