

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting date: June 05, 2024

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

- Chair, David Fenley, at large
- Vice Chair, Darrell Paulsen, Precinct F
- Sam Jasmine, Precinct A
- Christopher Bates, Precinct B
- Patsy Murphy, Precinct C
- Ken Rodgers, Precinct D
- Jeffrey Dains, Precinct E
- Kari Sheldon, Precinct G

- Michele Severson, MCD
- Erik Henriksen, MCD
- Diane Graham-Raff, MAAA
- Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- Heidi Myhre, MCCD
- Claudia Fuglie, MCCD
- Richard Rowen, AARP MN

Ex-officio:

- Andy Streasick, Metro Mobility
- Cheryl Schmidt, Metro Mobility Service Center (interim)
- Douglas Cook, Metro Transit Customer Advocate
- Anjuli Cameron, Metropolitan Council

= present, E = excused

Attending Online:

Vice Chair, Darrell Paulsen, Ken Rodgers, Patsy Murphy, Michele Severson, Christopher Bates

Absent:

Jeffrey Dains, Kari Sheldon, Trevor Turner, Anjuli Cameron

Excused:

Sam Jasmine

Call to order

Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:31 p.m. and announced that the agenda and May 1, 2024 minutes would be approved if quorum was met later in the meeting or delay approval until the July meeting.

Agenda approved

It was moved by Member Fuglie, seconded by Member Thorsen to approve the agenda. Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. **Motion carried.** Note: Approval was delayed as quorum was not met at 12:31 p.m.

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Vice Chair, Paulsen, seconded by Member Murphy to approve the minutes of the May 1, 2024, regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.** Note: Approval was delayed as quorum was not met at 12:31 p.m.

Business and information items

1. A **Purple Line Dedicated Bus Lanes Update** was presented by Elizabeth Jones - Senior Community Outreach & Engagement Lead, Metro Transit and Craig Lamothe - Director BRT Projects & Project Manager, Metro Transit as outlined in the PPT_TAAC_20240605 document to the committee and meeting attendees. Chair Fenley opened the presentation stating this presentation was cut short at the May 1 meeting and announced that a small workgroup meeting was held. Presenter Jones added that the presentation would not include a review of every slide to

allow adequate time for committee questions and feedback. Attendance by some committee members at the small workgroup meeting was very helpful. Following presenter introductions of Craig Lamothe and herself, Jones emphasized that the project team was seeking input and feedback on the Maryland and White Bear Ave. Corridor design options - specifically the Maplewood and St. Paul sections.

Design Options. Presenter Lamothe provided an overview of design options proposed for Maryland Avenue and St. Paul. In St. Paul, One side running lane in one direction with center turn lane would provide larger medians for pedestrian and bike crossings and fewer property impacts from left turn lanes. Two side-running lanes would include left turn lanes and provide semi-exclusive access critical to Maryland Avenue with up to 14 buses running per hour. A narrower option than center-running with platforms, less green boulevards, and requiring a center median with no left turns is necessary as it would be safer for pedestrians. Service would be faster and more reliable with no other traffic on the lanes except emergency vehicles, and vehicle safety would be improved with no left turns between signalized intersections. It was noted that this is the most reliable option. A one side-running option was not considered due to more space in the Maplewood area than in St. Paul; furthermore, the two side-running option is preferred by disability advocates due to consistency of station configurations and the introduction of a median which would eliminate left turns. Other benefits would include fewer property impacts, less traffic delays, and easy access for maintenance staff. The two center-running transit lanes design includes two options due to available space that will look more like light rail. Concrete barriers on both sides would result in faster service between stations, pedestrian safety, and improved vehicle safety with no left turns at unsignalized intersections.

RMS Phase II Discussion. Jones initiated this discussion asking the committee to think about what the project team should be aware of and consider while evaluating design options in St. Paul and Maplewood. Fenley questioned whether the design option will be one style or a few of them. Lamothe responded that with the center-running option now being evaluated in St. Paul, the center and center, side and side or a mix of center and side-running options would be possible or a true mix of options adding rider feedback has revealed the importance of consistency. It was noted that a mix of design options would be more inconsistent. The Sun Ray corridor is an example of design consistency.

