

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

June 24, 2019

LOCATION: Metropolitan Council Chambers, Saint Paul, MN

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 4:00 p.m. on Monday, June 24, 2019 in the Metropolitan Council Chambers, Saint Paul, MN.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Motion by Atlas-Ingebretson, seconded by Sterner to approve the agenda. Motion carried.

Motion by Cummings, seconded by Atlas-Ingebretson to approve the minutes of the June 10, 2019 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

TAB LIAISON REPORT

Dugan reported on the Regional Solicitation Policy Work Group that met May 24 and June 11. Work Group members began discussion on transit and equity for possible changes to the Regional Solicitation applications.

Roadways – Additional discussion on the roadway expansion project maximum.

Transit – Highlights of Work Group discussion:

1. Areas have different transit needs and they should not compete for funding at the consequence of each other, but all are worthy and should receive some level of funding.
2. How do transit providers select projects to apply for? Do they look through equity lens?
3. The transit system is based on spoke system. It doesn't address suburb to suburb needs.
4. Alternatives for changes to the applications and funding were presented for discussion. Alternatives include increasing the federal maximum request for a project to \$10 million, guaranteeing a project in a new market area, setting aside \$28 million for one Arterial BRT project each solicitation. Discussion on alternatives will continue at July 8 meeting.

Equity – Highlights of Work Group discussion:

1. Clarification on who is included in the definition of Equity. The Regional Solicitation include the following populations in considering equity: low-income populations, communities of color, children, people with disabilities, and elderly.
2. Question on how the region is identifying needs of disadvantaged populations.
3. Housing scores for projects that go through multiple cities can penalize the score of the community increasing affordable housing, when their neighboring city is not. The housing score is based on what is in the ground, not housing that is under construction. Regional Solicitation projects are funded in future years, when the construction would be complete.
4. Communities define their equity needs. Equity needs will be different by community.
5. Discussion will continue at July 8 meeting.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson reported:

Anoka County Tour

This week continues Chair Slawik's tours of the local governments. A lot of projects that Anoka County will give a tour of will include projects that were funded through the Regional Solicitation or projects that the county plans on pursuing through the Regional Solicitation.

Policymaker Groups

Similar to the transitway projects, when there are major highway projects (typically led by MnDOT) there are policymaking advisory committees as well that Council Members are involved in. Council Members who have districts that the project goes through can anticipate briefings from staff.

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

C Line

Two weeks after launch, METRO C Line has posted strong ridership gains on a preliminary basis, 11% more ridership so far has been reported. During weekdays, the METRO C Line carries about three times the amount of Route 19. In only nine days, ridership on the METRO C Line has almost reached the ridership of Route 19 over a period of 16 days. This is a testament to the success of the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) model that offers fast, frequent service every 10-15 minutes and upgraded amenities, like offboard payment and USB chargers. Route 19 still operates on a less frequent schedule, about every 30 minutes.

Construction

Downtown construction continues to have an impact on transit due to traffic. Construction season happens every year. This year, there have been few options, but a good partnership with Minneapolis has been built. With Minneapolis, Metro Transit has identified a few transit advantages that will help some routes, including transit-only access to 35W, and areas where buses get a head start along the shared roads. As construction will be ongoing, Metro Transit will continue to build on this partnership with the city and maximize any advantages. The best way to help alleviate traffic congestion during construction season is to ride transit.

Operator Shortage

Metro Transit still faces an operator shortage of 52 below the planned level of 1,456. If it continues, the workforce shortage will translate to unfilled bus service, impacting riders. It will be especially pronounced when Metro Transit has the next quarterly service adjustments because of an increase in service hours. Metro Transit is tirelessly working with Human Resources to recruit bus operators and create avenues to help ensure success in the training program. There are currently 14 weekday and 9 weekend student operators in the 5-week training program. The next weekday class is scheduled to begin on July 1. A new internship program gives new recruits a chance to drive in a closed course before taking the Commercial Driver's License (CDL) test and transit tests. The Second cohort started this program on June 17. Metro Transit is offering a \$1000 hiring incentive for recruits who successfully complete training and become operators by the end of July to help prepare for the next service changes and the 2019 State Fair. Current employees can also receive a \$600 referral bonus for each new bus operator candidate they refer when the new operator completes their evaluation period. Traditional radio advertising is scheduled to begin before the end of June and short television news lead-in spots are in the production process now, led by Metro Transit Marketing.

