

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting Date: November 2, 2022

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

Attending from home

Patsy Murphy, Sam Jasmine,
Ken Rodgers, Trevor Turner,
Diane Graham-Raff

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

Members excused

Chair David Fenley,
Christopher Bates

Staff Present

Sheila Holbrook-White,
Berry Farrington, Brian Funk
Arman Rajaeian, Gerri Sutton,
John Harper, Sheila Williams,
Michael Pal, Alison Coleman

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

Members Absent

Jeffrey Dains, Kari Sheldon, Rachel Garaghty

Guests Present

Matt Thiede

Call to Order

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

Agenda Approved

Andy Streasick added an amendment to the Agenda. Five minutes under the Reports section to discuss Metro Mobility Update.

It was moved by Henricksen, seconded by Fuglie to approve the amended agenda. **Motion carried.**

Approval of Minutes

It was moved by Thorsen, seconded by Henricksen to approve the minutes of the September 7, 2022 regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Business & Information Items

1. Better Bus Stops Update

Berry Farrington, Program Manager, Better Bus Stops, Metro Transit
Arman Rajaeian, Planner, Metro Transit

My name is Arman Rajaeian. I am a planner at the Engineering Department at Metro Transit. We

are here today to provide the TAAC an update on all of the exciting initiatives we have been working on as part of the Better Bus Stops program. Just as a quick reminder to you all. Better Bus Stops were to improve the customer experience at bus stops through providing information, building accessible boarding areas, pedestrian connections as well as investing in shelters and other accessible amenities at bus stops.

Next slide. The main topics that Berry and I will discuss with you all today. First, we want to touch on the bus stop accessibility and improvement guidelines that we have developed this past year. Next, we would like to discuss bus stop data collection that was collected this past summer. And then Berry will update you all on improvement to our bus stops in 2022.

Next slide. So, first things first. Let's start with the Bus Stop Accessibility Improvement Guidelines. We at Metro Transit could do this framework for capital improvement because before developing these guidelines, improvements to deficient bus stops occurred in a very ad hoc manner. Mostly when roadway authorities or development projects improved conditions at bus stops. You have to remember that bus stops are located in public right of way. Located in areas under control by external stakeholders at the local, county and state level.

These guidelines now set forth. A system for evaluating and prioritizing bus stop improvements independent of those one-off development projects or roadway projects. We are now looking at the entire universe of bus stops Metro Transit serves and prioritizing inaccessible ones for improvement by evaluating activity occurring at those bus stops.

The data that we utilize for this prioritization includes customer boardings, customer alighting's, limited mobility fare card data and bus ramp deployment data.

These last two data points. The fare card and bus ramp deployment data. We refer to these as the limited mobility indicators. And so, what you see on the screen right now is a very condensed form of the guidelines, which you can find online.

They go from highest to lower priority. The highest priority stops for improvement. Our bus stops that have 10 or more daily boardings and alighting's with demonstrated limited mobility usage. Our high priority locations are bus stops with five or more daily boardings and alighting's with demonstrated limited mobility usage. Medium priority locations are bus stops that just have one or more daily boardings independent of limited mobility usage. And then those lower priority locations are simply locations that are finding less than one person getting off and on the bus.

The purpose in defining higher to lower priority is to help us scope capital projects and make progress on the ADA transition plan. It should be noted that all the bus stops are priority. And we are clear that the ADA requirements apply to bus stops period. So there is no threshold for accessibility at bus stops. And it is necessary for us to have these accessible to the fullest extent possible.

So we take these guidelines and we review our network and implement them on an annual basis with approximately 20 to 30 stops put into the Capital Improvement Plan every year.

This is just a framework for us to improve. To find and locate and improve the bus stops. But as I mentioned, our goal is to make improvements at deficient stops. One issue for us as an agency is understanding specifically where we have inaccessible or deficient bus stops.

Next slide. We know that we have a data gap at Metro Transit for physical site conditions at bus stops. Especially when it comes to the term meaning accessibility. Because you do need to gather technical information like a bus stop with depth and slope. So this lack of data and knowledge limits our ability to fully implement the guidelines that I just went over. As we are kind of doing a lot of sleuthing on web services like Google Maps. Trying to ascertain whether or not a bus stop is deficient. We do have some older data sets that can give us a decent idea of whether or not a bus stop is paved.

But these legacy data sets do not come close to containing all of the data points needed by the ADA. So this really pointed to us needing to conduct larger scale data collection. Putting to use our bus stop accessibility checklist, which covers the full gamut of ADA requirements at bus stops as



well as the technical details needed to design and engineer accessible bus stops.

Next slide. Touching on the data collection. This past summer, we hired a bus stop accessibility intern to conduct bus stop accessibility insight condition audits. We billed it as a data collection pilot as this was our first-time conducting data collection for an extended period across many stops.

Through our intern's help, we were able to collect comprehensive site conditions data at over 900 bus stops, which was much more than we expected to collect in a three-month span. We focused on specific routes at a time, starting off with Route 4. Moving on to Routes 17, 54, 64, 515 and 23.

Additionally, through the Better Bus Programs of years past, we also sited accessibility data on Routes 3, 22, and 63 through the speed and reliability improvements that were made. And so, on Routes 3, 22 and 63, we have also implemented capital improvements to deficient bus stops on those routes.

As you can see, on the left, you will see a map. This represents a large geographic swath of our region. Reaching from Saint Louis Park in the west, to Woodbury in the east. Brooklyn Center in the north. Bloomington in the south. In my opinion, it is a really great start in tackling that data gap I described. This pilot data collection phase was valuable. Not only for the sheer amount of useful accessibility data that we retrieve, but also refining our data collection process. Because we revisited a lot of places in a short amount of time. So, we learned a lot from that experience.

Then, lastly, this newly collected data is going to be put to use immediately, starting next year. Helping us inform where we have deficient bus stops. When we start prioritizing capital improvements in 2023. Just to round this out, the two images that you see on the screen. The image on the left is an image that we collected this summer. It shows a fully accessible bus stop that is brand new. Contrasted with the image on the right, which is showing an inaccessible bus stop in a grassy median.