Discussion. Member Rowan questioned how stations would be configured for passenger accessibility. Lamothe explained that scenarios such as center running in both St. Paul and Maplewood would necessitate split center stations - center platforms - at the far side of signalized intersections allowing for pedestrian travel across one general purpose lane from either side of the station. Member Rodgers questioned whether one side of the platform would be accessible for pedestrian crossings. Lamothe responded there would be two split platforms explaining that a single platform would require specialized vehicles which are not in their fleet crossover and a larger lot to accommodate crossover maneuvering. Rodgers further clarified asking how a pedestrian would board the bus if they were not adjacent to the sidewalk or street and whether the only point of entry would be located at signalized intersections. Lamothe verified that the point of entry would be located at signalized intersections noting the platform would be shorter than an LRT platform. Rodgers requested verification that there will be signalized intersections at all station intersections. Lamothe assured that stations will be located and accessible at signalized intersections; however, pointed out that the Bruce Vento Trail corridor would differ. The Cook Avenue station located on the Bruce Vento Trail side/north side of Phalen Boulevard is not located at a signalized intersection. This station will have a pedestrian only push-button signal system to facilitate crossings from the station platform. Rodgers pointed out that these systems are not easy to navigate for a blind or deaf blind person without a landmark. Fenley requested an example of a station that would feel safe; Lamothe responded, Cook Avenue station is not at an intersection, and it is located near major destinations.

Rodgers announced that a Great Lakes ADA webinar about wayfinding outside of signalized pedestrian signal and new research will be unveiled. Lamothe stated that project staff will



register for this opportunity. Member Myhre expressed concern for potential confusion regarding how the system will be set up emphasizing that the disability community must be able to access the system on their own. Member Henriksen echoed concern expressed during the workgroup meeting that RFB's are difficult to find and recommended providing more details on the center line design relating to how pedestrians will locate and access ramps from corners of traffic signals. Lamothe responded that the project team will focus on one location to share back to the committee to ensure they get the right features installed.

Lamothe summarized that the project will be a full roadway reconstruction and concrete medians will be installed where there are no signals to allow pedestrians to cross one lane of traffic. Pedestrian access will be improved with the addition of more marked crosswalks, five more refuges/ medians, and station platforms will be located next to sidewalks with one side and two side-running options. Enforcements will ensure systems are operating properly as pedestrian safety is their priority. The purpose of future conversations with the committee will be to identify local areas to focus on. Discussions on pedestrian access and accessibility should occur closer to the thirty percent design phase during the spring of 2025. Decision-making on the design option is anticipated to occur in early October. The project team is currently focused on community engagement in both corridors. Vice Chair, Paulsen inquired if the design decision can wait until after the November election. Lamothe responded it will occur prior to the election noting the project could look different than it does today. Paulsen added the project could look different based on who is elected. Lamothe concurred that things could look different than they do today depending on election results. Fenley requested clarification as to which two corridors are under consideration; Lamothe clarified that the two corridors are the Maryland and White Bear Corridor and the Bruce Vento Trail Corridor noting they have not disbanded the Bruce Vento Trail corridor but have been working away from it due to guidance from policymakers. The project team is adding metrics for the two corridors - comparing differences between them – that will be presented to communities in both corridors in July. Fenley questioned if the Bruce Vento Trail Corridor supported the side-running option. Lamothe responded the Bruce Vento Trail Corridor would include a lane in each direction with four stations; the Maryland and White Bear Corridor would have twelve stations noting more people would be served.

Rodgers thanked the presenters for providing information during the early engineering phase as input from TAAC is typically requested later in the process. Referencing a center island crossing, Rodgers stated pedestrians need a means to access accessible signals - not just a place to wait safely - adding signals must be customized as part of the planning process. Rodgers asked if there will be enough space for pedestrian ramps in both directions expressing the width should be included in the decision-making process. Lamothe stated that pedestrian ramps will be utilizing a twelve-foot-wide lane. Myhre echoed Rodgers' concern with crosswalk safety and asked if center islands will be wide enough for wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Lamothe will check further but assured that medians will be very substantial and pedestrian safety has been a priority over transit.

2. A **2024 State Fair Planning Update** was presented by Jason Bordenave - Supervisor, District Street Operations, Metro Transit to the committee and meeting attendees. Following an introduction, Presenter Bordenave announced that he would be providing an update on the upcoming State Fair that runs from August 22 – Sept. 2, 8:00 a.m. to Midnight – noting the opening time moved up one hour. Bordenave provided responses to concerns that were brought up during the October 2023 committee meeting. Last year they had four Park & Rides, this year two sites, Maplewood Mall and Maple Grove Park and Rides, will be added noting the Maple Grove Park & Ride will be available on weekends and Labor Day. Porta Potties will be housed in Metro Transit facilities so lighting will be good, and placement will be near boarding areas. Accessible parking lots will be brought back including Maplewood and Maple Grove plus along the A Line and Route 61. The signage near Gate 9 will be clearer as to where passengers need to go to catch the bus. Traffic controllers will be provided by the State Fair at Como Avenue and the transitway to accommodate buses, Gate 9, Snelling, and at Midway for pedestrian crossings. Google maps has been updated; it



has been successfully tested locating Gate 9.