Metro Transit Police Department

On Thursday, June 20, the Metro Transit Police Department welcomed 15 new recruits to the force. Three of the new recruits previously served as Metro Transit community service officers. These officers

have second language skills in American Sign Language, Amharic (which is spoken in Ethiopia), French, Hmong, Korean, and Vietnamese. These recruits successfully completed the department's custom, nine-week academy. They will now spend another four months working alongside field training officers. Metro Transit police officers primarily focus on patrolling the transit network but respond to calls for service throughout the seven-county region.

Pride

Metro Transit celebrated Pride not only this weekend, but throughout this month. At the event, transit employees walked in the parade and set up a booth. Throughout the month, Metro Transit has shared stories about the LGBT community with events at Heywood and highlighted staff members in stories and posts to social media.

METRO Blue Line

On Wednesday, June 26, Metro Transit celebrates the 15-year anniversary of the METRO Blue Line. 216 million combined rides on light rail and commuter rail since the Blue Line's opening and the Green and Blue lines each set annual ridership records in 2018. 32% of Metro Transit's total annual ridership on rail lines (2018) 62 miles of combined railway and 91 light rail vehicles.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked about intersections with connectivity and if there are plans to build out infrastructure such as benches along the C Line at intersections that do not have stops. Kooistra said he will ask if the specific stations mentioned (not part of the C Line) are part of the infrastructure plan. Zeran asked about the C Line learning curve with the new technology. Kooistra said that there were technicians who have come out to trouble-shoot and a full report can be brought to the committee in the future. Sterner voiced his appreciation for Metro Transit's role in the Pride parade and how it was received by the community.

BUSINESS

Consent Items:

Motion was made by Sterner, seconded by Chamblis and carried, to approve the following consent items:

1. **2019-120 SW:** 2019-2022 TIP Amendment: I-35W Stormwater Storage Project

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council concur with the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) action to amend the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to change the description and cost of MnDOT's I-35W stormwater storage project.

2. **2019-121 SW:** 2019-2022 TIP Amendment: MN Highway 5 Concrete Pavement and Bridge Rehabilitation Project

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council concur with the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) action to amend the 2019-2022 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to update the project description and add an additional bridge rehabilitation for MnDOT's MN Highway 5 concrete pavement and bridge rehabilitation project.

Non-Consent Items:

1. **2019-145:** Northstar Corridor Funding Agreement with State of Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) | Resolution 2019-11
Metro Transit Finance Director Ed Petrie presented this item.

There were no questions or comments from Council Members.

Motion by Fredson, seconded by Zeran:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to:

- Enter into an Agreement with the State of Minnesota Department of Transportation for Calendar Years 2020 and 2021 to provide funding for public commuter rail service in Sherburne County, Minnesota for an amount up to \$1.6 million per year.
- Execute the Attached Resolution of the Governing Body (Metropolitan Council) to enter into an Agreement with the State of Minnesota Department of Transportation for Calendar Years 2020 and 2021.

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

2. **2019-154:** Scott County Functional Classification Principal Arterial Change Requests
Metropolitan Transportation Services Highway Planning & TAB/TAC Process Manager Steve Peterson presented this item.

Chamblis asked what studies are done as part of the request. Peterson said Appendix D of the TPP has the technical information to guide a decision and it largely comes from the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA). Sterner asked about coordination between Scott and Dakota Counties for east-west travel across the region. Cummings asked for clarification on the process. Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson said that in this case there was a formal request to the Council. Cummings inquired if the shift from MnDOT to the counties for new principal arterials will increase Met Council involvement beyond the previous once per decade requests. Atlas-Ingebretson asked what triggers the study to determine a future principal arterial. Thompson said the comprehensive planning updates helped the county to think about their long-term highway systems. Chair Barber added that counties choose where they want to invest their county sales tax and some of these new funds could be used on upgrading potential principal arterials. Sterner asked about the downgrade of the segment back to an A-Minor Arterial. Peterson said the county made the downgrade request so that the principal arterials are appropriately spaced based on FHWA guidance.

Motion by Sterner, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council approve the following functional classification changes and administratively modify the 2040 Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) to reflect the following:

1. Changes to the system:
 - a. Upgrade Scott County State Aid Highway (CSAH) 42 from an A-Minor Expander to a Principal Arterial from CSAH 17 to CSAH 21.
 - b. Upgrade CSAH 17 from an A-Minor Expander to a Principal Arterial from CSAH 42 to Trunk Highway (TH) 169.
 - c. Downgrade CSAH 21 from a Principal Arterial to an A-Minor Expander from CSAH 42 to TH 169.
2. Continue evaluating CSAH 78 from TH 169 to CSAH 17 as a future Principal Arterial, but do not change the current functional classification of the roadway at this time.

