

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting Date: February 01, 2023,

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Steet

Members Present:

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

Members Attending from Home
Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates,
Ken Rodgers

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

Members Excused

Rachel Garaghty, Diane
Graham-Raff, Trevor Turner

Ex-Officio:

- Phillip Sterner, Council Member Liaison
 - Andy Streasick, Metro Mobility
 - Douglas Cook, Metro Transit Advocate
 - Guthrie Byard, ADA & Title IX Administrator
- = present, E = excused

Attending remotely

Doug Cook
Guthrie Byard

Call to Order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:30 p.m.

Agenda Approved

Another item was added to the agenda. Accessible Minivan Pilot Project by Paul Colton.

It was moved by Dains, seconded by Thorsen to approve the agenda. Committee members did not have any other comments or changes to the agenda. **Motion carried.**

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Bates, seconded by Jasmine to approve the minutes of the December 7, 2022, regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Business & Information Items

1. Transit Worker Recognition

Vice Chair Darrell Paulsen and Chair David Fenley

Chair Fenley spoke to the TAAC committee. We are going to do a 20-minute presentation before we start regular business. Which is recognize operators and receptionists that have done right by the disability community. These folks were nominated by folks in the disability community riders. Twenty-two was the 30th anniversary of this committee. We have been operating for 30 years. So we decided to do something special. What better than recognizing the folks who get us around. The folks who we rely on to operate the vehicles and who also book our rides. So we have five folks that we

have recognized. Four of them are here. What I plan on doing now is turning it over to Darrell. This was his brainchild. He is responsible for this happening. He will hand out the awards to the individuals. We will be having some pictures taken as well. I would imagine that they will be posted in some sort of form. We will deal with that later.

Vice Chair Darrell Paulsen spoke to the TAAC committee. We were excited to recognize the 30th anniversary of TAAC and its involvement in the transit world. With that opportunity, came about the opportunity to recognize some of the drivers and reservationists and staff that do this work on a day-to-day basis. With that, we had a number of folks come in (25 of them). Some of them got excluded from it for one reason or another.

We did narrow it down to what we thought was the five best representation of the system overall. With that, I want to recognize those drivers once again. I will call them up, hand them their certificates and take a photo of each one. This is the quickest and easiest way to do this. We have cake and water outside the Chambers.

I will recognize Michael Owens for his commitment and outstanding service to the disability community. And through his exceptional performance as a Metro Mobility reservationist. Please stand behind me and I will call the others.

I will now recognize Scott Schaller for outstanding service to the disability community through the performance at Metro Mobility as a transit operator. He is one of our drivers on the regular route service. Thank you, Scott.

The next one we will recognize is Richard Huerta Cruz. We recognize his outstanding service to the disability community through his performance as a Metro Mobility operator. Thank you, Richard.

The next one is Histin Kuku. We would like to recognize Histin for his outstanding service to the disability community through his exceptional performance as a Metro Mobility operator. That was dated December 7, 2022.

So all these drivers and reservationist, through their outstanding commitment to the work that they do. We want to make sure that they continue to feel that love. Let's all give them a round of applause.

We want to recognize Nickolay Montik for his commitment as a Metro Mobility operator as well. He is not here. We will send his certificate to him.

2. The Application of Panelists for the Paratransit Appeals Process

Brian Pilon, Investigation & Resolution Specialist OEEU

Tyshia Riddley, IRU Project Coordinator, Investigation & Resolution Unit OEEU

Riddley said I am an Investigation and Resolution Specialist and Coordinator for the Office of Equity and Equal Opportunity Investigation and Resolution Unit.

Pilon said my name is Brian Pilon. I am a Senior Investigator within that group as well. Today we are, as indicated, here to talk to you about paratransit appeals. I will be handling the first portion of that. Which will discuss what it is in general. And then we will talk about some basic background information on that.

Next slide. What is a paratransit appeal? Paratransit service, through the Metropolitan Council, is provided by Metro Mobility.

The criteria to be eligible for Metro Mobility is regulated by federal law.

The Metro Mobility Service Center is the certifying body for eligibility in the region.

Periodically an individual who has been denied certification and/or their service has been suspended, may elect to appeal their denial. For conduct suspensions, the customer is encouraged to contact the Metro Mobility Service Center to see if mitigating circumstances, provider error, or perhaps a one-time grace period, might prevent a suspension without the need for a formal appeal. As it relates to all eligibility denial. The Metro Mobility Service Center does discuss those reasons face-to-face, with the individual and encourages the applicant to provide additional information that could alter the outcome without the need for a formal appeal. In event the appeal was to go forward, and we have received a



request for an appeal, and an appeal is made due to an eligibility denial, a presumptive eligibility is granted for 90 days. Similarly, after an appeal is requested due to a suspension, the suspension is not implemented until the appeal is complete.

The appeal consists of a hearing where information is presented by a Metro Mobility Representative and by the individual requesting the appeal (Appellant).

An appeals panel hears the information, asks questions, holds a discussion, and makes a decision about the eligibility / suspension.

The appeal determination is made solely by the appeals panel and is not influenced or decided by any Met Council employee.

Next slide. So what is the role of OEEO? The Metropolitan Council's Office of Equity & Equal Opportunity (OEEO) is the Council Liaison responsible for assembling an Appeals Panel and for providing administrative support to the Panel.

APPOINTED - All panelists are appointed by the Council's Regional Administrator

ASSEMBLE - A three (3) person Appeals Panel is assembled from the appointed directory to decide the outcome of the appeal.

CONTACT - OEEO contacts panelists from the directory to determine their availability.

SCHEDULE – OEEO schedules the hearing as soon as is administratively possible while providing the Appellant at least ten days' notice.

Next slide. The hearing process. OEEO convenes the hearing and facilitates the introductions.

A Metro Mobility representative will begin and explain the reason(s) for the denial of eligibility or suspension.

Panelist and the Appellant can ask Metro Mobility clarifying questions.

Appellant then discusses why eligibility is warranted or suspension is not warranted.

Panelist and Metro Mobility can ask Appellant clarifying questions at that point.

OEEO concludes testimony and closes the hearing to only panelists to make their decision.

Panel Chair writes the decision memo and sends that to OEEO within 14 business days of the hearing.

OEEO notifies Appellant and Metro Mobility of decision within 21 days.

Next slide. At this point we would like to take a pause in our presentation and ask if there are any questions about that process or what it is in general.

Vice Chair Paulsen said my question is that the notice will go out to the appellant in 21-days. Is the panel never allowed to make a. What if it is something really obvious that if we tweaked it a little bit, are they able to make an on-the-spot decision or do they always wait the 14-days and then the 21-days to the appellate because it is a legal process at that moment?