Next slide. Berry Farrington spoke to the TAAC committee. I would like to just cover the capital project progress we have made this year. As we wrap up our construction season. We added 23 new shelters at bus stops that did not have them previously. That is in addition to the work that is underway to bring out the D-Line December 3.

We have replaced 29 shelters that were in poor condition, old or just needed to be replaced. Preventative maintenance replacement. We added 35 accessible boarding areas, with cities, counties and MnDOT and roadway authorities.

We also have designed 14 accessible boarding areas for spring 2023 construction. Those are in the guidelines that Arman described. Those are highest and high priorities. We are already putting that guideline work to our capital program.

We added light to 34 shelters and added heat to 15 shelters. And unique for this year, maintenance staff modified about 70 benches to create clear space within the shelters. These are older shelters where the bench had crossed from sidewalk to side wall, effectively blocking those with a mobility device from getting to the back of the shelter. So now those benches are about halfway across the shelter.

Next slide. Here is just a quick example of a shelter replacement where we have been focusing on really doing the best we can to create a more accessible bus stop. In this case, we cleared that pedestrian access route and boarding area by using a different type of shelter in our replacement.

The photo on the left shows the old condition with the shelter behind the sidewalk. But because it is rather wide, it is sticking out into the pathway of the sidewalk. It has a wind screen in the front that blocks the 5 X 8 clear area that we want for the bus front door. This shelter has a bench that is at the full length of the shelter back, which we don't want to have.

So the shelter on the right is the new replacement. It is a different style of shelter. It fits fully behind the sidewalk. The accessible boarding area is clear. The bench is appropriately sized. We are bringing that attention to detail more in our plans.



Next slide. I mentioned that of our 34 shelters that we added light to. I wanted to note that 18 of those were solar lights. This is a new model of solar lighting that we are piloting. In the past, when we have put solar light on shelters, we had a pole next to the shelter. But this is a rooftop solar panel. It sits on top of the shelter roof. So it is a little less clutter around the bus stop. This photo shows a shelter lit up quite brightly by that solar panel powered light. We are excited to roll that out in the system. We know we have heard from your committee before and others of the importance of lighting at transit stops. When we look at bus stops, BRT's, stations, LRT stations, transit centers. Anywhere you might board. Approximately 64 % of customers board at a lit shelter, station or facility. We are working on keeping that number climbing.

Next slide. In addition to our standard capital projects, we are trying to grow how we work with our partners for bus stop accessibility. So we continue to work with development projects and roadway projects to get good, accessible bus stop designs built by others. This year for example, we began partnering with the City of Bloomington on the development review. We already work with the City of Minneapolis and Saint Paul on that process. So, when new construction happens and it has a bus stop at the front door, we can get a good design.

This year we also partnered with our Met Council Office of Equity and Equal Opportunity to create a video that shows in a nutshell what is a good accessible bus stop so that we can share that directly with partners to hammer home that design device that we offer. This video is about a minute and a half. With your permission, I would like to show it in the meeting if that is O.K.

Jason, could I ask you to press play at the center of the slide?

Jason Tintes tried to play the video, but it didn't work.

Rajaeian said we can send the video to the TAAC committee at a later date. It is on YouTube. It is a good video that describes accessibility at bus stops. What is required and it is a great video for us to share internally and externally with our partners.

Acting Chair Paulsen said How long has the video been out?

Rajaeian said it is unlisted on YouTube. Only people with the link can access it. it has been out for about a month.

Farrington said one more slide please. We appreciate the chance to be here today. We did know a couple of questions. We will listen to any feedback and ideas that you have. But we are curious if there were any other measures in addition to any activity and limited mobility users that Arman described that you would like us to consider for those improvement guidelines.

If you have any other suggestions for information sources to help us identify priority bus stops for people with disabilities. If you would like to share any of your bus stop experiences, that is always helpful. Thank you.

Acting Chair Paulsen said if anyone has any questions, we will address them now.

Henricksen said thank you for the work you are doing on routes and getting a lot of those maintenance activities or ADA that work gets done that is needed on some of those bus shelters. I did have a question that on your presentation you had mentioned that you had to send out an intern to teach people how to do the surveys. Collect data to see where non-compliance was had. Then you also mentioned that you do also utilize the ADA Transition Plan.

I guess I am curious on why there is a gap on the ADA Transition Plan. We had a presentation a couple of years ago on that where they had hired a consultant to do an inspection of basically all services for the Met Council. I am curious about why the bus stops were not included in that ADA Transition Plan. And all those deficiencies weren't identified.

Rajaeian said the audit that you are describing that occurred in 2019. The scope of that audit was primarily a public and support facilities for the Metropolitan Council. It only focused on public and support facilities. We have over 10,000 bus stops in our network. There is no conceivable way to have a consultant go and complete a full accessibility audit made of 10,000 bus stops in a reasonable timeframe. So that is something that we have always been planning on conducting. I



think that we began this summer with this pilot. But the effort that you are describing focused on park-and-rides, transit centers, support facilities, like the rail maintenance facilities. Things of that nature. And if there were any bus stops associated with those facilities, like an adjacent to a park-and-ride, they were included within an audit. But there is a deliberate decision made to not include bus stops at that time because it would have just really inflated the scope to be something.

Henricksen said how many bus stops did the intern get to this year?

Rajaeian said this year? She visited 900 bus stops in three months.

Henricksen said so it would take 10 years if that process continued to complete inspection of all the existing bus stops if there are only 10,000.

Rajaeian said I wouldn't necessarily say 10 years.

Acting Chair Paulsen said It was 903 months, right?

Rajaeian said Well, 903 months but we had to have, there is a deliberate time frame with this intern. It was June, July, August and then it was over. We decided to go with an intern doing the data collection as a trial run. To see what it would take to have someone go out in the field. Primarily most of the day. Conduct these audits. And just doing that repeatedly, week after week.

So I think, one thing that we learned is that it doesn't need to be under the pretense of an internship. It could be a little bit more fluid. We get like a temporary worker who is able to start earlier in the year. Not under the confines of the internship program where they start in late May and then usually finish their internship by the end of the summer. That is something that we are looking forward to entertaining in 2023 of getting someone on board earlier in the year and having them do more data collection and therefore that could definitely speed up the timeline that you described. If we have six months of data collection, that means that we might collect close to 2,000 bus stops, for example.