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

3. **2019-160:** Authorize Execution of Contract Options with Gillig LLC Utilizing the Commonwealth of Virginia's Gillig Bus Contract – 11 Buses
Metropolitan Transportation Services Contracted Transit Services Fleet Services Manager Paul Colton presented this item.

Cummings asked what happens to buses when they reach the end of their useful life. Colton said sometimes they come to the State Fair and provide service then are auctioned. Sterner asked about the fuel type and efficiency comparison. Colton said these buses are replacing buses that are 12-13 years old, 3 EPA engine changes on the diesel side so a 15-20% improvement in fuel economy but also pollution savings. Colton added that electric buses were not considered because they were not budgeted for and there was not a contract to buy off of. Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson said MTS is looking to Metro Transit's deployment of the electric bus fleet to see how the electrification roll-out goes and what can be learned, this will be shared with the suburban providers as it progresses. Atlas-Ingebretson asked if hybrid had not been an option. Colton said hybrid was not considered an option because the cost of the capital equipment is almost double with the fuel savings only about 25%. Thompson said if the budget can be expanded, the suburban providers may choose other options but with the buses needed and the budget provided this met their needs the best in this situation. Colton added that every three years there are additional improvements to reduce pollution on the diesel side from the EPA. Sterner asked if these buses can use biodiesel or be converted to. Colton said they can use biodiesel and during most of the year they do use 5-10% biodiesel.

Motion by Fredson, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to exercise bus purchase options utilizing the Commonwealth of Virginia's Contract E194-75548 MA2274 with Gillig LLC, to purchase nine replacement transit buses and two expansion buses in an amount not to exceed \$5,951,000.

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

INFORMATION

1. Draft Transportation Improvement Program 2020-23

Metropolitan Transportation Services Senior Planner Joe Barbeau presented this item.

Sterner asked about the possibility of changing projects like the Bottineau to a BRT to allow more projects. Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Thompson said that right now the document reflects the decisions for the funding with the preferred mode and preferred alignment. Atlas-Ingebretson asked how other languages have been included. Metropolitan Council Outreach Coordinator Sara Maaske said up to now they have not but she will look into it. Atlas-Ingebretson said radio is an important media and MPR is listened to across ethnic groups. Fredson commented that the list appears West Metro-heavy. Thompson said there are 525 projects listed but the three major East Metro projects are just gearing up so they are outside of this TIP and a lot of other major projects have been completed so when there is a broader perspective a balance can be seen.

2. Travel Behavior Inventory Program

Metropolitan Transportation Services Travel Modeling & Research Manager Jonathan Ehrlich presented this item.

Atlas-Ingebretson asked what participant demographics were tracked. Ehrlich responded that the demographics tracked were: race, age, gender, income, and educational attainment. Atlas-Ingebretson asked how the information collected from the transportation portion of the American Communities

Survey is different. Ehrlich said that survey is only collecting information about the commute, which is limited since commutes only represents 15-20% of overall travel regionally and nationwide. Atlas-Ingebretson said hard-to-reach populations are only hard-to-reach because entities use the wrong methodologies, designing for homeowners and those who have written language skills, so she encourages the use of a phone survey. Chamblis mentioned that scanning a postcard may be more of an incentive to participate. Ehrlich said he will take this advice into consideration but did note that phone-based surveys have been done in the past and were onerous for participants. Fredson asked what is done with the final data. Ehrlich responded that the data is anonymized, and it helps guide decisions by making the tools and models reflective of the population. Fredson asked about limitations on the data the Council can collect. Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson said this data helps look forward with how big a project should be or where it should go. Gonzalez inquired if there is any ask of the users of what they want. Ehrlich said there is a question about autonomous vehicles, but targeted questions can be done in the future. Gonzalez asked if tourists/visitors are captured somewhere. Ehrlich said there are other ways to access travel patterns of those who do not live in the area. Chair Barber asked about teen travel. Ehrlich answered that there are enhanced privacy concerns with those under 18 and there is also a concern for the reliability of the information a child would provide. Chair Barber commented that leaving the teen travel reporting up to the parents may leave the teen travel under-reported.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 6:05 p.m.

Jenna Ernst
Recording Secretary