Pilon said it is my understanding that that decision is made after the hearing. That we are notified of that decision in 14-days. But I will defer to Andy on that.

Streasick said it is true that for a formal appeal, one of the requirements is the decision be made in writing. And that the appropriate way take place. However, if there is something obvious that comes up, the Metropolitan Council, Metro Mobility in this case, may drop or alter their decision. In which case, obviously, the appeal would seek to, or would become irrelevant.

Vice Chair Paulsen said they could drop that at a moment's notice. I am not talking about something that would go through a normal appeals process. But I am talking about somebody that maybe has a terminal illness or has a really affected situation that requires them to only use Metro Mobility for that reason they have gotten denied several rides because they can't even make it across six blocks to their doctor's office. So, in that case, what would you do in that case? When you know that person is already terminally ill and only has so many months or possibly weeks to live. I know there has been clients that have had a similar issue.



Streasick said I think in terms of dropping the appeal. What we would look at would be whether or not the eligibility criteria, if materials were presented, the appeal that made it possible for us to ascertain if someone was clearly eligible for the service. We could do that immediately. Or in the case of a suspension, if the activities that lead to the suspension were somehow mitigated or are proven to be outside of the rider's control and were not a direct threat to health and safety by the materials that were submitted during the appeal. Then you could act on that.

Vice Chair Paulsen said what I am saying is let's say it is not even something that the rider did, per se. Outside of their control. It is just because of their dementia or because of their terminal illness that they don't fully understand it and they have gotten kicked off or they got suspended for one reason or another. Which makes them not being able to get to their blood draws or dialysis or whatever appointment that is medically necessary. So, it is not about the rider or the person doing something wrong. It's about the process and fully understanding of the ridership that you guys are entrusted to deal with.

Chair Fenley said so, Darrell, I get your question. What we are doing now is more like talking about the process. At each appeals hearing, that is when we get into the weeds of what they are. This is extremely rare. It happens only once a year. Maybe even less than once a year. I think I have been on three. And those are the only ones that have happened in four years. We take everything into consideration. And it is very much under the understanding that folks rely on Metro Mobility for transportation. But I think getting into the weeds of what a hypothetical would be in particular appeals. In a particular appeal. It doesn't really fit for this discussion here.

Pilon said there is that presumption of eligibility for 90 days. And then there is also that lack of suspension or the withholding of the suspension until the decision is made. So in that sense if you had concerns about somebody. That ability to access the service while something is pending. That gets mitigated.

Vice Chair Paulsen said you at least hold the ridership. That is why your appeal process is happening. That is particularly the way it is done at the county level as well. So, I mean the fact that you mitigated that as well. That is all I needed to know.

Dains said mine was similar to Darrell's' in some regards. I use Metro Mobility and have never been suspended, thank God. But I don't know what the criteria is for suspension. I am looking at this thing and you are asking for volunteers to be on it. Maybe I am getting in the weeds here, but what would be the criteria for someone getting suspended? How would you make a decision being on the panel that they shouldn't be suspended? Maybe this is a subject for another meeting. I don't know, Chair, what you think.

Chair Fenley said if you have criteria for suspension in your presentation. It is usually egregious stuff for suspension.

Vice Chair Paulsen said or repeated behavior.

Chair Fenley said even then. It is so rare. It is hard to get suspended. But that being said, do you all have an answer?

Streasick said the most common suspension is for no-show activity. Council policy or Metro Mobility policy, suspend folks automatically for no-showing at least six percent of their trips and also at least four unexcused no-shows or late cancels within an existing 30-day period. So no-showing or late cancellations. Four rides within 30 days and having that equal six percent of your trips. Otherwise, suspensions would take place for behaviors that either seriously disrupt transit service or violates the rights of others or pose a direct threat to the health and safety of others.

Chair Fenley said this is all pushed on from the feds, correct? Or is this Council policy?

Streasick said the overall guidelines, in terms of severe disruption, direct threat to health and safety or interfering with the rights of others come from the feds. The interpretation of that takes place at the Council level.

Henricksen said once a decision is made, is that the end all, be all? Or is there another appeals process one can go through? Also, for an appellant, what type of advisement or representation can

they bring to their hearing? It sounds like it is just the appellate.

Pilon said unfortunately, I don't have an answer to the representative ability to be present. It looks like Andy might be able to speak to that as well.

Streasick said the rider can bring along anybody they want. In fact, the rider need not even be present. They could send somebody by proxy. They could have somebody come with them. Or they could present documentation. There is no requirement that they be present at any kind of appeal, in order for that appeal to go forward. What is the other part of your question?

Henricksen said is it the final order?

Streasick said the decision made by the appeal panel is final. Suspensions for Metro Mobility don't go over 30 days. So we would be looking at a 15-day suspension, 14-day suspension or a 30-day suspension. With the case of eligibility. Somebody might be found ineligible. But we always tell them that if their health condition or diagnosis changes in some way, they could always reapply, and they would be looked at with fresh eyes. With regard to eligibility status.

Vice Chair Paulsen said with that, I suppose that all of those denials come back on the system at some point. Do any of them not come back to the system after they have been suspended? Or deny ridership. Is there any way we can track that or figure that out?

Streasick said are you talking about active riding? Do people choose not to ride after being suspended?

Vice Chair Paulsen said yes. Do all those riders come back on the system? If they do all come back on the system, I understand, because it is a 30-day suspension. Are there any riders that don't come back on the system?

Streasick said there are no riders that don't come back on the system. Of course, whether or not one chooses to ride, it is their own prerogative. Everybody has access to this system automatically after 30-days.

Vice Chair Paulsen said if it is the choice of them. Do you know if there is any way to track whether they continue to ride or they don't ride?

Streasick said we don't track that.

Vice Chair Paulsen said is there a way that we could? Is there a reason why we wouldn't track that?

Streasick said we don't track people's ridership trends overall. I think we probably could look at ridership post suspension date. But it is not something we have ever done. We have seen no reason to do so operationally.

Dains said are the cases more suspensions or eligibility requirements? If they are eligibility requirements, aren't those medical issues? So, this follows up what Eric said about a representative being there. Because if I were on that panel, I am not always able to make medical decisions.

Chair Fenley said if I understand the question. You are looking into what the reasons have been in the past for the suspensions. Andy can speak to that.

Streasick said I believe this answers your question. It is far more common to have an appeal take place over a suspension than a finding of ineligibility. Is that your question?

Dains said yes.

