

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, July 06, 2016

Committee Members Present: Chair Kjensmo Walker, Julianne Bina, Christopher Bates, Heidi Myhre, Pamela Zimmerman, Bob Anderson, David Fenley and Patty Thorsen.

Committee Members Absent: Adora Sage

Committee Members Excused: Ken Rodgers, Kari Sheldon, Nichole Villavicencio, Robert Platz and Margot Imdieke Cross.

Council Staff Present: Pam Steffen, Adam Mehl, Derek Berube and David Hanson from Metro Transit; Mai Thor, Andy Streasick, Andrew Krueger, Dana Rude and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Matt Jensen from Kimley-Horn, Mary Springer and Jason Dannenbring from Snow-Kreilich; Rick Cardenas.

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, July 06, 2016.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Fenley seconded by Bates to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2016 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Legislative Update

Leslie Kandaras spoke to the TAAC committee. She works in the Government Affairs department of the Metropolitan Council. The Minnesota State Legislature concluded their legislative session in late May. There was discussion about a possible special session. They were following several major pieces of legislation. None of them panned out for them. One was a comprehensive transportation bill. For years Governor Dayton has supported a comprehensive transportation package to fund the roads, bridges and the transit system across the state. For the Metropolitan Council the Governor's proposal has consistently included a metro area sales tax. His preferred amount is a half a cent additional sales tax in the metro area to invest in the transit system throughout the region. Even though there still were conversations going on in the final week of the session, ultimately there was no agreement on a comprehensive transportation bill. One never made it to the House or Senate floor.

Additionally they were tracking the bonding bill. Even numbered years are traditionally bonding years. In the odd numbered years the state sets its biannual budget. In years such as 2016 traditionally they pass some sort of public works bonding bill. So this is a bill that enables the state to borrow money. This is usually to suggest capital projects throughout the state. There was a lot of activity around that bonding bill in the final hours of the session. Even though the House and Senate passed a bill, they were not the identical bill and the House adjourned before they could pass the amended version of the Senate's bill. That meant that there was no bill to be passed on to the Governor because the two bills did not concur with each other. In the bills that were considered by both bodies they did include some funding for transportation projects. That would have been money for the Orange Line project as well as money for the Mall of America Transit Station. They did not end up passing it to the Governor.

The bill that did get sent to the Governor was a tax bill. The Legislature did come up with a bipartisan tax agreement. It included language for our regional transit capital bonding authority. It did not include money for the Council. It included language that would give them the authority to levy or borrow \$82.1 million to invest in regional transit capital needs. That would be fleet replacement needs and other transit capital projects throughout the region. The Governor ultimately decided not to sign the tax bill. He cited several concerns with the bill including a mistake with language that would have ended up costing the state considerably more than had been planned when it was being debated. Because the Governor did not sign that bill it did not become law and we did not receive our regional transit capital authority from this session.

They did pass and the Governor signed a supplemental budget. That included \$407,000 for Twin Cities Rise to fund another cohort of a mass transit technician program. It has been a successful program reaching new populations of the potential transit technicians in providing them with job training through partnership with community technical colleges and Metro Transit.

At this time there has not been any more talk about a special session.

2. State Fair

David Hanson, Manager of Street Operations and Adam Mehl, Market Development Specialist, spoke to the TAAC committee. They are working on the State Fair Project. The State Fair is taking place from August 25 through September 5. Last year they carried 575,348 passengers to the fair. That is up eight percent from 2014. Their goal is to increase that to three percent this year over last year.

They will be operating 21 sites this year. There will be 10 weekday sites and two additional ones on the weekend. That will consist of Maple Grove and Best Buy. They added two operations. One is Bottineau Boulevard park and ride that replaces the former Brookdale Square operations. That held 1,000 cars. Bottineau Boulevard only holds 500 cars but has restrooms and curb lighting. On the east side of the river will be the Newport Transit Center. They expect to get about 500 cars at that facility. This will be good overflow for Cottage Grove, which always experiences overflow. The Dunwoody/Parade Stadium is at the same location. They will be there a little sooner than anticipated and will have more parking spots.

The regular route service is the A-Line service. They have dedicated transit supervisor staff that manage that service on the street. That is Ford Parkway to Snelling. Normally they put up a stop on Snelling at Como. They put up a temporary stop at Midway to accommodate customers going northbound. Route 3 will have extra service if they experience delays. The Route 84 will be adding extra service for the evening after the concerts. The Route 84 normally runs every 30 minutes. They will supplement that service so the A-Line won't get too overburdened.

The State Fair Transit Hub has one area for the free ride service and one area for the express service.

