

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, August 20, 2019

Committee Members Present: Francisco Gonzalez, Tie Oei, Chai Lee, Juliana Miller, Lanise Block, Shirley Cain, Leah Goldstein Moses, Anita Urvina Davis, Miah Ulysse, David Ketroser, Aarica Coleman, Tommy Sar, Sonya Lewis, Kris Fredson, Mohamed Sheikh, Leslie Redmond, Metric Giles

Committee Members Excused: Abdirahman Muse, Samantha Pree-Stinson, Sarah Rudolf, Nelima Sitati Munene

Committee Members Absent: N/A

CALL TO ORDER

Committee Co-Chair Gonzalez called the regular meeting of the Council's Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:08 p.m.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

The agenda was moved by Cain and seconded by Coleman.

The meeting minutes from July 16, 2019, were moved by Chai and seconded by Urvina Davis.

WELCOME METRO TRANSIT POLICE CHIEF FRIZELL

Metro Transit Police Chief Eddie Frizell came to share his background and experience coming to the Council. Metro Transit General Manager, Wes Kooistra, introduced the Chief. The committee introduced themselves and shared interest areas for future discussion.

Committee members discussed the Greenline service-hour changes that went into effect yesterday. Committee members expressed they did not support the decision to reduce service hours.

Wes Kooistra and Chief Frizell discussed the current activities from the Housing Action Team (HAT). Staff had been on the Greenline and replacement buses since midnight on Sunday; 36 of the last 48 hours staff have been out there talking to riders and looking at what the effects were. The HAT has connected 36 families with vouchers and has a total of 89 vouchers dedicated to transit-riders experiencing homelessness.

Committee members had the following questions:

- Men of color from the ages 25-54 are historically the population that is most at risk of police brutality. How are you going to prepare police officers to work with people with mental illnesses?

Chief Frizell discussed his philosophy on Twenty-first Century Policing. Homelessness is not a crime. He talked about his livability approach – the police department has put together co-responder teams to address EDPs (emotionally disturbed people). There is a mental health professional with a police officer to respond to situations that involve EDPs. It is a proven concept now that could easily grow with any police department. The Chief said he fully expects the committee to hold him accountable. He said he wants the police department to reflect the community that they serve and who understand the situation of people's lives. The Chief values the committee's feedback and input.

- Would you also consider having co-responders that are trained in chemical dependency? My community does not trust police officers; they are scared because of the violence they have experienced.

The HAT is working with the counties to provide services; they are connecting people not just with housing but with necessary services. We are going to need more resources and will continue to work counties. We are not just trying to wipe our hands and say we can't help because we are a transit agency.

METRO TRANSIT NETWORK NEXT

Karyssa Jackson, Community Outreach Coordinator in Customer Relations, presented about Metro Transit's Network Next project. Karyssa asked for the committee's input and guidance regarding the scope of the project and its Public Engagement Plan.

Wes Kooistra shared that the Network Next Project is aimed at determining the values and priorities to be reflected in the transit service system. Is geography or frequency prioritized? Are transit-dependent riders prioritized? There are limited funds; this project is helping Metro Transit to make decisions. Historically, decisions have been made based on how many riders utilize a route or stop, how efficient the service, and how cost-efficient it is. This project is reevaluating how the agency makes decisions.

Following the presentation, committee members had the following comments and questions:

- How can we collaborate with your community engagement efforts?

We would welcome any collaboration with the EAC. If you identify gaps in our community engagement strategy, we welcome input! Also, committee members were sent the RFP information for the community-hosted conversations, please distribute to your networks.

- Is public safety a part of this project?

The scope of this project does not address the question of public safety; however, we will be capturing all feedback and creating a mechanism to direct the information and recommendations to the appropriate department.

- Are you considering previous customer comments and complaints?

Yes, we will be looking at them and looking at how we incorporate the feedback.

Committee member made the following recommendations:

- Improve transit connections in communities and neighborhoods that have historically and currently been disconnected from the region by transit route planning (e.g. North Minneapolis)
- Improve the frequency of bus routes from Plymouth to North Minneapolis
- Reframing transit planning "tradeoffs" to "payoffs." What would have the greatest opportunity and/or benefit?
- Make sure to engage young people
- Compensate survey participants (e.g. free transit ride voucher)
- There was an exercise that was facilitated on the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) that may help think about who has been underserved.

In addition to community engagement feedback, Giles encouraged committee members to also focus on decision-making processes. If the committee wants to get the outcomes they want, they need to examine and give feedback on the decision-making process.

MID-YEAR REVIEW

Co-chair Francisco Gonzalez facilitated a conversation to review the Committee's work for 2019 and reflect on the rest of the year's priorities and work.