Henricksen said I think this committee would be interested in being kept apprised of that. As the ideas come to fruition. That plan that could probably be baked into the overall guidelines you have created, which is pretty good as well. Looking at where to focus prioritizes I think is important in those plans. I know we would be curious as to how that proceeds. Because I think one or the other metrics you mentioned. I think there was between 20 to 30 stops that can be done a year. Or improvements that can be planned. I know that probably all 10,000 aren't deficient. I am assuming that a lot are. So if we can only back some money at a certain rate. Or even at a lower rate, which we can do those improvements. The more, I think, towards that the better. I think the initial guidelines are working. So thank you.

Turner said I have a question. Is there any talk of potentially having everyday riders report in deficient bus stops? Heidi had mentioned that she had taken a photo of the bus stop that she thought was not ADA compliant. I certainly have lots of photos on my phone of a bus stop that I think are not deficient. Is there a way that there could be a number that you could text photos or text a report that this bus stop isn't sufficient for people with disabilities. That could be a really great way to help aggregate all the riders' ability to do that data collection of bus stops that need to be addressed.

Rajaeian said I think that is something that we have thought about in the past. I think the main thing that keeps us from opening that door is data quality. By having someone trained in the ADA law, and well versed in the accessibility checklist. As I said, it covers every single aspect needed for bus stop accessibility as well as design and engineering.

That is primarily the main reason we have taken that route initially. But it is something we have thought about. I think we could still continue to consider. Especially if it were a way to at least flag deficient stops and get us on the right path to go and do that comprehensive audit in the field. I think that is something we could consider down the line.

Farrington said if there are some stops that you have a concern about, you can always email that photo to Customer Relations at Metro Transit or call us. If you have the bus stop site ID, that is helpful. But specific corner location could help us investigate it.

Thorsen said I am glad that the Better Bus Stop Program exists. Because it is a good way to channel the concerns. We talk about individual bus stops as the unit that you are evaluating. As providers of the system, I understand you have to narrow down to people to account for it. As somebody who is using the system. If they are able to get, they need to be able to get from their original starting point to the destination. And then back to their starting point. So my question there would be let's say there is bus stop number one. Let's just say that is going eastbound. And the nearest bus stop to bus stop number one is going in the opposite direction. Is there a way to account for both of those together? Thinking about if I were to take a bus and be able to get to my only destination, but not able to get back again.

The other thing is more practical, maybe. Have you thought about. I looked at your online description of the bus projects that were being planned. There was a map. Have you thought of putting a link between that and the trip planner website as well as the next trip website? That would connect users. It may not help them on that immediate trip. But if they use those stops frequently, those were just two thoughts that came to my mind.

Acting Chair Paulsen said my concerns were more about inclement weather. You guys only surveyed 900 bus stops in three months. Congratulations for that. it was only during the warmer months, right? It was only during the day as well. Activity changes at bus stops throughout the day. They might be busier during the day. Not so busy at night, or they might not be busy during the day and very busy at night. So those things need to be accounted for.

The other things I was excited to see you guys were picking up on the lighting and what that means to perceived safety. But I also don't see any pictures that are showing receptacles or trash cans for garbage. I also would say that the new bus stops look great. I use them. I understand that that is what we are going to do. But I actually prefer if the heating element is never going to get fixed where the heating comes down far enough so that I can utilize it. if I am out there in cold weather. Then I would prefer the older bus stop. As you showed the wind screen. I know that that limits the number of people that can be in that shelter. But, at the same time, if you make the shelter small enough or large enough, you will cut down on some of the activity that maybe happens around certain stops. I am caught in a catch-22 there. Yes, I like more space. But when you make the space tighter, you make sure you limit who can be at the bus stop. That might cut down on some of the undesirable activities that happen at certain bus stops.

That was just my suggestion and my thoughts.

Streasick said I just wanted to make sure that everybody grasped an important distinction here. To Trevor's point about how about users flag particular bus stops. Obviously, our answer to part of that is of course, users aren't going to necessarily know the ins and outs of whether or not something is formally ADA compliant. However, what I heard Berry follow up on, which is an important piece for everybody to take away is that absolutely you can email or call Pam's group as a user and say "I am having issues with this bus stop." I think we all know not only might not some users be aware of ADA compliance and all the nuance, but there may be bus stops that are "ADA compliant," that have accessibility issues. So regardless of whether a bus stop is formally ADA compliant, if there is a barrier to access it. if there is something making it difficult to use, call Pam's group or email Pam's group and you can relay that info.

Jasmine said I wanted to talk about your comment, Darrell, about making the bus stop smaller. I am not sure which ones you are at. When I ride and hit some big ones, especially when I am downtown. I am concerned about making them smaller. I don't know how many of those bus stops, how many people do they hold? But if you have say somebody in a wheelchair and a couple of more people and somebody with a guide dog. depending on the ethnicity of the guide dog. Some people like to keep a distance from the guide dog. I am just saying that I want to be cautious about minimalizing the size of the bus stop. I would not want to be the one who waits outside in 10-degree weather.

Acting Chair Paulsen said what I meant was that there has to be a way to compromise. Having the larger bus stop also means that it is going to be harder to heat and maintain as far as there is going to be undesirable people there. However, I know that that is the way the system is going,



right? So having the smaller bus stop doesn't apply in that regard. The only way that I brought that up is to make sure that you look into the safety of a larger bus stop lighting. Look at the receptacles and the heating. The heating is a big element because we spend six to seven months out of the year in cold weather. So heating is something we definitely need to look at.

That was my point, Sam, about the smaller bus stop. Because if you make some smaller, it is easier to heat.

Jasmine said I just wanted to make sure that people who are made to fit in it, will fit in it.

Myhre said if you do the open ones, just to make sure, I will always be taking Metro Mobility or the city bus or a taxi. If you go with the open one, are you going to be shoveling it more? Keeping them safe. I have been literally walking in snow and ice and try to keep warm. I have ended up in places that I am not supposed to be. Are you going to go out into the suburbs? I know that West Saint Paul has recently had some vandalism from a mentally ill person. I was not there when it happened, but I was there when the glass broke more and hit me. Since there was no maintenance on weekends, we had to wait until Monday or later to have it fixed. Your route information is not always there. Your data is lacking, and I don't know what you are looking at or not looking at.