Streasick said for the most part, the appeal panel meets over suspensions other than eligibility. I believe once in the last 10 years, we have had an appeal over eligibility. We have had several in my 17 years here. They were front loaded because Metro Mobility shifted away from self-certification in that time. Basically, people could just opt into eligibility once we started enforcing federal guidelines. There were a few appeals that took place around eligibility. But the vast majority of them that are currently taking place are about conduct related suspensions.

Henricksen said how would a volunteer be able to determine eligibility, with no qualifications to maybe make that determination?



Streasick said we would want a qualified individual, who we would be looking for to serve on the panel who are not medical professionals, but people intimately familiar with fixed route. Because bear in mind that paratransit eligibility really is all about each individual's current level of functioning. And how that impacts the ability to access the fixed route system. So we would want two different skill sets. Or maybe three. One, fairly intimate familiarity with Title II and specifically how that applies to paratransit. What are the three categories of eligibility and how are those applied? Two. A fairly wide spanning knowledge of disabilities and health conditions. And how those may interfere with somebody's ability to ride independently or navigate the system. Three. The accessibility features or lack thereof of our fixed route system and the challenges and capabilities that are inherent to that system for someone with a disability.

Henricksen said so it is incumbent on the facilitator of the appeal hearing to look at the application from the volunteer to make that determination on if they are qualified or not.

Streasick said yes. We will always, on an appeal of eligibilities, share the initial application. Then again, the applicant, or appellant, can present additional documentation indicating why they feel like they should be eligible.

Riddley said the reason we are here today. We are seeking qualified volunteers for our Panelist Directory. Panel members would be typically currently employed in the disability field or have a disability themselves or have experience in working with people with disabilities. The appeal panel does NOT consist of Met Council Employees The panel is composed of:

The Chair of the Council's (TAAC) Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee or the Chair's designee.

An individual who is professionally involved with persons with disabilities; and A professional acquainted with the appellant's particular stated disability, selected from a list of knowledgeable volunteers. There is a minimal time obligation required. The Appeals Panel meets on an "as needed" basis. There are no regularly scheduled meetings. Over the last five (5) years, there have been less than 3 hearings a year. Applying for the panel directory does not mean you will be called on for each hearing. Applying for the panel directory does not mean you MUST be on the panel when called. You can evaluate your current availability and decline if needed.

Hearings are scheduled for 2.5 hours. Hearings may be in person or online.

This is a volunteer role – there is no compensation.

Next slide. Application Process.

Application Includes: Name, Contact Information, Demographics, Relevant Job History working or volunteering with people with disabilities. Past panel experience. Disability areas with which you are knowledgeable. References. Applications will be reviewed by OEEEO.

Selected individuals will be informed in writing that they are added to the directory.

Directory members will be contacted annually to inquire if they wish to remain in the directory.

We do have a copy of our draft application form right now. That can be pulled up. We were hoping today to get some feedback on the application, itself.

SurveyMonkey form: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Paratransit-Appeals-Panel>

I will walk through each page. If you have any feedback, let us know.

Chair Fenley said could you read all the words on the page?

Riddley said top of the page.

Application for Metropolitan Council/Metro Mobility ADA Paratransit Appeals Panel

The Metropolitan Council's Regional Administrator appoints a three (3) person appeals panel to decide an appeal. The panel is composed of the Chair of the Met Council's (TAAC) Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee or the Chair's designee; an individual who is professionally involved with persons with disabilities; and a professional acquainted with the appellant's particular stated disability, selected from a list of knowledgeable volunteers.

First name: Middle Initial Last Name

Experience

1. Employment/job history

Please list any employment or volunteer experience that you feel is directly relevant to your ability to serve as a panelist for a paratransit hearing.

Employer Position City State From To

Employer Position City State From To

Employer Position City State From To

- 2. Describe in detail your experience working or volunteering with people with disabilities.
- 3. To match panelists with an appellant's stated disability, please select which of the following disability areas you have knowledge of that would make you an asset while serving on a panel regarding that type of disability:
 - Vision impairment
 - Hearing impairment (D/hh)
 - Learning disability (ADHD, dyslexia, etc.)
 - Developmental disability (autism, cerebral palsy, etc.)
 - Mobility impairment (temporary or permanent)
 - Mental health disabilities
 - Other disabilities not listed above (please specify):
 - None of the above

- 4. Please describe any past panel review experience.
- 5. How did you learn about the Metro Mobility ADA Paratransit Appeals Panel?

Applicant signature: Date:

Notice: The information included through this page of the application form is public information under the Minnesota Government Data Practices Act and may be disclosed to persons or entities requesting this information.

Data Practices Act Notice

Information beginning on this page is private. It will not be disclosed to the public.

Application Supplement

The information about you contained on this application supplement will be made available only to members of the Metropolitan Council and Metropolitan Council employees whose work assignments reasonably require access to the information.

Hearing panelist applicant name:

Applicant contact information

Street address: Apt: City: State: Zip:

Primary phone number; Primary email address:

Demographic information

Gender (select one):

- Female
- Male
- Non-binary
- Fill in the blank: I identify as



Do you identify as having any of the following functional limitations? (Select all that apply)

- Seeing
- Hearing
- Walking
- Climbing stairs
- Sleeping
- Breathing
- Other (please specify):
- Moving
- Learning
- Regulating emotions
- Regulating insulin
- Understanding written text
- None of the above

Note: The paratransit appeals panel regulation requires at least one panelist be professionally and/or personally acquainted with the appellant's particular stated disability.

Race/ethnic group (select one):

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Hispanic or Latino
- Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- White
- Other (please specify):

References

Name: Phone number: Relationship:
Name: Phone number: Relationship:
Name: Phone number; Relationship:



Submitting your application

Mail or email your application to:

Tyshia Riddley, Equal Opportunity Consultant and Coordinator
Metropolitan Council, Heywood Office
560 North Sixth Ave
Minneapolis, MN 55411
Tyshia.Riddley@metc.state.mn.us

For assistance filling out this application, please call Tyshia at 612-349-7583

Chair Fenley said so that was the Application to be included in the pool of the panelists that then evaluate the appeal to suspension of service of Metro Mobility.

Rodgers said on the form itself, you identify visually impaired and hearing impaired. While those individual disability categories usually don't object to the term impaired. Those in the hearing community do object to the term impaired. So I would change that hearing impaired to deaf or hard of hearing. That impairment is a problem for those in the community.

Rowan said elderly people who have disabilities. Sometimes there are specific conditions they may be more prone to have. The only consideration to putting a person on the panel that might be more familiar with issues relating to aging. Aging is one of the purviews of our committee here.

Riddley said that would be helpful. Thank you.

Pilon said we will certainly make note of that recommendation.