Gonzalez asked the following questions to kick-off the discussion:

- Are there items not on this work plan that should be prioritized for 2019?
- How do committee members feel the year has gone so far?
- Any suggestions for improvement?
- What agenda items do committee members feel that the EAC had an impact, and what was it about them that should be modeled into future staff presentations and discussions?

Committee members shared the following comments and questions:

- Cain is frustrated with the committee because she would like to see more action-oriented committee activity. She doesn't feel like the committee is doing very much.
- Coleman asked if Nelima can present to the Council members their ideas and recommendations?
- Gonzalez stated that the Chair and Regional Administrator have provided a process for the EAC to submit formal recommendations to the Council.
- Oei said that if committee members want to be more action-oriented and have projects or subcommittees, they must be willing to put more time into participating in committee activities. Are we willing to work on the weekends?
- Block said the committee should have a stronger actionable platform. After hearing staff, we should have a standing report back to the Council based on the feedback.
- Fredson said there has been an effort to better match up EAC agendas with what is happening at the Council. A prime example is that the Chief came to visit the committee on his seventh day on the job. Second, attendance and participation matters. Today, we have a lot more members than we have had at the last meetings. Third, the Council does hear you. We brought your conversation about the proposed Greenline forward to the Council and it brought a lot of conversation about how are we need to change our processes. Fredson said that he believes the committee is powerful. If there is some other process that Council Members can help with, please let us know.
- Sheikh shared that he thinks the committee has been very impactful with the feedback the committee has given and their recommendations. Human Resources and workforce equity strategies is an example.
- Coleman said the biggest frustration is the discussion on April 16 about the proposed Greenline service-changes and then the Kindness Campaign that was presented after. It felt disingenuous and disrespectful. On that issue, not even Council Members get a voice or get to vote. Coleman said that the staff has been really valuable. For Coleman to truly represent her districts, she said she needs to be presenting to the Council and showing community members that she is their advocate. There are still a lot of people who don't know about the Met Council.
- Urvina Davis said it is challenging because the EAC meetings are so time constricted. That makes her nervous because she has a lot to say. She would like a retreat where the committee can dig in. Committee members can think about how they can partner with staff. The committee could create subgroups. Otherwise, it is the institution's decision and she doesn't feel like the committee is being effective.
- Cain suggested adding what committee members said bulleted on the Agenda Request Form. For the EAC's work plan, there are so many information items. Those items are nice but passive. I want it to be action-oriented.

- Giles said that former Council Member Gary Cunningham said the EAC has power. Council members have accessibility to staff. There is unconscious gatekeeping of preserving the system as it is. We need to stop talking about it and figure out what process leads us to actionable system changes. Let's focus on actionable system changes. Let's start leveraging our staff like Mitzi.
- Lee said whichever committees he sits on - he will take the EAC's recommendations with him. Lee acts as a vessel for the EAC.
- Redmond said they don't have to recreate the wheel. Redmond asked the staff to send a process-improvement document from 2017 to the committee.
- Sheikh said the committee should get in the process of providing recommendation letters. Also, is there a process for following up on the recommendations? What happened to them?

Throughout the discussion, committee members made the following recommendations to improve the work of the EAC:

- Call for a more action-oriented platform
- Identify an issue(s) the EAC would like to focus on and get regular updates
- Need for an elevated awareness of the EAC in committee members' communities
- Need a process for identifying a collective EAC opinion to submit formal recommendations
- EAC co-chairs could present ideas or issues to the Council for consideration
- Need for a process of reporting EAC discussion, feedback and informal recommendations to the Council
- Improve tracking on EAC's recommendations regarding how they were or weren't integrated into the project, program or policy development
- Create subcommittees, task forces or "adopt" a project on a specific topic area

DIALOGUE

Co-chairs Francisco Gonzalez shared that moving forward, the Co-chairs and Standing Committee has decided to hold space at the end of EAC agendas for committee members to report out on their work, their communities, and to discuss process-related improvements to the EAC's work. In the past month, several committee members have had ideas for improvement, so we would like to open a discussion.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gonzalez had several announcements for the committee:

- As a reminder, the Standing Committee will now be meeting here at the Met Council Robert Street location. Our next meeting is on Tuesday, August 27 at 5:30 pm. Note, that participation in the Standing Committee is critical. We are looking for more committee members to join the Standing Committee – this committee reviews presentation requests and sets agendas. If you are interested in participating in the Standing Committee, let me or staff know, and we will forward you the calendar invitation.
- Please fill out the post-meeting survey. It only takes a few minutes to complete, and your feedback is really useful. Yolanda will send the survey link.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Yolanda Burckhardt
Recording Secretary