The other thing I wanted to bring up is something that made the news. I reported it to Metro Transit, and they said to bring it to the counties. I saw drugs and alcohol right next to me in a shelter. It made the news that they took some shelters away. How do you protect people in the shelters?

Farrington said our data doesn't capture the pieces of lived experience. I wanted to just go back to the shelter size difference and the shelter that had the wind screen on the front. We are trying to make sure that where it fits well. That was an example where it didn't fit so we scaled back to the next size down so that doesn't have a wind screen. But we keep that in our inventory. We still use it because we know people appreciate that.

While we clear snow from all the shelters. The kind we showed you today with that standard Metro Transit logo. We clear those the same regardless of the BRT stations.

Myhre said I live in the suburbs, and I reported a few of them and it was days before anyone got to it.

Farrington said if it is a Metro Transit shelter, regardless of municipality, we clear them. Staff go on a route. It could have taken longer. The broken glass on the weekends. There are fewer people to replace that. Our goal is to replace the glass in less than 24 hours. On the weekend it would take longer.

Henricksen said you own and maintain the shelters and bus stops. Is that correct? You are operating within the right of way. You mentioned that in the presentation. Are you bound by the right of way line? Do you ever secure other easements when you are butting private property? For instance, if you wanted to have a larger shelter. The shelter, the screen. Do you first vet out potentially with butting property owners secure easements to widen an area? I guess I would be curious about that process.

Farrington said we do work to get an easement or a site license, which is a less binding agreement with a property owner to use private property where we might need it to really make that difference. Occasionally yes, is the answer.

Henricksen said do you try to stick with the right of way to help with those municipalities?

Farrington said yes. It is much quicker, easier and cost effective to work within the right of way. So that is our first choice.

Acting Chair Paulsen said thank you for your work on the Better Bus Stops. I think that we are headed in the right direction. I think that consumers that use the service and have lived experience, do have to figure out a way to be able to connect and be able to identify those troubled bus stops. However, I am a little concerned that you said that the reason we haven't allowed the

public to give you that information was that some of you know the ADA law. I am sure that the intern you had there for three months did not understand the ADA law completely. Or understood the complexity of our 10,000 bus stops or our system. Therefore, I wanted to ask you why somebody that uses the system on a day-to-day basis would not have that channel right away. You would say: "yes, we will get to you right away. Thanks for giving us the feedback." You roll back that feedback to another intern or another potential person that is trained. So they can go and look at it. There has got to be a way to take that experience from people that use the system on a regular basis. There has got to be a way to take the feedback.

2. Home & Community Based Services Waiver Transportation Services

Sheila Holbrook-White, Waiver Transportation Services, MTS, spoke to the TAAC committee. I work in MTS and am the Waiver Transportation Services manager. I am going to talk to you today about the service we are putting together. I will talk to you about the schedule and Next Steps. And then answer questions. And have a discussion.

Next slide. The agenda is an overview, schedule and next steps. Then questions.

Next slide. I would like to begin our discussion by first referencing the Metro Mobility Service Area. Something with which I suspect many of you are very familiar. This slide shows a regional overview of the seven counties Twin City Metro Area. The federal ADA service area is highlighted in blue. And it includes the urban areas of Hennepin and Ramsey counties. With some limited areas in Scott and Dakota Counties and a small piece of Washington County.

The non-ADA service area is highlighted in gray. This area includes parts of Hennepin, Anoka, Ramsey, Washington, Dakota, Scott and Carver that are outside of those communities that are served by all day fixed route service. For customers who have been certified for Metro Mobility, requests for trips that begin and end in this federally required ADA area that which is blue, must be provided during the same days and the same hours that fixed route service operates in their communities.

Being placed on standby is not permitted. If a Metro Mobility customer, whose trips begin and end in a federally required or blue area, makes regular trips to the same location on the same days and hours at least once a week. He or she can request a standing order. Assuming that those trips are expected to be consistent over a six-month period. An approved standing order relieves the individual, the caregiver allies, from making advanced reservations for this regularly scheduled trip. Essentially the trip is already automatically scheduled for that individual.

In the gray or non-ADA service area. A certified Metro Mobility customer, whose trip begins and or ends in the gray area, may be placed on standby.

So, in other words, a customer or caregiver may request a trip during days and hours of service, and not have a confirmed ride when they complete their request. Because of their standby status, these participants are not eligible for standing orders.

So that individual and his or her family and caregivers will be calling Metro Mobility up to four days in advance of trips. Even those that are requested for the same day, the same time, to the same location. Critically, because of capacity constraints, there is no guarantee that trips that start or end in the gray service area, always get the trip or reach that destination.

Next slide. The ADA and non-ADA service areas, we just reviewed, are critical in understanding the program we are developing. Some persons with disabilities receive home and community-based waiver services that allow them to live in the community they call home while receiving the services and supports that meet their needs and advance their goals.

Some waiver recipients attend day support programs. Day support program participants who qualify for Metro Mobility, receive services through two different contracts. Through the agency contract, participants attending the region's largest day support and adult day programs whose trips begin and end at that blue federal ADA area, receive standing orders to those facilities. Similarly stable agency contract drivers remain the same.

These features offer a premium level of service at the same rate paid by every other Metro Mobility customer. Through the demand service contract, participants attending one of the other day support programs, that are not among the region's 10 largest, Metro Mobility will connect the individual to their location. If the trip starts and ends in the blue area, and the individual travels to and from that facility on the same days and the same time, standing orders are an option.

However, under the demand service, multiple drivers may be taking an individual to and from his or her day support programs. And for adult day support service participants who in the non-federal ADA area, there is no standing order. There is no guarantee that they will attend or be able to access their services because they may not have a ride.

Next slide. This map shows the regional county, Twin Cities area with a Waiver Transportation Service Area highlighted in green. No federal ADA service area or non-service area boundaries are shown on this map. For persons who have community-based waivers, this transportation service we are developing now, offers distinct premium services. The waiver service does not distinguish between the blue and the gray.