Streasick said on one of the things we need to be really clear on is that age in and of itself, is not relevant with regard to determining eligibility. It does increase the likelihood that someone would be eligible. I think what we would be looking to try to get at is in addition to hearing loss and vision loss constituencies, orthopedic conditions, memory loss conditions and those kinds of things. Especially ones that might fluctuate from day to day in ways that might spontaneously disrupt one's disability to access public transit.

Chair Fenley said you do try to pick a panelist that does have experience or even have the disability of the person who is appealing the suspension. Which I think is pretty much in line with *nothing about us without us*. The mantra that the disability community likes to live by.

Henricksen said on the front of the application when you are discussing who the panel is composed of. It goes into and is defined all individual people as professionals. But there is a note on the data practices page that actually states that the panel must be professionally and or personally acquainted. So if I was reading the application and I didn't feel that as a professional. I might just not apply. So maybe a little clarification on that last one where you put in the and/or personally acquainted. That might maybe open up a couple more panelists or applicants.

Next slide. Riddley said thank you for that input. I hope that you would apply and share with your networks. Once that we get the application finalized and have a live link online. As well as the accessible PDF. So please apply and share.

Vice Chair Paulsen said is there a timeline that the application is going to be online and live and is there a timeline where the panelists are going to be selected? Is all that going to be online somewhere so we can see it? When will that happen?

Riddley said yes. Right now, we are hoping to have the application live, online, at the Metropolitan Council. We are still determining the best landing page right now. We are hoping to have that by the next TAAC meeting, hopefully. We are working with Communications about promotions and rollout and what that is going to look like. So that is our hope. To have it by the next meeting. And to give that back to everyone.

Chair Fenley said is the application process just going to be rolling? So that there is no deadline to apply by.

Riddley said we are thinking of leaving it open. We are hoping to get an overwhelming response. So if we do, we might have to close it. We are hoping to keep it open for at least 60 to 90-days.

Myhre said if you don't understand the process of being suspended because most of them are for that reason. Can you get a person to walk you through it because you don't understand? They use a lot of big words. Even the application has big words. If someone could break it down for you so that you understand everything.

Chair Fenley said Metro Mobility does work closely with folks who are potentially pushing or getting close to suspension. It is something that doesn't happen very often. Because of Andy's stellar customer service skillset working with people on a day-to-day basis.

Streasick said we do notify folks in writing and trying to use plain language. But within that letter, there is always a phone number that people can call in case they process things better verbally. Or just have questions. They can call and talk to us. One of the things that we try to do is point it out earlier in the presentation. If we can give a second chance opportunity. If we can do a one-time grace. We will work with customers to build understanding. If the conduct really did seem to stem from a reasonable lack of understanding information, then we can forego a suspension.

Obviously, that is true with something like no-shows or late cancels. If someone tries to tell us they didn't realize that they weren't allowed to hit their driver, that doesn't work. We will work with folks to try to avoid a suspension. We do send out warning letters for everything except for an imminent or direct threat to health and safety. There is a warning letter previous to any kind of suspension activity. That warning letter is in plain language as best as we can. It also includes a phone number so we can talk and have that exchange. Prior to any suspension even being on the table.

I should point out that even if somebody's disability impacts impulse control, or anger management, or the ability to process, they will still get suspended. If they are impacting the health and safety of the other riders or

drivers. So, we will work with folks. We will try to warn folks. We owe it to everybody to provide a safe ride. If a customer is not fostering that kind of environment, they need to be suspended anyway. But we will work with them to try to mitigate that. I will work with support teams too. If I know somebody's team a little bit. I can try to work with them. Put in notes with regard to particular de-escalation techniques that tend to work well.

We try to do what we can. But I don't want to make it sound like if somebody has a developmental disability, then they are not going to get suspended regardless of their behavior. That is not something we can abide.

Chair Fenley said disability rights end when they hurt other people.

Henricksen said it sounds like most of these appeals and this process is a suspension due to maybe behavior or something that is happening. It is not about eligibility. So when someone is suspended based on conduct or whatever it is, but not on disability. That still doesn't preclude them from needing the service. They are still eligible for it. What type of resources or conversations are had with the appellant about for the next 30-days, these are the opportunities or things or resources you can use to still get to your appointments? The service that Metro Mobility did provide. You are suspended for 30-days from us for this reason. But in that time, here are the services that you can use or will have to be utilizing. Is there some kind of interface like that?

Streasick said it depends on the individual. We will absolutely talk. Usually as part of that opening. Pre formal appeal. But then reiterate, add an appeal. There is the opportunity there. Fixed route. If it is appropriate for that individual in any capacity. If not, we tend to refer to the hub. What used to be the disability linkage line for people to go to explore other affordable transportation options.

3. Legislative Update

Hannah Pallmeyer, Government Affairs Liaison, spoke to the TAAC committee. They are moving at lightning speed. Despite working for the Council for four years, this is my first opportunity to present to a committee or advisory committee. I am really looking forward to the opportunity. I want to make sure that these legislative updates are useful for you all. If you have any feedback on how we can make sure that these are most useful to you, feel free to send that my way.

Yes, we are moving at lightning speed at the legislature. In October, I started as Met Council's Government Affairs Liaison. Prior to that I have been working in the Metropolitan Council's Community Relations Team. Largely supporting our Council Members. So, new to the role, but not new to the Council. Prior to that, I spent a few years working for the Senate Environment and Energy Committee. So that is where my legislative experience started.

So, 2023 Legislative Session kicked off just about a month ago. It is the first year of the biennium. In Minnesota we have two-year biennium sessions that start usually in January, February. And have to end by a specific date in May. Then in the first year of the biennium, the Legislature sets the budget for the next two fiscal years of the state.

So the session convened on Tuesday, January 3, 2023. Just shy of a month ago. In this session, the legislature and the administration, which the Met Council is a part of, will be considering the historic state surplus and setting the two-year budget.

Vice Chair Paulsen said. So are we in a budget year or are we in a policy year?

Pallmeyer said that is great question. They call odd years at the legislature, budget years, normally. And the legislature will need to pass a two-year budget for the State of Minnesota for the next two fiscal years, which starts July 1, 2023. While they can certainly pass bonding bills, which are bills that dedicate bonds for capital investment projects throughout the state. And they can pass policy bills as well. Oftentimes it is referred to as the odd year of the legislature's budget year. The even years are sometimes referred to as policy or bonding years. Although they can pass policy and bonding bills this year as well.