Ticket prices for the express buses is \$5.00 per person for a round trip. You can purchase the tickets online ahead of time or at the bus in cash. For August 1st through 24th there are bus bargain prices. For a single person it is \$4.50 round trip or \$9.00 for two people or a family of four pass for \$15.00. This year MVTA will be accepting these tickets.

Metro Transit will be at two locations inside the fair. The primary one is at the Grand Stand. They will also be at the Eco Experience/Kick Gas display. They will focus on air quality.

They are looking to give over 600,000 rides this year. They are distributing 60,000 State Fair Brochures before the fair. They will have skyway ads and ad panels. They are doing direct mails both physical and email. Direct mail will go to the Brookdale area to advertise the new park and ride and let people know that the old location is not being used anymore. They will also be focusing on the Newport park and ride area.

They will have sidewalk clings downtown Saint Paul and Minneapolis telling people about regular route service like the Green Line or park and ride service they could take. They are doing extensive online advertising using paid social media and free social media like Pandora, Facebook and Google. They will have advertising on the vehicles and then print ads.

The number of buses they will have on weekdays is 64 in the a.m., 62 in the p.m., and 41 artics. The number of buses they will have on Weekends and the Holiday is 74 in the a.m., 74 in the p.m. and 54 artics.

The Metro Transit staff total estimated hours is 3,184. The bus operators total estimated hours is 11,363. Express service costs are covered by collected revenues. No subsidy is required.

3. Metro Mobility Update

Andrew Krueger spoke to the TAAC committee. In December 2015 Metro Mobility had a historic day. It was the first time ever that they went over 8,000 rides in a single day. The Star Tribune did a short article on Metro Mobility ridership on December 3. Shortly after that, on December 9 they surpassed the 8,000 mark again.

Historically, the highest ridership days happen in November and December. Occasionally they will have a high ridership day that happens in October. It is rare to see that happen in the beginning of the year. In February, they had the second highest ridership day ever in Metro Mobility history at 8,016 rides. When you look at the number of times the number of rides in 2016 that are making the top 10. Six of the highest ridership days happened in the first five months of the year.

If the historic trend continues they will be looking at significantly higher ridership come November and December because they are hitting ridership marks now that they typically don't see until the end of the year. They can add on top of the mark another 500 or 600 rides come November and December.

If you look at the ridership per month over the course of a year looking back to 2012 you could see that the ridership goes down the last week of December because of Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and New Year's Eve. In the first three weeks of December they have the highest ridership days. But in 2015 it went up in September and again throughout December when they had an extra weekday. He showed a chart of the years between 2012 and 2016.

In 2016 they have not seen the typical decline in May and June as they typically see. Generally it drops down in May, June and July. If they go high again in November and December they are going to have performance issues across the board. They will be putting almost every vehicle out.

They have huge variations in weekday service. Wednesday is the busiest day of the week. Tuesday's and Thursday's are not quite as high. Monday ridership is the lowest followed by Friday.

In 2016, given the high ridership days, the on time performance is not what they would consider to be acceptable levels. This year they have seen a decline in on time performance. Looking at the same time in 2015 at the end of May they were at 96.4 percent on time. It dropped down to 95.7 percent through May of 2016.

They have put an increased emphasis on appointment times. They changed their contracts to do that. The appointment times are still not what they want them to be. They believe the appointment times should be at the 95 percent level. Over last year the appointment time percentage has gone up five percent. Last year they were hitting appointment times at 83 percent of the time. This year they are at 88 percent of the time on average.

They have seen a slight decrease in the number of trips in May and June. They have put out more routes than ever before. They are putting more vehicles on the road. They have added more vehicles, more capacity. They have added additional drivers. The number of routes have increased. The productivity has decreased from last year. When you look at the months of May and June there was a decrease in on time performance.

They did some analysis with MnDOT and they found out that hours lost because of congestion have increased substantially starting about April 1st. If you look at April and May there was an increase in hours due to traffic construction. MnDOT is unwilling to say that it is because of road construction. On some streets there is utility work. Sometimes there are streets torn up and lanes are closed. Congestion has gotten worse before the July 4th holiday. It is having an impact on the on time performance.

They don't traditionally look at weekend rides but the on time performance on weekends is less than on weekdays. The ridership is about 2,500 rides on a weekend.

They released a Request for Proposal (RFP) to bring in a consultant to take a look at the last decade of Metro Mobility ridership and to try to make some forecasts going forward for what are the next five to ten years going to look like. There is a lot of discussion about baby boomers starting to retire and perhaps moving into Metro Mobility service. There are other factors as well. Generally as we age we tend to travel less. Although the number of people who may be eligible for Metro Mobility will grow substantially, the number of trips they take on an individual basis might go down. So they are having somebody come in and do an in-depth analysis in the next six months of what can be expected within the next three, five, seven or ten years.