The green represents the Waiver Service Area with coverage with each of the seven metro counties. Standing orders are available regardless of where the trip begins and or ends and the Waiver Transportation Service Area. So long as the trip meets the other requirements like travel to and from the same locations and at the same time. There are no standbys. There is an opportunity through this program also to reach competitive employment.

As a premium service, we anticipate making waiver services. Currently we are proposing to make them available Monday through Friday, from 6:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m. and on Saturdays and Sundays between 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Because this is not tied to fixed route service. Changes in those services do not affect the days, areas and hours of waiver service.

Waiver services will be billed directly to DHS. So there is no onboard payment. There is no fare card.

Next slide. What is the impact on the lives of people? The Waiver Transportation Service offers substantive positive impacts to customers with home and community-based services. For waiver participants, whose trips start and or end and what is currently that non-ADA service area. They can now request standing orders to any of the region's day support programs across the area. no more calling to make advance reservations and no more standbys.

For a waiver participant to live in what is currently the Metro Mobility Federal ADA area. They will have an approved opportunity to arrange standing orders for day support services and changes to fixed route service no longer affects their ability to access locations.

Consistent across all waiver service participants are the following improvements: expanded days and hours of service, which improves access to the community specifically competitive employment. Consistent driver assignments. No onboard payment. A single point of service. A contact for service management. No certifications or recertifications for Metro Mobility.

Next slide. Waiver Service seeks to connect persons with disabilities who have home and community-based waivers to the lives they desire in their communities. And it reflects the community driven priorities, state plans, regional planning and legislatively mandated recommendations. Focus on connecting waiver participants to the services that supports resources needed to remain independent.

The waiver program advances multiple objectives and priorities. Including the goals articulated in the state's own step plan. The regional priorities identified in the 2020 Twin Cities Public Transit and Human Services Transportation Coordinated Plan. And several recommendations found in the 2018 legislatively mandated Metro Mobility Task Force Report.

Next slide. A few highlights of our proposed schedule. We plan to complete the RFP in Quarter 4 of this year. And launch outreach and engagement to disabilities serving agencies. We will be collaborating with lead agencies, which in this region are counties, to prepare administratively, for the transition of Waiver Service recipients, who choose to participate in the waiver program.



We know that there will be significant administrative work and education and engagement. And we want to provide the requisite time and training to assist in that seamless transition as individuals elect to use this option. We prioritized this transition by starting with our current agency participants. Followed by current demand passengers with waivers who have not had access to premium features. And then to passengers who may be traveling to a day support program that has not been actively cultivated. One of those other than the top 10 largest. We will also transition those current agency passengers who opt not to participate in the waiver program to Metro Mobility demand services.

Our next slide is our final one. Mr. Chair, I will follow your lead on our next steps.

Acting Chair Paulsen said thank you. This was an interesting presentation and an interesting take on this unique opportunity. For the individuals who are on waived services. I understand that you are going to bill the waiver through DHS. When will those individuals be able to request from their agency to do the switchover?

Holbrook-White said we are currently looking at beginning service. Because we want to get that robust time frame for people to get prepared to know the pros and cons of those choices. We are looking at perhaps Spring or Summer of 2024. So it is a bit out. But we feel like we need that time for individuals to understand: "This is a choice you now have and to make those transitions and supports available."

Acting Chair Paulsen said my only other concern is I know that a lot of the individuals that I have clients that are on waiver services and one of the benefits that they get with their waiver services is they get the Go card. And that Go card can be used on Metro Mobility. it can be used on any service that we have in our system other than the demand side. If this program was implemented, would that affect that piece of the waived piece? Because folks rely on that Go card as even a backup in order to get around if they don't have an appropriate way of doing that.

Holbrook-White said Mr. Chair, thank you for that great question. This is but one option that is available to individuals that have community-based waivers. They may also want additional options for which they qualify. Let's say Metro Mobility Demand Response. That is up to that individual in partnership with that lead agency to get that GoTo Card for those that elect that.

Acting Chair Paulsen said thank you. I just didn't want this to overshadow some of those services that those individuals who begin to rely on it and live with it.

Myhre said I ride Metro Mobility and I get waiver services. I get a Go card like he is talking about. I get the bus because I am qualified. And I get a monthly bus pass. Then I get \$80.00 worth of money to take some rides. It is a little confusing to get all of this information. So are you going to have a website that helps and gives some real good training for the social workers? There can be some serious miscommunication problems. I can see that when you are setting it up people can get confused on the Metro Mobility side.

The other thing I wanted to bring up is when there are holidays, the note on Metro Mobility that says standing orders have to be changed. The way you present it, it looks like everything is fine. then I see the sign on Metro Mobility that it has changed.

Holbrook-White said your first question, I think is an important one. You have these options and services currently. This becomes another option from which you may select in partnership with your lead agency. Your point about the needs for specific training and education around what this option entails and working with the lead agencies is in fact part of the reason then we delay implementation. Because we want that pathway to be seamless for the individual for that person to understand the choice that they have. To make that choice. And for all that administrative backup stuff. It takes so long it frustrates people. Because they are waiting to start. We want to give ourselves a long lead time for that so that it is seamless for those who transition.

I am going to defer the question that you asked to Andy because I am not sure that I fully understand it and I wouldn't want to speak on behalf of Metro Mobility.

Streasick said I think this is another example of a potential benefit of the waiver program. Metro



Mobility has particular days that all standing orders are cancelled. Holidays. Those are spelled out in the Service Guide. And while there have been times where we have made exceptions to that. the Waiver Program is going to work much more closely with DTNH providers if there is a particular day that is not one of those holidays where the providers are closed. They can cancel that standing order more easily. If there is a particular holiday that Metro Mobility cancels standing orders, but those DTNH's or job sites are going to be open. Then the Waiver Transportation Program can still provide those trips. So it is an opportunity to be much less cookie-cutter than something the size of Metro Mobility.

Myhre said for me, I have to set up my own rides. What about someone who comes to our houses to help us?

Streasick said Sheila can speak to the particulars. But I think that as we get closer to roll out. As this program matures and approaches a go-live date. Absolutely, education for county workers and the contractors who are working on waivers is really important. So that your waiver worker who come out and talk to you about your options have all the details and can help you make the best choice for you.