In November 2022, there is a budget forecast release for the State of Minnesota. By Minnesota Management and Budget, which is a state agency that projected a general fund surplus for the upcoming two-year biennium of just over \$17 billion. Twelve billion of that is left over from the previous biennium. So, last year the legislature did not pass very many bills. Which meant that there is money left over from last year to be used this year as well. What is interesting is that inflation is not included in the budget process here in Minnesota. There actually are bills in both the House and the Senate to include inflation

in future budgeting cycles.

At a high level, there is a surplus in Minnesota. But what is interesting is that the November 2022 forecast actually showed that the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax, which is where the Met Council receives funding from that pot of money. It is actually growing at rates lower than what was previously predicted in the February 2022 forecast. So even though there is a high surplus generally for the state. Not all funds have seen the same levels of increase.

The forecast is going to be updated at the end of this month. And then those dollars that are determined as part of the dated forecast are what the budget will be based on for the next two years. So, I would anticipate that when I come back in March, I will hopefully have some additional information about what the numbers the budget will actually be based on.

I think, as you well know, the Met Council is part of the governor's administration. Which means that the governor purposes and recommends that both of our budget requests to the legislature and bonding requests are capital investment requests to the legislature that would benefit the Met Council. Then we in Government Affairs, along with staff and others, help support those requests at the Capitol.

So the Governor and Lieutenant Governor have recommended three transportation budget items to the Legislature this year. And they were just released last week.

The first is to identify a sustainable and reliable transit funding source for transit in the seven-county metro area. The way in which the Governor is proposing to do that is to implement a 1/8 cent sales tax in the metropolitan area that would start in October. That would fund the regional bus and transitway system. And it will help us address what we refer to as the fiscal cliff or an infusion of one-time money that often comes in from the legislature to help us continue to fund our transit services. This would help us identify a reliable source of funding going forward.

The second recommendation from the governor's office regarding transportation, is to increase the regional transit capital bonds that the Met Council can bond for in the region. The total for the next two fiscal years would be just over \$104 million. Those bonds are then used for replacement buses, for bus facilities, and other capital enhancements throughout the system.

It is not just for Metro Transit. It also includes Metro Mobility. It includes the Opt Out providers and dial-a-ride programs as well.

Then the third budget item is an item that would help us accelerate our transition to zero emission buses for the region. So it would be a recommendation for \$29.2 million in one-time funds that could help us purchase battery electric buses and the charging infrastructure associated with them. That would be then used in place of diesel buses in the transportation system.

Some of you may be aware of federal funding that has been passed through a variety of federal bills including the IIJA, which stands for the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act that passed on a federal level. A lot of these federal programs have the opportunity for states or other entities to apply for sometimes competitive funding to access this federal funding.

And so, if we were to get these funds from the legislature, we may be able to use that to apply for further funds from the federal government.

Metro Transit has a plan of having at least 20 percent of the bus placements be zero emission buses by 2027. If we were to receive these funds from the legislature, that would allow us to exceed that goal.

Vice Chair Paulsen said meaning that we could do it sooner? Or we could potentially add more buses?

Pallmeyer said yes. I think it would depend on the level of investment that we would receive.

Vice Chair Paulsen said also that puts us in line with the federal recommendation of 2045, with all transit buses.

Pallmeyer said that is a good question. I am not really sure what the federal recommendations are.

The last item that is related to financial items from the governor's office recommendations is a bonding or capital investment recommendation from the governor's office. that would mean \$72 million would go to our arterial BRT system. This funding would specifically advance three Bus Rapid Transit projects, which

would be the F-Line, which would go up the Central Avenue Corridor, up into Blaine, I believe. The G-Line, which would stop not far from this building. It would go up and down the Rice Street / Robert Street Corridor. Then the H-Line, which would go along the Como / Maryland Corridor.

So \$72 million is the recommendation from the governor's office. We are excited to support that at the legislature.

I will stop here to see if anybody has any questions before I get into the policy issues.

Vice Chair Paulsen said the information that you said so far. Are there any bill numbers? Are these within the governor's budget? Then you have to search for the five priorities or six priorities? Things that he laid out over the last two weeks.

Pallmeyer said the items that I just laid out are not in bill numbers. But I would be happy to provide the committee the link to where you can find some additional information on the website.

Vice Chair Paulsen said if you provide it to me or the chair, we could make sure it gets disseminated to the rest of us.

Pallmeyer said absolutely.

Myhre said we got all these buses. Recycling is a really big deal. So what are we going to do with the budget and figuring out where the old buses go or when we start transitioning to a new system? Once they die or we move on to a new bus type, where do we recycle it or how do we get rid of it?

Chair Fenley said I realize this is probably out of your scope of knowledge. If you know the answer, feel free to say. There are probably very few people at Metro Transit who know what happens to a bus when it gets decommissioned.

Vice Chair Paulsen said they get sold at an auction.

Chair Fenley said in the long term it is better to have more efficient buses or the most efficient busses, which would be electric, in the fleet. Rather than maintaining the internal combustion or diesel engines. I am sure that they don't dump them in a landfill.

Dains said just on the zero emissions funding. You said it was \$29 million. That is for the biennium. Are they going to put money in on a reoccurring basis into the future? Or is it a one-time expenditure?

Pallmeyer said the recommendation that has been put forward this year is a one-time cash infusion. I think it would be up to future legislators to decide how they would like to handle that going forward.

In addition to the budget proposals and the capital investment proposals. We are also working on a handful of policy proposals at the legislature that relate to transportation. One is something I am sure that anyone who has been on the committee last year likely heard about as well. We are continuing to work on transit safety and administrative citation's ability at the capitol. That was a proposal, I think for the last handful of years now. I think many of you know safety and security is a top priority for the Met Council. This proposal would allow for transit safety officials to check fares on transit. As opposed to having police officers check the fares. This would allow police officers to be able to spend their time to address more serious incidents. Instead of fare inspection. And then it would also allow the Council to create a process of administrative citations in which, instead of going into the criminal system, fare non-payment would be given a citation that would be more similar to a parking ticket. So that is a proposal that we have been working on with the legislature for a number of years, now. We will be continuing to work on it this year.

Based on the previous question, that bill was or will be introduced today in the Senate. I can provide bill numbers. I did not write them down because it just happened. But actually, all three of these bills were introduced today in the Senate. Then we are still working on getting them introduced in the House. Usually what happens is our bills are sent over to the House. And then the legislators work amongst themselves to determine what happens. I know there is a lot of interest in especially the transit safety and administrative citations programs at the legislature. So we are really looking forward to continuing to work with that one this year.

Myhre said are they building in safety? There is always going to be someone who is upset if they get a citation. Do they have any backup? Can they call a cop? Just for safety for anyone on the vehicle.