Discussion. Myhre questioned if there will be signage providing transit schedules including Metro Mobility near Gate 9. Bordenave responded that extra buses have been added to Route 3 as well as a Coordinator and will communicate the need for wayfinding signs to the State Fair. Paulsen questioned whether Maplewood has been added for all twelve days, only on weekends and evenings, and if the signage by Gate 9 is utilized by Metro Mobility. Bordenave will check with Metro Mobility on signage clearly showing where to board adding Metro Mobility utilizes the horseshoe area near Gate 9. Paulsen stated that small blue/brown signage indicates which vehicles can be there. Bordenave verified that Maplewood will be available all twelve days and Maple Grove on weekends and Labor Day. Bordenave pointed out that there could be operator not signage issues; he will bring this concern to the State Fair. Myhre added there have been accessibility issues with Metro Mobility pulling into the horseshoe area. Bordenave responded that they might bring Metro Mobility in on the north side as the gate has a scooter rental area; he will check with the State Fair in July. Paulsen added that it is used by Metro Mobility and gets very congested.

3. **Office of Legislative Auditor, Metro Mobility Report** was presented by Mariyam Naadha - Evaluation Manager, Office of the Legislative Auditor and Kyle Malone and Wil Harrison as outlined in the OLA Metro Mobility Presentation_June 5, 2024 to the committee and meeting attendees. Chair Fenley informed the committee that testimony was provided to the joint House and Senate and the report was issued a day prior to the May committee meeting. Following introductions, Presenter Naadha prefaced the presentation with an overview of the Office of the Legislative Auditor, audit process and a timeline of the Metro Mobility audit and report noting an evaluation of Metro Mobility was recommended in the spring of 2023 by the Legislative Audit Commission to review the extent to which Metro Mobility was meeting the demand for its service. The report was released on 4/30/23, Link: <https://www.auditor.leg.state.mn.us/ped/2024/metro-mobility.htm>.

Key findings from the evaluation of Metro Mobility for fiscal year 2023. Summary – In consideration of different service standards, the Metropolitan Council largely met the demand for Metro Mobility services, however allowed trip providers to deny ride requests in the state-mandated service area. Metro Mobility services failed to meet performance goals for on-time pick-ups and drop-offs. Several issues related to the Metro Mobility complaints process undermined its effectiveness: 27% disagreed and 13% strongly disagreed that the process to make a complaint about Metro Mobility service was clear to me (pages 33 and 36). The role and penalty and bonus structure of trip providers was reviewed noting a penalty of \$50 is applied to a confirmed instance where a trip provider failed to forward a complaint and a bonus of \$5,000 if the ratio of complaints counting towards a trip provider’s bonus is less than or equal to no complaint per 2,000 rides. About three-quarters of Metro Mobility rides were within the federally mandated service area - this area is subject to federal regulations set up to ensure that Metro Mobility services are comparable to the fixed route system – in fiscal year 2023 (July 2022 - June 2023) and federally mandated rides were prioritized over rides scheduled in the state mandated areas. The Metropolitan’s Council actions to address service quality were reviewed noting the Council issued financial penalties for all instances where trip providers failed to meet goals for onboard pick up and drop off times, amended contracts, increased wages for drivers, relaxed performance goals, and separated goals relating to on time pick up and drop off for rides in the state mandated area. The legislative audit review of Metro Mobility rides data showed that those steps did not adequately address service quality issues (page 23). Trip providers were not meeting on time pickup and drop off goals even though the Metropolitan Council lowered the goals in November 2022. Trip providers denied a significant number of state mandated rides in the fall of 2023 - almost a full year since performance goals were lowered.

Findings	Recommendations.
In considering the different service standards, the	The legislature should consider amending the

Metropolitan Council has largely met the demand for Metro Mobility services, however allowed trip providers to deny ride requests in the state mandated service area.	statues to explicitly identify service requirements in the state-mandated service area (page 25-26).
The legislative audit review of Metro Mobility rides data showed that those steps did not adequately address service quality issues (page 23).	The Metropolitan Council should take additional steps to address service quality issues, such as include mitigation plans in contracts or require trip providers to develop one if one or more service standards in a specific period is not met (page 24).
Contracts disincentivize trip providers from forwarding complaints to the Metropolitan Council (page 37). A penalty of \$50 is applied to a confirmed instance where a trip provider failed to forward a complaint and a bonus of \$5,000 if the ratio of complaints counting towards a trip provider's bonus is less than or equal to no complaint per 2,000 rides.	The Metropolitan Council should limit the role of trip providers in the complaints process and should change the incentive structure in contracts with trip providers to encourage providers to forward complaints to the Metropolitan Council (pages 44 - 46)
The Metropolitan Council has paid trip providers a bonus related to meeting all ride requests when they have not earned it. The Metropolitan Council has sometimes paid trip providers a complaints-based bonus when have not earned it.	The Metropolitan Council should ensure that the bonus related to fulfilling all ride requests is given only when the trip provider has earned it and should only pay bonuses when trip providers have earned them (page 47).
Metropolitan Council has not established clear guidance to staff on how to resolve complaints such as written guidance on how staff should determine whether a rider's concern represents a complaint that should be monitored. A lack of clear guidance to staff on complaint resolution could result in an inconsistent approach.	The Metropolitan Council should update its written procedures to provide more complete guidance to staff (page 45). Noted: The Metropolitan Council updated its written procedures and provided more complete guidance to staff in March; however, more could be done.

Discussion. Chair Fenley prefaced the discussion clarifying that the presentation originates from the Office of the Legislative Auditor not the Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, or Metro Mobility. Myhre opened the discussion asking if they would be looking at the taxi service as there have been complaints about the service. Presenter Naadha acknowledged knowing of the on-demand taxi service and explained that the report was based specifically on Metro Mobility services noting if there is enough concern, the Legislative Audit Commission could potentially look at it. Presenter Harrison added this concern could be added to their list of potential evaluation topics being compiled throughout this year for review by the Legislative Audit Commission next year.

Paulsen clarified that Metro Mobility serves riders who also utilize mainline transit service and questioned whether the twelve-million-dollar shortfall of Metro Mobility was related to a lack of on time performance or formal complaint process due to provider bonuses. Naadha responded that federal regulations require public transit entities to provide a para transit service; the state requires special transportation services. The evaluation looked at quality of service which was impacted by a variety of workforce issues noting budget shortfall was not part of service quality issues. Paulsen referenced the situation during the COVID-19 pandemic when para transit rides were restricted to emergencies but acknowledged not being aware of the timeline of the audit. Harrison stated the evaluation focused primarily on fiscal 2023 partially due to problems related to the COVID-19 pandemic namely the supply chain issue and how it affected meeting performance goals; however, ride restrictions during the pandemic did not arise.

Fenley informed the committee that the Council has provided a response and questioned whether it was collaborative. Harrison responded that the Council was cooperative and generally agreed with most of the results of the evaluation. The Council communicated that performance issues were attributed to work force shortages and are forming initiatives to



address recommendations noting a more complete response is included at the back of the report. Fenley encouraged the committee to look at the report, adding the Council responded favorably the last time they were under review, and the purpose of the report is to prompt Metro Mobility to perform better. Graham Raff questioned whether the Office of the Legislative Auditor has the authority to go back and enforce recommended changes. Malone responded they are not an enforcement agency; they go back to agencies to see what steps have been taken in response to their recommendations, how effective they have been and if any steps need to be taken. The updates are published annually in January or February.

Reports

Subcommittee

1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers
Rodgers was not in attendance at the May Blue Line meeting but did attend the Quarterly Management Committee Meeting. The latest plans were discussed by officials; they are due at the end of the summer. Until the environmental impact statement has been submitted, the citizen advisory committee has a limited amount of work to do but have been getting updates on plans in place for displacement.
2. Green Line – Christopher Bates
The project was going well until the misplacement of the tracks; however, the project is still on track for completion in 2027.
3. Gold Line – Darrell Paulsen
A Gold Line report was sent out to committee members via e-mail on 5-24-24.
4. Purple Line – Darrell Paulsen
A Purple Line report was not sent out due to the update provided by presenters Jones and Lamothe. Paulsen thanked Henriksen for attending a smaller group meeting to discuss snow removal and clearance issues at the stations and what overall accessibility looks like.

Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group

None.

Chair

None.

Public invitation

No comments.

Member comment

Henriksen requested to have the wayfinding information forwarded to the committee; Rodgers will forward the information to Henriksen for dissemination to the committee via e-mail. Rodgers explained that the Transportation Access Board (Road Research Academy) panel created and investigated the use of tactile guides used primarily by the blind in navigating wide open spaces with no travel lanes adding they are currently in use worldwide, but not in the United States. The University of North Carolina conducted research and identified findings and best practices in areas where there are accessibility needs; this information will be shared with the committee.

Fenley verified that the July 3 committee meeting will be held and informed the committee that there are currently two agenda items to cover including an update from the Minnesota State Fair.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of June 05, 2024.

Approved this 3rd day of July, 2024.

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