Myhre said are you going to have a video or some kind of learning thing so the person who has to come to my house and help me can learn how to do this?

Holbrook-White said two issues. I think on the schedule, if you looked back to the slide right before the end, we are starting to do that outreach to the disability serving agencies. We have been talking to the lead agencies for several months. We are beginning that outreach now. Because we want to make sure that people have a chance to ask those questions and thoroughly understand. We have not specifically defined what educational tools we will be using but I appreciate the video idea. I'll take that back as we talk to folks and do that communication.

Myhre said real people that actually use the service instead of actors. I think that will tell the story even better.

Fuglie said will there be separate vehicles that will be used for the agency waiver thing? Or will it be all combined under Metro Mobility where we already have a lot of people using it and it will add on more people. Is it going to be separate?

Holbrook-White said they will be separate. There are two specific rationales behind that. The waiver program will be available in a different hours and days of service than Met Mo in some communities. We will be using a different vehicle. Also, the vehicles we will be using for the waiver program will not have a fare card or fareboxes. It is going to be a fare free program. There is no fare card payment, but they will be different. And they will be accessible. Our expectation is the quality of service that oftentimes people are getting today for the agency program, will be continued with the waiver with additional support and premium benefits.

Acting Chair Paulsen said when you talk about the vehicles will be different. I get that they will not have the footcandle or other collection devices, but will people be able to identify this is my waived bus verses my Route 219 bus that circulates around my neighborhood? Will we be able to quickly identify that is my waived ride that I am scheduled to take or is that Metro Mobility bus waiting to pick someone else up?

Holbrook-White said we are working through that communications plan right now. With the very folks that helped build the branding for Metro Mobility. So we will be happy to come back to you when we have a better understanding of how that branding might look like.

Jasmine said are there things that will be put in place that will insure the longevity of this program as opposed to having that get cut once people get used to it? if things get tough.

Holbrook-White said part of the reason we are moving forward on this is this does allow the Council to receive funds through DHS. And that allows us to draw down more federal funds. That allows us to reinvest in these resources. This does build sustainability in the long term. It is not the primary reason we are doing this. It is partly also to make sure that folks with home and community-based waivers have the lives they want. But that is an added benefit that we can



reinvest those funds in this program as support and sustainability over the long term.

We look forward to building on the branding tradition on the Council as a whole, which is to make services very clear to the passengers.

3. Metro Transit Operations: Accessibility Continual Improvement

Brian Funk, Chief Operating Officer, Metro Transit, spoke to the TAAC committee. Our new Deputy Chief for all of our transportation services. All the service delivery that Metro Transit provides on our fixed route buses, light rail and Northstar are routed through Michael Pal. He comes to us from New York City with a long career at the MTA. Starting as a bus operator and having varied experience. We are happy to have him here.

What I intended to provide today is an update with me explaining how we arrived at this point and the actions that we have been taking at Metro Transit. I do have a written summary report that I will provide to those in attendance and an electronic version for those online.

Recently Metro Transit and the Met Council reached a settlement with an individual that did not have great experiences in all cases with riding our services with a fixed route bus. The gentleman working over the last six years. It was an individual with a deaf and blind condition. The importance of our buses stopping at the exact location each time was something that was of importance to him. Unfortunately, we did not meet that expectation each and every time. And so, we strived to do better. I think as this committee knows we operate a lot of services. About 5,000 trips every weekday. Even with less service right now. We have a large operator pool, who takes pride in providing public service. But there are times when we don't quite get it right.

We take it seriously the need to refocus on our training and setting expectations and trying to make sure that we follow through at a higher percentage of success. I will walk through the key elements that we have committed to. Many of these are standard practices that were enhancements to items we have started over the last several years. And I think members of this committee are familiar with some of our efforts including the experiential training we provide for our new operators.

Acting Chair Paulsen said a point of clarification. We did not receive anything in our packet relating to this. Am I correct in that, Alison?

Alison Coleman said no, we did not receive anything.

Acting Chair Paulsen said we will have some questions about this at the end of the presentation.

Funk said I understand, and I apologize for that. I did not send that information to Alison.

Streasick said we have been pretty consistent with the messaging that if for any reason we cannot get a presentation to the committee in advance, just for accessibility reasons, don't use a powerpoint. Just talk it through. So that would be best practice. Just go ahead and do that so the folks that can't follow along visually, can manage by following along with the presentation. If we could go with that, that would be consistent. It would be best practices.

Funk said and so, the items that Metro Transit and Met Council agreed to provide enhancements to include updating video that provides instructions for bus operators on where to stop. Our goal has been and continues to be is we are stopping at the T sign, the bus stop sign. On an effort to be as consistent as possible.

As people who use our system, especially on the fixed route network, we know that there may be some reasons why that particular location is not available to an operator. Winter weather may be an example. An errant trash can or newspaper box, or some other blockage. So in that other event, we provide instructions to our operators is to clearly announce their stop, and be able to communicate with the customers who are not at an advantage, to see exactly where they are.

We have committed to this enhanced level of training and doubling down on our communications for at least the next three years. We believe that this is an industry best practice and that we are meeting both ADA and exceeding to be able to provide that clear and consistent service. This has become a routine. We have been doing this for a number of years, and we are committed to do



this in the future.

As a part of that, we have reissued our operating bulletins, which serve as work rules for all of our employees. We have also issued a specific, what we call a route information bulletin. It goes to operators on specific routes. So in this case, the individual that we have been working with. He primarily rides on the routes 3, 6, 17 and 114. And so, operators who work one of those assignments. Every time they come in for one of those assignments, receives a reminder notification that there may be somebody who needs that extra assistance on their route to try to make sure that we are providing that consistent service.

Even though we have a long block of training when employees are new. We recognize that there is a lot of things that people are contending with early in their career. Then a refresher training is beneficial to all of us. And so we have committed for the next two years, at least, to be able to provide a 10 minute refresher training on the importance of this consistent practice and why it is beneficial to all of our customers. Especially those who are deaf and blind.

In addition, new supervisors and managers. If they have not received that bus operator training. Many of us has risen through the ranks from that position. But not all. They also will be required to complete that training. So when they are coaching and working with employees, they have a full understanding of what the expectations are.