Chair Fenley said it isn't Hannah's job to determine what happens on the bus. Her job is to mainly advocate for the overarching policy positions that the government and the Metropolitan Council has at the legislature. We can take these discussions offline. We have been presented to by the Metro Transit Police Force on this issue. I think it was maybe three months ago. We did talk about this. If we want to have another presentation on this, I am happy to. Hannah, go ahead.

Pallmeyer said I am not aware of this specific training. But Metro Transit would provide that information.

The second policy proposal that we are working on this year is an update to language about transit fare programs and passes. The Council offers several passes to patrons. Some of them are available to employers and schools or nonprofit organizations. These transit fare passes that we provide are regional passes and can be used on buses and the rail network throughout the region. Not just Metro Transit provided services.

So this proposal would allow the Council to create passes that better reflect the current transit system. And would also provide some additional flexibility to create transit fare programs and passes that would respond to the rider's needs.

So, the update itself wouldn't necessarily say what those passes would be. It would just give us the opportunity to create those passes and programs going forward.

The last policy provision that we are working on is something that would classify all transit customer trip data as private. As you know, we are a public entity and therefore some of the data that we have is considered public data and people can request it through the Data Practices Act. We are wanting to make sure that the data from when you request a trip or book a trip through Transit Link or Metro Transit Micro. If you book it right now through a website or a mobile app, that is classified as private data under state law. We just want to make sure that data for customers that are booking not via the phone, is also classified as private data.

So, the proposal just clarifies that transit customer data collected on forms and over the telephone is also classified as private data. Similar to other data that we collect in other ways.

Those are our three policy proposals that we have been working on. As I said, are being introduced today. There are a handful of other legislative initiatives that are happening at the Capitol. One is that this year there will be new Council members appointed at the Metropolitan Council. I think last night was the last of a series of public interviews that have been happening across the region to interview people who are interested in being appointed to be a Metropolitan Council member. For folks who are interested in being appointed. They applied and then were interviewed by a panel. And then the governor has until sometime in early March to make those appointments.

We can anticipate some new faces on the Council going forward. And also, Governor Walz, in the last few weeks, has reappointed Charlie Zelle, the Chair of the Met Council, to another term in that position.

Also, at the legislature this year. This is the year for when the Metropolitan Council districts get redistricted. So similarly, to how just this past 2022 election cycle, is when House and Senate districts were redistricted. Then there is another process where Council member districts were redistricted. To make sure that those districts represent roughly the same amount of people. It is a process that we go through every 10-years at the legislature. It always follows the reapportionment that happens prior to the legislature using census data. So that is something that we will be paying attention to this year.

Lastly, I just wanted to mention. In addition to the bills that we are putting forward at the legislature. And the proposals at the governor's office is putting forward at the legislature, there are always a variety of other provisions that are introduced by other legislators. Sometimes the encouragement of other groups at the capitol and we track hundreds of bills on many different topics to see how they may or may not impact the Council.

One bill that was heard last week, in the House Transportation Committee is House File 401, which is a bill that has a variety of policy provisions in it that were heard last year. Not a lot of bills were passed last year around policy proposals. Despite it being a pseudo policy year. So this bill is taking a variety of policy proposals that were heard last year. But never passed. And then reconsidering them again this year.

One of the provisions in that bill is a provision that you all likely heard about last year in this group. Which

is a provision that would ensure that transit vehicle operators receive training on assisting persons with disability and mobility limitations to enter and leave a transit vehicle. That is a provision that was discussed last year. The Council is happy to work on that provision and one of the parts of that is that we would consult with you all on what that training would be. That is something that was probably discussed last year as well.

So that bill was heard but not voted on. It will come back again for further consideration. We will continue to talk about that with you all if that bill does move forward.

The session timeline, as I said. The February 2023 forecast for the budget will revise the November 2022 forecast and will be used as a basis for the budget for the next two fiscal years for the state. The legislature must adjourn by May 22.

My understanding is that I will be here with you all on a monthly basis, about the legislature and what the Council is tracking and what our priorities are. I will do that through the end of the legislative session.

If there are questions that you all have, I may not always know the answer right away, but I am always happy to look for additional information and share it with you. Do you have any questions?

Dains said you said the substantial portion of the funding for the Met Council comes from the Motor Vehicle Tax?

Pallmeyer said yes. The Met Council receives funds from what is called the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax. Which is money that is collected when cars, trucks, vans are sold. When people purchase those. A portion of that money goes into the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax. Then a portion of that money funds Council transportation work.

Dains said so that is down because people aren't buying a lot of cars right now?

Pallmeyer said I don't want to speculate on the economy. That gets a little out of my wheelhouse. It is still growing over the course of the next two biennia. It is growing at a rate that is lower than what had previously been forecasted. I think it changes with consumer habits. I know there is also some chip shortages and other things that might be leading to that.

4. Accessible Minivan Pilot Project

Paul Colton, Fleet Services Manager, spoke to the TAAC committee. What I wanted to share with you. I need to come before you anytime we make a vehicle change to our fleet. Particularly Metro Mobility. So one of the things we are proposing is a pilot program to purchase 20 ADA accessible minivans. So they have been retrofitted. These could be Chrysler Voyagers. My understanding is they are the only minivan that could meet the ADA criteria for the different dimensions and so forth.

We would like to give this a try. See how they work in the Metro Mobility system and get feedback from both our contractors, our customers, maintenance staff and all of that as part of this pilot project. So they would be 2022 Chrysler Voyager minivans. They would be modified by Braun. They would be lowered, so a ramp would be put in them. Then the interior would be completely modified to be able to be accessible. I can talk more about that as to what is next.

So, why do we want to do this? What has led us to this decision? Well, to dovetail back on your previous discussion, there is a huge shortage of automobiles and automobile products in the marketplace because of the chip shortage and parts shortages. So that explains some of our MVST issues here in the metro area. But it is a global problem.

So, we normally would have made a purchase of our annual purchase of vehicles for Metro Mobility in 2020. We were not able to do that. The state was revamping their contract. That is the vehicle that we use to purchase vehicles. It's a fantastic contract for us and we have a great partnership with the State Office of Transit, that does this contract.

So the contract comes out in 2021. We make a sizeable order. And we get word that Ford has reduced their chassis production. Part suppliers are not able to produce all the parts that are needed for the buses. So, everything gets delayed. And the prices go up. We are dealing with contract amendments right now, galore. And getting the funding necessary to keep pushing forward to get these buses in service.