About three years ago they looked at their ridership and looked at the vehicles that were in use. What they look at is peak vehicle usage. They try to have a 10 percent spare factor of vehicles. On the peak time they were down about three percent three years ago. They have significantly increased the fleet. They now have over 525 vehicles as of today. When Andrew started three years ago there were about 400 vehicles. There has been a significant increase in vehicles and drivers since he started, trying to accommodate this growth.

Hiring qualified drivers has been an issue.

The Minnesota State Council on Disabilities along with the University of Minnesota, MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council yesterday submitted a request to the Federal Transit Administration for just over \$1 million for what they are calling a sand box demonstration. Sand box means they give you a little bit of money and resources to look at what would it take to bring driverless cars to a service like Metro Mobility specifically for people with disabilities. There are a lot of questions they need to answer about people with disabilities in the next few years. They are hoping that Minnesota can be on the forefront of that. That was submitted yesterday.

4. Metro Mobility Community Conversation Debrief

They went around the table and asked if anyone who attended had anything to say. Heidi Myhre said that she wished she would be heard more. Andrew Krueger said they went to small roundtable discussions to give people a chance to talk. The facilitators were told they were there to listen. It seemed like in some cases they felt they had to justify instead of listen. For the first forum, for everybody they had email addresses for, they sent out a report: here is what we heard and here are the answers. They were working with the Communications department to see if there is a way to change the public forums a little bit to give more information. "Here are the last three forums, this is what we heard." "Here are the changes that we have made because of it. Here are the things we can't change and why." Let it be a dialogue on the issues that they have heard.

Christopher Bates said they should ask what Metro Mobility is missing. What is administration missing?

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. They started the last meeting with what Andrew just discussed about the main points that they have gotten at the previous meetings and what they have done to address some of these issues. They heard concerns about trip routing as the service grows. Trips are getting more circuitous in the way that they are routed and how to address that. They heard concerns about on time performance. Things that needed to be done to address that. They had the open ended question of what are they going to do about ridership growth? They heard a desire for additional or different communication coming out of the Metro Mobility Service Center. They are trying to let riders know what is happening and how things are going. The communication part in particular is leading to some changes where they are resurrecting the newsletter. A lot of people are not interested in the newsletter. But for those who are interested, they will start putting out the newsletter again a couple of times a year. It will let people know if there is anything new or something is changing.

With three public forums finished, Metro Mobility staff is impressed with the role that the Communications staff has played with getting people to show up. They had about 45 people at the last one. This was the smallest one of the three forums. Previously, when the Metro Mobility staff put these forums together there were very few people who attended.

Now that these three forums are done, they will want to move away from just a general updates/question and answer to having more targeted opportunities for feedback as appropriate or as things change. They are looking at launching a new online trip booking system when the Trapeze system will allow them to do that. So once they update Trapeze, sometime within the next year, they are looking at launching a new, more user friendly version of their online trip booking software that works how they want it to work. It includes the ability to call and check and see real time how long it is going to be until the ride shows up. You can call and find out where your bus is in real time.

When they start to look at those types of changes they will like to use these community conversations in addition to an open feedback forum to bring this out while it is still in the design phase and say "What do you think of this?" "Here is why we think it is a good idea." And then they will ask for feedback.

They have gotten a fair amount of feedback on the current online trip booking software, very little of which is positive. Because of the negative feedback they are looking at putting a new one in as soon as possible. They

may have at the next community conversation a computer with the new software to let the people try it out and be interactive with it.

They like the three locations of Minneapolis, Saint Paul and Bloomington. It makes sense based on ridership hubs. They like the locations of the two core cities. They will be looking for a different place in Bloomington.

In the past, the TAAC had driver recognitions at the meeting. There was customer feedback about a driver going above and beyond. It was something that some drivers appreciated. The driver was given a plaque. Eventually it went by the wayside. Metro Mobility staff is interested in resurrecting that depending on the type of feedback they get. They would do this at the community conversations. People would hear positive things about the work that they do.

Of all of the community conversations, the one in the evening was the one that was the least attended. As they go forward they are going to consider to make them all during the daytime hours.

5. MOA Design Update

Derek Berube from Metro Transit, Matt Jensen from Kimley-Horn, Jason Dannenbring and Mary Springer from Snow-Kreilich spoke to the TAAC committee. The goal today is to give an update on where they are at with the design of the Mall of America Transit Station. They are at the 90 percent design threshold, which means they are nearing the completion of the design project. They met with the TAAC committee about a month ago and got a lot of feedback. They put a lot of those suggestions into the project. Right now they are in the 90 percent review period. They will be reviewing the project for the next month. Then they will review the cost estimate and go into the procurement phase and get a contractor on board this fall to begin construction. If the funding is in place at the time they will finish the project near the end of next year by Black Friday.