We are also going to be doing monitor. Both announced and unannounced. Supervisors in the field, to be able to make sure that we are complying with this, and we are not just waiting for something to potentially go wrong. Or for somebody to call in. So we are taking that proactive measure as part of this commitment. To ensure that we do self-monitoring and hold ourselves accountable.

And then we have agreed that if there are future disputes or complaints about where the bus does stop, we will have a consistent standard between all parties and we are sharing this publicly so that everybody knows what our standard is and what that includes is that using the onboard video, we are able to see clearly out the front door of the bus when it stops. Looking towards the curb. So what we have agreed to is if that bus stop sign is visible in the front door, the 32 or 36 inch wide front door, we have met the standard. So that is what we are aiming for.

Or if the complainant and his guide dog is visible in that front door, because we had to stop at a location that doesn't have a sign or the sign is down or something else, we are saying that we have met the requirement or if the bus operator exits the bus and communicates with the individual to let them know what route is approaching. We have met the standard.

That is what we are doing. Then of course, we will continue to follow up on any issues that this particular individual has. Like we always do. We will work through the customer relations process for anyone who did not have a good experience on our fixed route service. And try to make it right.

Those are the highlights that I really wanted to share. At the discretion of the chair and the committee, I would be happy to share written documents. I apologize for not providing them in advance.

Acting Chair Paulsen said I began to be aware of the issue a few years ago. It is also understood that during rush hour time, the buses do what they call "Jump the line." And jumping the line is against your policy. We don't allow that. But during rush hour time, when you have buses that jump the line, it is not just poor practice. It limits people like me who may be looking for that second or third bus that is behind that first bus. That might not be jumping the line because he knows what to do. But those two other buses, they want to catch up and make their time. So they are jumping the line.

How do you reprimand your drivers for that? Because during rush hour time, they don't understand that when you jump the line, you are missing people.

Funk said you are exactly right. That is contrary to what we are instructing our operators now. There could be an exception if the first bus in line has a mechanical malfunction. Is broken down. Or if they are boarding or waiting for a supervisor or a security response. Or something of that



nature. However, what our training does do is advise our operator that they must ensure that that stop is clear and that they have communicated the route that they are operating should anyone want to board that bus. That front sign or the side sign either isn't visible or the person seeking to use the bus can't see it or read it. That is our expectation. Because we are in the business of transporting people. Leaving people at bus stops is not achieving our objective.

Acting Chair Paulsen said so I guess my point was: Do we include individual operators that jump the line as well? Are they included in this additional training for the next two years? You can pull them back in if you catch them doing it. Give them a 10-minute refresher course. Then you put them back in the line, right?

Funk said you are right. So that is both part of what we are monitoring and part of that standard operator procedure for entering, clearing, and then departing a bus stop. So it is a whole three-step process to be able to both enter it safely, utilize your mirrors. Make sure that you are achieving the goal of entering safely and departing safely and merging back into traffic. And each of those steps.

One part I didn't get into but since you touched on it. We do have a collective bargaining agreement on levels of discipline that arise from people failing to follow our rules. But we do apply that for people who are either unwilling or unable to follow our expectations.

Rodgers said I didn't hear in your list of items that are going to be corrected or provided moving forward. To make our system better. I didn't hear any specific item that related to. It was well known that this individual had complained many times over a period of two-years. That this was happening. Yet, nobody took that complaint seriously. So somewhere along the way the system broke down whereby a citizen could make a complaint and then it gets followed up on properly.

I wanted to just make sure that that part of the system has been addressed. I know we are all human beings, running as best we can, and we don't always live up to our high expectations. But we need to have workable solutions in place that when an issue happens and it gets reported, something happens to correct that. I didn't hear that in your list. Has that been addressed?

Funk said I believe that it has, and we have acknowledged that because of both the scope and size and duration of our system that we had a failing that we did not recognize what were events that seemed to be happening not at the same times, same location, with same employee. That was a gap in our ability to identify an issue. And so, in this specific case, and hopefully moving forward, we have set up a process to have a more centralized evaluation of those complaints so that we are able to take action even quicker than we did. And I would say that in this case, part of when it became a little bit clearer to us earlier on or at least comparative to today. In 2018, we did take that preemptive step before any litigation to try to address it through that onboard experiential training. Committing to that through our professional operator development program. But yes. The point is well taken that we will continue to do better.

Rodgers said the only other thing that I just want to leave you with. A concept that is maybe a little difficult for everyone to understand. But it really needs to be understood. Especially by those receiving complaints or issues. In some sort of organized way. Many people with disabilities have speech difficulties or communication difficulties. And with this particular example, this was a deaf and blind individual whom I know personally. I understand his speech. But I understand also that his form of communication is limited. I just want to make sure that people on the receiving end of receiving comments and complaints, are fully aware and understand, have patience to listen. Have patience to read. Maybe even reading through the lines to reach out when there is a question and not just assume that they don't understand it and pass on it. I want to just make sure that everyone gets the respect and opportunity to be heard. And a follow-up happens with that individual.

Sometimes that is very nuanced. I understand that. But it is really critical especially for people in the customer service realm.

How do you know that the buses are doing everything correctly that you just said? When they are lined up like a train.

Funk said part of our training does require that the operators are using their best judgement on where the safest place is to stop. So they are not boxing themselves in. Wintertime would be a



great example of that. Or even if there is a car parked in the bus stop. We want them to choose an alternate location that they deem safe as opposed to skipping the stop, for example. So that is part of their training, and it comes to some degree with experience. But we provide some guidance and some examples through our instruction staff.

To your first point about our compliance to rules and what not. We do have field supervisors who are out to make sure they are monitoring our operation. I trust them to be ensuring that we are following our training and doing what our customers expect. Part of what I can take away from today's meeting is to reiterate the importance of being there and being at bus stops. To make those observations and ensure that we are providing that service.

Myhre said what does trust mean?

Funk said I am not personally able to observe every bus or every stop. So I need to be able to provide the training. And then I provide the supervision in the field to monitor and ensure that they are following our rules. And so, I am entrusting, but I also verify. One thing I will take away from this meeting is to make sure that this is a focal point for our staff that are out in the field, monitoring the operations. For example, when I ride the bus home today, I am going to walk over and probably catch a Route 74 right here at 6th and Robert. That will be something that I monitor. Believe me, if I don't see something happening the way I expect it, that will be reported. Those are the checks and balances that we try to put in place.

Myhre said are you going to use the videos that are on the vehicles to get some ideas if they really are true to what your vision is?

Funk said we use the videos typically in an investigative form. So, if we are made aware that there is an issue or if somebody observes something that didn't work. We will use that evidence to be able to evaluate from a neutral perspective exactly what occurred and what transpired. We also have full GPS monitoring. So we are able to see where every bus is at a polling rate of about once every 10 seconds. We are able to see the order that buses arrive at the stops and how they depart. There is a feature to note if the door was open and items like that.

We do have a side project. Working on updating those onboard mobile gateways. We are able to both use the radio, cellular connections. So, if either one is more accurate, we are able to have that redundancy. So we continue to have that. Those investments made into our capital improvement plan.

Reports

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. Just a real brief information item that needed to be added to the agenda. because we are aware that there has been kind of a larger issue. Particularly with folks in the East Zone. I have been working with the Council for 17 years. We have always been talking about driver shortages. It is just a reality in paratransit, and it is perpetual. It has been true nationwide. It has always been true. But it lends itself to almost feeling a little bit like the little boy who cried wolf. We thought it was bad then. But in the pandemic environment that we are in now, and the hiring market that we are in now, we have never been short of drivers like this. It is absolutely unprecedented. The way that it impacts our system is unprecedented. Brian could speak to that on the fixed route side as well.

We have never had to cut fixed route like we are doing. We have never had to cut paratransit like we are doing. We are severely, severely, short of drivers. And one of the ways that we have been dealing with that at the Metro Mobility level, particularly in the East Zone is by denying non-ADA rides. That is rides that are not in the federally mandated area. We have been denying hundreds of those a day. We are aware that that has a significant negative impact on folks with disabilities and their ability to maintain independence. We are aware that that is at odds with the Council's' mission.

We have very few options as we look at the driver shortage where it is at. The Council has decided that we need to look elsewhere to try to address that issue. The trip denials have become just a



little bit too big of a deal that has gone on for too long. in a different stage of the pandemic, they might have been more understandable. Now, there is a question of when this hiring market is going to change. We just don't know. we cannot, as a Council, continue to deny those non-ADA rides. So, what we are doing is we are going to prioritize immediate ceasing of denying non-ADA rides. And what we are trying to do is make that jive with the reality of our hiring situation with operators is we are going to stop damaging providers for any service that exceeds or meets the ADA federal performance metrics. Those of you who have been here awhile probably know that while the federal standard for example, for on-time performance is 90 percent. We damage for anything that doesn't meet 93 percent. We would really like for perform above the federal standard.

We are going to continue to bonus. To try to incentivize performance at that 93 or above. So that folks are incentivized that the contractor level to go above and beyond and do what they can to take away the damages so that folks don't have to feel that the basement is at 93 or I am going to get damaged. So I had better deny these non-ADA rides. So I could hit that 93 percent.

We are taking away that damage in an effort to work with our contractors and partnership to remove those denials. Because that is not something we can sustain anymore at this point.

So if you have had your trips denied, you will stop seeing that. if you haven't had your trips denied, particularly in a non-ADA service area, you may see contractors using that negotiation window a little more aggressively. You may see trips that are pushing that onboard time a little bit more and you may see a slight dip in on time performance.

We are doing what we can to do all trips while at least meeting the federal minimum for on-time performance standards. Particularly within the ADA service area.

The waiver service is more than a year down the road. I hope we are in a different hiring situation at that point. Even if we are not, that is exclusively subscription or standing order based. So there will be no trip denials on that waiver program. It is a standing order system. And just like with Metro Mobility standing orders now, those are automatically assigned to a run. They are scheduled. They are set in stone. That won't impact the waiver program when it rolls out.

Jasmine said I was wondering if you could explain the East Zone. What does that encompass?

Streasick said our services are currently provided by First Transit East. Roughly speaking, Anoka, Ramsey County and East. I should point out that while the primary numbers of denials are taking place in the East, the service impact as we take away any options for even occasional denials, do impact all zones. It is just that most impacts would probably be seen with any change in the East Zone.

Jasmine said I live in a non-ADA area, and I have had no denials.

Henricksen said is this temporary? So once hiring levels go back to a level that we could go beyond the federal limits. Would that be the goal to reinstate that 93 and above?

Streasick said yes. It is really our hope that tomorrow something happens so that we can go back to something resembling a more normal job market. We are also exploring a variety of other things we can do to stop the bleeding with regards to driver hiring from referral bonuses to try to get wage increases. But yes, absolutely, we hope that this is a temporary thing.

Subcommittees

1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers

We have resumed our Blue Line TAAC Meetings. We just had our first meeting. it was with the Business Advisory Committee. We set our goals for the next year to year and a half. Right now, the Blue Line is focusing on finalizing an alignment from Target Field through the first several stops in North Minneapolis. There are still a couple of options on the table. There are still a lot of public engagement going on. That is where we are right now. The rest of the line is shaping up, but nothing has been finalized yet.



2. Green Line – Christopher Bates

This item was not addressed.

3. Gold Line – Darrell Paulsen

We broke ground on the Gold Line. October 19 in Woodbury. It was an exciting time for the BRT, Bus Rapid Transit, and what that means for the East Metro and its connection to the East Metro. It was an exciting time for Metro Transit and for the BRT projects to be showcased. Members of the press and TV were there. It was the only event where I have been at where our US Senator and our US Congress person was there. It will roll out in 2025, I believe.

4. Purple Line – Darrell Paulsen

That has a little bit more of a challenge to it. However, we will start doing some public engagement. Hopefully in the end of November, at the end of this month. The public engagement period should go almost until Christmastime or the first of the year. Then I will be able to come back and give you more of an extensive report after we get some of the feedback from the public.

Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group

This Item was not addressed.

Chairs Report

This item was not addressed.

Public Comment

None

Member Comment

None.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:30 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 November 2,, 2022.

Approved this 02 day of November 2022.

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