They are all on order. We are just waiting. We have the first bus delivered yesterday, from the manufacturer. It looks great. We can't wait to get it in service. I can't wait to get more vehicles in. But it is going to take time. So we are looking for solutions to get newer equipment into service. To keep things reliable. To try some new things that might be really beneficial for us in the future. Delivering Metro Mobility service. So the minivan was an idea that was one that floated to the top. We think we can make that work in daily service without really missing a beat. And offer us better operational opportunities. Because a minivan can get into places that our buses can't. So, we will find out.

So that is why we are doing it. We are trying to find all kinds of alternatives to keep us with a reliable fleet until we get our new fleet in.

So what is next? The plan is we believe we have found a contract that we can purchase off of the State of Oklahoma. If we can ever get anybody to call us back. Or email us back. It would be awesome. And if I can get the vendor from that to send me some information so I could verify the pricing and all of those things. I think we will get that done. So we want to purchase two vehicles right away. Get them into service. Figure some things out. We will order the other 18 with Council approval. It is budgeted. And then we would move forward.

So the configuration of these. We are going to keep it very simple. We want to maximize this base to be able to onboard as many different types of devices as we can. Because we know that the mobility devices for our customers come in many different sizes, shapes, lengths, widths and all of that. These vans are designed to have the copilot seat in the front removed and that is where a space for the customer with a mobility device would sit where the tie-downs are. We think that we can extend the tie-down to the back of the mobility device a little further so that we could accommodate longer scooter-type vehicles. And then we would have a rear bench seat that would support two ambulatory customers. So basically, two ambulatory customers and one customer using a mobility device. Is what these would hold.

Based on our productivity per hour, we think that we could still very efficiently and effectively use this type of vehicle in our service. So, a lot to learn. I think there is a lot of opportunity with these. Our goal is to in your March meeting is to come back with a prototype. As close as possible. Whatever we can find out there because they are hard to come by. And have an opportunity to view that vehicle whether before or after the meeting. whatever we can build that into the meeting. (Paul will not be available in March. He is considering coming to TAAC in April).

Chair Fenley said I have a few questions. Maybe we can set up a meet and greet at another meeting with the van and TAAC members. First of all, would these just be put into the system? And then whatever the rider or whatever vehicle the rider gets, there be a choice for the rider. "Hey, this minivan is available now or there is a bus available in whatever." I know it is not on demand. So it is not available now.

Colton said one of the conversations that we've had is that is primarily we would build routes. So the contractors who would have a few of these. They would build a route primarily around ambulatory customers, which represents about 70 percent of our rides each day. But on the fly, if we needed to move trips around. If we happened to have one for a customer in a mobility device, we would be able to then. If that vehicle that is nearest in the system, then we would be able to deploy that to keep it efficient and on-time. That is one thought that we have.

Chair Fenley said obviously you can't put three wheelchairs on these buses. Short of the capacity, would they be able to handle the same single ridership parameters? When you said all shapes and sizes of wheelchairs, scooters and some scooters can be longer. Are you aiming to have it to be able to handle the same exact dimensions that a chair mobility device that the current buses do?

Colton said that is our goal. Right now, we exceed the minimum footprint for a mobility device quite extensively on our buses. We really maximize our space to the best of our ability. And it has worked really well. I may not have that opportunity with a minivan. We are going to learn a lot more when we get into it. And so, we will definitely react and adjust as appropriate.

Chair Fenley said I realize these questions I have been asking do depend on a lot of different things. But I am asking them now so you can have an idea of what you are shooting for. What is the entry? Would it be rear entry or side entry for loading?

Colton said it would be a side entry. We don't think a rear entry would work as well in the metro area.

Chair Fenley said I totally agree. That is why I asked that question. I know a lot of minivans we see in the private sector for transportation. A lot of them are rear entry. That makes it a little more difficult, I think.

Vice Chair Paulsen said most of my concerns are about equity and fairness. What you said was that 70 percent of your rides come from ambulatory customers. If you are doing a rear entry or side entry, regardless of what you think, if you look at the federal transportation system overall, throughout the federal government, they are exclusively looking at the rear entry issue. I know, David, he works in accessibility and things like that within his other job. But I do know that I have used rear entry and side entry. I do know that rear entry, I have a lot more ability to get out in tighter spaces than I do in a side entry situation.

However, having said that, you also indicated to me that the front seat of your minivan would pull out. So effectively, if you did have that done, you could effectively put two wheelchairs there. That means that me and my family could effectively take a ride together instead of having to book two separate vehicles because of a one mobility device situation. So what I am trying to say is that I know there are minivans where we could put two full size wheelchairs in there because I have been in them. We rent them at events. When you look at purchasing these two vehicles and then these next 18, I understand that we are looking at this as a situation that covers 70 percent of your rides. But as we look at this option, I believe that other folks such as myself, are going to ask to ride that ride because it is going to be a better ride. It is going to be smoother. I am going to know that my driver has more confidence in it and more ability to drive that smaller vehicle. Than to drive a big Metro Mobility diesel bus. So I know you are looking at covering 70 percent of your rides. But if we don't have the ability to choose that, then it looks like unfairness, or you are just creating another specialized service for some ambulatory folks. That could actually be engaging to ride the main system if they had the skills or support to do so.

Chair Fenley said are you planning to have these to be able to hold two wheelchairs? Or just one.

Colton said what is available right now is, I believe, one wheelchair location. But obviously, if we have the opportunity to pick up a couple that has multiple spaces, we could certainly look at that.

Vice Chair Paulsen said if you are saying only one spot is available, the passenger side in the front of the vehicle is the only one available, I also know that those foldup seats that are by the lift, that ambulatory folks would be able to sit on, if those could be folded down and pushed forward. You could put a wheelchair right there. Because there are taxis that do that. So that means that you could effectively put two devices in there. I am not saying that you are going to have that ability to do that a lot. But if you have that ability, where you did have a family such as mine, that uses two wheelchair devices at the same time. Then we could effectively take the same ride as a family should be able to do anywhere in the system.

Streasick said just a small clarification. Since these are recorded for the record. As somebody who has done paratransit for evaluations. It would be unfair and unrealistic to say that ambulatory folks can typically use the fixed route system. With training and resources available to them. There are all sorts of ambulatory folks for whom that is not an option. I just needed to clarify that for the record.

Vice Chair Paulsen said we may not have either choice, but it is still an option. We talked about options a lot last month.

Colton said It's a challenging issue because in looking at this spacing. Looking at the dimensions of the interior of a minivan, we can have two spaces for mobility device customers. The one behind the drivers' seat and the passenger seat, is a very limited one. And we know that not all mobility devices would fit in there. And so if we did have multiple mobility devices in there, are we compromising all possibilities in the copilot seat area. So we are trying to maximize maneuverability within the vehicle itself, and that kind of thing. But Darrell, remember a couple of big things we have to remember. We run 530 demand vehicles in service. Twenty vehicles represent a fairly small percent of the fleet.

There are certain parameters that we would certainly set up so that we would not put families and others in a situation in which this unit would not show up knowing full well that we had specific requirements at the pickup.

Chair Fenley said before I get to the last two questions and move on, this is an initial presentation on this. I think that getting into the weeds about how the program is going to be implemented in terms of is this going to show up for a family. I think, maybe we could hold that discussion off until these vans are actually put into service. Clearly, they are taking that into consideration.

Vice Chair Paulsen said the reason why I brought those up to you is because you said you were going to look at this option in the next month. So looking at purchasing the next two vehicles. So what I am saying is if you are looking at those options, then please explore the possibility of a two mobility device in a minivan situation. Because I know it exists. I have used it. I help a friend that has a minivan. And I put my wife and myself in that van multiple times. It is very tight. But I have done it. So I do know that it is available and it is the only reason that I brought that to your attention.

Chair Fenley said it is important to know that private vehicles are very different than vehicles intended for public use, too.

Myhre said if you do what Darrell wants, is the driver going to respect us sitting next to him? It is a lot different than being behind him. They are in their own world and drive us. The other thing is are you thinking about PCA's? A caregiver or somebody who has to come with the passenger. It is never just one person. There is another person who has to come along with that person in order to do what they need to do. In the past, you have sent the wrong vehicle. Then when we have to deal with it.

Chair Fenley said yes, companions and caregivers. I think that you definitely have to take that into consideration.

Colton said each vehicle is specked out in the system with capacity and capacity types. In theory, you should not exceed your capacity types when you build the route. You know that you have enough seats and spaces for everybody. I do know that from time-to-time things get messed up. But, if we needed more than it could hold, then we would use a different vehicle.

Henricksen said my question is why 20? I understand that that is relatively small in regard to the over 500. My question is is it a pilot program? Pilot programs tend to be smaller in nature. But my understanding is we are having to decrease some level of service goals because of attention of drivers or recruiting of new drivers by putting in eventually, potentially new vehicles would require, I assume, 20 new drivers. So balancing a pilot program with the needs of retention and employment. I am curious on how we got to the 20 number and if that has been thought out?

Colton said the 20 number was based on what pot of money could I get that would fund a certain number of vehicles? That's how the 20 came up. That's my last pot of money that I can use because everything is tied up in bus purchases. I can't spend anything that is tied up. So that is where the numbers fell. From a budgeting standpoint. I have this funding available, and I can use it on this project. And based on the price of each vehicle, this is about how many I can get. We thought it was a good-sized number to start with. To try out in the field. As far as these may replace some of our equipment that needs to be retired. It is not necessarily an expansion of the fleet. And therefore, an expansion of a need for drivers. I hope that helps.

Streasick said sometimes we are so knee deep in this stuff all the time, that we forget to say what to us is the obvious and a piece here is because of the supply line issues, we are using vehicles that our policies would dictate we would have taken out of service some time ago. And the silver lining in it is that it turns out that our retention schedule has proven out to be a good one. There are reasons that we get rid of the buses when we do. And put them out for auction. We have had issues with windows falling in. We have had issues with vehicles spontaneously catching on fire. And we have a very common relatively speaking issues with lifts becoming functionally in operable on buses because the bus has floorboards in front of the lift onboard the bus that become unusable. A bus warps into an ambulatory only vehicle that folks can't use anyway. This isn't really about expanding the fleet as much as it is about dealing with our supply line realities. And trying to have enough usable vehicles out on the street to respond to service needs as well as our driver supply will allow us to do.

Chair Fenley said it is a global problem that we are responding to.

Bates said my question is from a fiscal standpoint, the vans are going to be more cost efficient as far as fuel is concerned, correct?

Colton said that is correct.

Bates said so, in essence, we could be looking at doing the vans and getting rid of the buses. There is \$2.00 a gallon difference between diesel and gasoline. Is that what we are looking at for long-term? To go with the vans instead of the buses?

Colton said let me clarify one point. None of our fleet is diesel. It is all gasoline operated vehicles on the Metro Mobility side. The second issue is one of the things that we could never forget is that we build our vehicles for maximum flexibility and operations. We are very nimble every day out there on the street. What we have found is that we cutaway vans, cutaway buses that we use, give us the greatest flexibility out in service, day in, day out. Ride in, ride out. So the vans clearly would not give us that level of flexibility throughout the day. But there is a knitch that fits very nicely into the service at a certain level. The question is what the sweet spot is. The right number of vehicles on an average day for that type of vehicle. Just like we use a few sedans out in service. What is the sweet spot in your service requirements for all of that equipment? But the backbone of the Metro Mobility service probably always will be some type of vehicle that is going to have the current configuration or a similar configuration that we have now. Eight ambulatory customers and three spaces for customers utilizing mobility devices.

Chair Fenley said this is not the last we are going to hear of this. I hope to visit one of these vans. I do appreciate all of the comments that folks have made. I am sure that Metro Mobility will take this into consideration.

Myhre said when you order the new van, make it close to what the real thing is going to be like. So that we can get feedback correctly.

So, one of the challenges is all of the vans may be built already. I may be buying already produced vans. Like Andy said, we are in dire circumstances. We are trying to get things as quickly as possible to augment our current fleet condition. But down the road, this gives us a chance to explore and figure out what they can do and what they can't do. So I really thank you for your time today. I really appreciate the conversation and the questions. We will be back.

Reports

Subcommittee

1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers

Ken Rodgers said just to remind folks. The Blue Line Extension Advisory Committee has just restarted. At our last meeting we just reelected Cochairs and reviewed our charter. We have a meeting tonight. We are basically starting from scratch. We are underway.

2. Green Line – Christopher Bates

Nothing was discussed.

3. Gold Line – Darrell Paulsen

Vice Chair Paulsen said on the Gold Line we started on construction. You might have seen on the notes as they have come out in the last couple of months.

4. Purple Line – Darrell Paulsen

Vice Chair Paulsen said the Purple Line has had some challenges. Particularly, the Purple Line sits in Maplewood, where I represent and reside from. We are doing a public engagement with our city and our community. Around the Purple Line and the BRT process. So tonight, I will be with the Met Council members and staff. Doing the Purple Line engagement out in Maplewood. I will send my updated report in our notes.

Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group

This item was not discussed.

Chair

This item was not discussed.

Public Invitation

Nothing discussed.

Member Comment

No comments.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:31 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 February 1, 2023.

Approved this 01 day of February 2023.

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