They showed an image of the station as viewed from 24th Avenue. The ribbon interior that draws you from the façade up to the mall remains unchanged from the last meeting. The space out of the bus gates has changed a little bit. They reduced the size of the lower ceilings above the bus waiting areas at each gate. There will be a brighter light in that area where the people wait to get on the bus. They have a couple more TVM's planned where the ticket vending machines are located. They have also created an area of solid wall between the two sets of doors so they can have next trip displays. The cords are hidden in the wall. There will be enunciator buttons below the next trip displays. The building rotated 90 degrees to what it was in the last presentation and touches both the mall and the street creating a walkway between those two areas.

One big change they have made is in the last design. There was an area that you passed through as you are going to the escalators that everyone felt was too tight. It seems like not enough space. They made that slightly bigger. What changed in the design is the entire police station was pushed north to make a bigger walkway that has better visibility along the length of that walkway. The walkway as you are approaching the escalators has gotten wider by about five more feet. It is 20 feet now.

The other thing that has happened is they changed the configuration at the end of the hallway. The Mall of America requested wider escalators. They had 24 inch escalators and the Mall wanted 40 inches. This took a lot more space. They eliminated the stair that was supposed to be between the escalators. Now they have two wider escalators and a larger elevator. But they do not have a staircase at the end of the hallway.

Together with the adjustment to the police station location means that as you are approaching you will be able to see where the escalators and elevator are. They also made a modification so that the escalators are moved to the east about eight feet from where they were before. Which means as people are walking down that hallway they will encounter the escalator first and go a little further in to get to the elevator.

Another change that they made was adjusting the width of the vestibule that you are entering in the middle and one result of that was that it created an area next to the vestibule that is out of the line of traffic that is a little more generous for those waiting for Metro Mobility in the waiting zone. This will allow the passenger to see the Metro Mobility vehicle and allow the driver to see the passengers. Another change they made is the ramps as you enter in from 24th Avenue. They previously had two longer ramps. They made that into three shorter ramps with landings between each.

They added a retail space at the bottom of the escalators. They will probably have a convenience store in that location.

They have made a decision based on feedback from Metro Transit and from the TAAC committee that it is important to have a bench close to the loading zone for the high frequency bus routes. That would be six of the gates out of the eight gates. Two gates at the end that are rarely used is where the cut off happened. They put a bench at each of the gates that were highly used. That will give someone a place to sit down that is close to where they are getting on the bus. In addition to the bench each of the gates has a LED Next Trip display with a letter for the gate letter. It has a sign that signifies the end of the loading zone that the driver pulls up to. That sign will have the enunciator and speaker. It is similar to what you would find on Marquette.

The bench they are using as the basis of design has individual seats and it has options for arm rests between those seats. You could put an arm rest between every single seat or you could choose two arm rests out of five seats. They want feedback on what the TAAC members think about this.

The TAAC members said: they like a variety of widths in the seats. Pam Steffen said to check in with Metro Transit on this.

They asked about signage on the restrooms. They reviewed Metro Transit's standard signage for both the men's and the women's restrooms. They have a man and a woman and a wheelchair sign. They are looking at the family restroom signs. They couldn't find a standard sign. They wanted feedback on what that room should be called and what the sign should look like. Should it be a family and assisted or just assisted? If they were to put a pictogram what should the pictogram be of?

Chair Walker said to use the words accessible instead of handicapped.

The City of Bloomington is requiring that the doors be three hour doors. This means that the doors may have to be heavier because of fire regulations.

At this time they have only been putting the power door operators on the outside door of the restroom.

In the Metro Mobility waiting area there will be a bench and a place for a wheelchair next to the bench.

Every crosswalk location where they will be encouraging people to cross will be ADA compliant with the truncated domes as well as the crosswalk marking across the roadway. The ceiling treatment will also be a wayfinding device. The brighter areas at the location on the island where you are supposed to go will help guide you to where you need to go. Making this site similar to other locations will help people find their way.

They have three steps at the base of the escalator and the end of the escalator to help people get used to the escalator.

Chair Walker asked if they could have an accessible pedestrian signal at the stop sign where all of the buses are supposed to stop for pedestrians to cross. That way if a person who has low to no vision needs additional time to cross they will have something auditory that tells them it is safe to cross. There would be a walk sign and additional time for a slower person to cross.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

This was not presented

2. Green Line

This was not presented

3. Orange Line

This was not presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Andy Streasick talked about the accessible restroom doors. They should open outward. It would be easier for someone who uses a mobility device to get out of the restroom.

MEMBER COMMENT

They talked about recognizing drivers for their good work.

Fenley talked about the community conversation and varying the hours to get a cross section of the community.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary