

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, December 1, 2021

Committee Members Present: Chair David Fenley, Vice Chair Darrell Paulsen, Sam Jasmine, Patsy Murphy, Ken Rodgers, Jeffry Dains, Kari Sheldon, John Clark, Heidi Myhre, Claudia Fuglie, Patty Thorsen, Diane Graham-Raff, Trevor Turner, Erik Henriksen and Richard Rowan.

Committee Members Absent: none.

Committee Members Excused: Christopher Bates.

Council Staff Present: Doug Cook, Jason Tintes, Council Member Phillip Sterner, Guthrie Byard, Christine Kuennen, Andy Streasick, Eric Lind, Kimberly Malone, Celina Martina and Alison Coleman

Public Present: none

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:32 p.m. on Wednesday, December 1, 2021.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

Chair Fenley added two more items to the agenda.

It was moved by Dains, seconded by Jasmine to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Paulsen, seconded by Jasmine to approve the minutes of the November 3, 2021 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Improving Survey Methodologies

Eric Lind, Analytics Research Manager, spoke to the TAAC committee. This is an item that we wanted to bring to your attention for discussion. So I don't have a powerpoint. Mainly, I wanted to talk through what the idea of what we are working on is and we would like to hear from you about what your input is on this idea. So I work in Research and Analytics at Metro Transit. So we do a lot of things with data. I appeared before this group before a couple of years ago talking about how we use data to prioritize stops for snow clearance, for example.

The other job that I have is working on surveys. So supporting our surveys in terms of everything from small projects surveys to the larger, system-wide Travel Behavior Surveys and so forth. One of the things we are doing is we look at these surveys and we want to improve the language around how we ask people to identify themselves. We want to do that for a couple of different reasons.

One reason is to make sure that people see themselves in how we are asking them to be identified. This is something we have looked at in respect to gender identity, race ethnicity. So one component we are asking about today is could we make sure that we ask people about their disability status? That we are asking it in a way that people can identify themselves and respond in a way that makes them feel comfortable in recognizing. So that is one aspect.

The second aspect of this is to improve the data that we are collecting. When it comes to different aspects identifying as having a disability or not. What I mean by that is what the text of this document starts with is how we currently ask questions. So right now, we ask people a couple of different forms. But generally, along the lines of "do you have a disability?" "Yes, no, or prefer not to answer."

This has been language that has been used in many different surveys across the Council. Is used in our opinion surveys when we ask people about their experiences and ask about travel behavior surveys.

I do understand that in previous conversations, maybe with Jonathan Ehrlich, my colleague in MTS and the Met Council. That was identified as one of the better ways to ask this question by this group.

So do you have a disability? Yes. No. Prefer not to answer.

When we look at our ridership at Metro Transit and thinking about our ridership as a whole in thinking with all our different services, we know that there are other dimensions to this. Some of those become really important as we try to gather information. So, for instance, as we go out and survey our customers about their perspectives on bus service and the locations of stops. Or even the number of stops. We do ask riders: "Would you prefer to have more stops in this area? So the bus is stopping more frequently. Or would you prefer to travel more quickly? Or prefer to have to take a little bit longer to get to a stop?"

That is a very common tradeoff of fixed route transit planning. You could have more stops. You can have faster speed. So we are asking people about these questions.

It would be nice to know when we are asking these questions and we have preferences stated by some number of people. Are they people that say they have a disability? If they do say that they have a disability, are they people who have trouble with mobility, people who have a reason why they would not prefer to walk further or is it something else? Is it a vision impairment or is it related to mobility? Are there other disabilities? So, when we start to look at the information that we could get from customers and from riders? What we are interested in is how do we ask that question in a fair way that lets us get additional information about how people experience our system.

So I have been working with Guthrie Byard, with Doug Cook and other members of our internal working group on this.

We drafted some example language on how this might be applied. And really what I would like to hear from this group is feedback on: "Do you think this is worth doing to expand out the identity of disability?" If so, are there particular ways to ask a question that seems more appropriate or more welcome? And then, if there are other things where it seems like it is not worth asking or appropriate to ask then we hear that as well.

The last bit I will ask is one of the things we are working on is standardizing this across all of our survey efforts. There are many different times that we go out and ask people about their opinions and experiences and preferences. We would like to be able to standardize that, so we are always asking it the same way. We can compare across surveys. But also ask how people would know what they are going to get when they are looking at the Met Council survey.

So these are the main purposes. I don't know if you could share that document again. Scroll to the Example Questions. The main discussion point is here, my question to you all. Would you like to see a question that says: "Do you have a disability?" Yes. No. Prefer not to answer. Or would you be O.K. with this form of question: "How do you describe your ability status?"

It would be select all that apply question. So it certainly would not ask people to rank them or one over the other. But anything that applies can be selected and the responses would be:

- a. A vision impairment
- b. A hearing impairment
- c. A learning disability (e.g., ADHD, dyslexia)
- d. A developmental disability
- e. A mobility impairment
- f. A mental health disability
- g. A temporary impairment due to illness or injury (e.g., broken ankle, surgery)
- h. A disability not listed above

I do not identify as having a disability or impairment.

Maybe I will just stop there and ask if there are opinions on the approach of disability on its own or any other detail verses this approach.

Chair Fenley said I see hands up already. I am sure we will have a robust discussion on this. I want to ask another question before we get into some wordsmithing here because I have a feeling that folks will want to do this as well. I would like to look at the big picture before we get down into the details. This question could be for Eric, for any of the TAAC members or essentially for anybody on this call. I definitely want to query the high of mind here. So you did give one reason as to why, and it was a good reason, as to why getting a little more granular data as to what the disability may be. But I am curious if there are other reasons that you were thinking. I will give you that first, Eric. But then anybody else as to the why, because I think that is a good question to really get into before you start to ask survey questions that might not actually give you what you want or really anything at all.

Lind said yes, the why is to fold its one connection to how experiences relate to disability when it comes to our fixed route service. And another example is if we are piloting these apps on the mobile phone. That can help low vision and blind riders navigate our transfer system.

When those customers are surveyed, then the general population of rider experience can have opinions about ease of transfer or wayfinding and so forth. We would like to identify those customers who may be or are giving us low scores are those who have a vision impairment. There is that functional reason. Again, the other reason, and Guthrie could speak to us as well. The other reason is the identity reason. So, capturing people's own self identity in how we ask these questions. Part of that motivation may resonate with you all or may not. As we have looked at it again, these other dimensions of identity, our survey process. We have found that people really want to be able to identify themselves properly in the survey documents and not feel like they are not being captured. It is really more of an end-to-end user of the survey. Feeling recognized.

And so that is why it is important to hear from you all about whether this would accomplish that or whether we are off on a fool's errand.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I think Guthrie was going to come, and the thing I see here is on the list of identification. You are not identifying anyone on the Autism spectrum, or on the neuro diversion spectrum. So, if you start to identify folks at this very neuro skill, what is to stop you from developing programs specifically targeted to those populations without making it equitable systems for all of us and not targeting *particular* disabilities and situations.

Chair Fenley said I am pretty sure that Autism falls under developmental disabilities, whether we like that or not.

Vice Chair Paulsen said it does not. As far as on a legal standpoint. But people don't identify on the spectrum as that. So that is what we are saying. If you want people to self-identify, then we need to include folks on the spectrum and how they identify.

Jasmine said I believe he had another choice on there and knowing that you can't list every disability. Not to make anyone less important, but would that not be an acceptable thing? Then I have another comment after.

Vice Chair Paulsen said it certainly would be acceptable, but I don't want to be lumped into other at times. So people that are on the Autism spectrum, they would also not want to be lumped into other.

Jasmine said then I guess my question would be if you chose other, would there be an ability to type in what your disability was, number one. To me, that would, in my opinion, that would be an acceptable thing. Just because, visually impaired, you know, that doesn't mean that I am visually impaired. It may be that I am blind. There is a whole lot of spectrums of visual impairment. I guess the other thought is I don't think that it is bad for you to ask about disabilities. Sometimes I have been one to not like that. But in this particular case, if you are actually going to use it for where you are helping choose where you stop and how safe it is, I think that is a respectable thing.

I will give you an example. I had a stop in Plymouth in my express bus route, that was, i felt was a stop in the spring and the summer. Except in the winter, because there was no sidewalk there, he left me in a nice, big snowbank, met by a pine tree, which was not really thrilling. So, I think that there is something to be said for knowing what could be helpful for somebody and safe and good stops.

Chair Fenley said thank you Sam, for bringing us back to the "why." And before we get into wordsmithing, I do just want to give folks the opportunity, for the members, staff and other folks here, to address that overarching "why" question. It seems to me like the "why" is there, but I would like to provide Eric and the Met Council with

even more reasons as to “why”. So they can use that data better. Obviously, we will talk about this again, but I want to get at that. I see Trevor’s and Patsy’s hand up.

Turner said I have a couple of comments. The first one is addressing “why”. I do think it is really important to ask about disabilities especially when it comes to transportation. I think just asking “do you have a disability or do you identify as someone with a disability is too broad. And not helpful for data collecting purposes. Because the experience for people with disabilities varies based on the disability that you have. I do think it is important that if you are going to ask a question to get information about a disability, to break it down like in that first question you had, breaking it down, into different disabilities. Then, that information is actually useful. Then you can say “How many deaf and hard of hearing riders do we have? How many wheelchair users do we have?”

Because they all are going to have different needs. Those who are deaf and hard of hearing are going to want more visual things on Metro Transit. People who are blind or of low vision are going to want more hearing and tactile accommodations. Stuff like that. By breaking it down, you will actually know you have a more useful information than simply just asking if you have a disability.

Murphy said I believe that being in a more detailed situation. You are questioning and giving different choices in this is going to be very necessary. Because a black and white question of “do you, yes or no?” can leave a lot is going to be whether somebody connects that word “disability” because it can come across as being negative. But I am also looking at this in terms of. How. I think a lot of you know that I am on the Traumatic Brain Injury Advisory Committee. We are trying at this point to change some of the questions that are on some of the evaluations. That was one of them. Exactly what we are doing is getting it from the black and white “yes or no”. To being more detailed. So I would say, stick with what we have right here. Especially as my support staff that is here with me, commented that her, the sister that she is currently working with. She had a stroke. That falls into five of those different categories. So, if she was to say “yes”, like Trevor said, you know is it she is visually impaired? Is it hearing? Or what is it? I would go right along with sticking with the list.

Myhre said my concern is that I have multiple disabilities. Preictally that lists fits me. But at the same time, I have seen were we get pigeonholed like the blind people get more of certain things. Or the wheelchair people. We need to figure out how we can spread this across the board so people who have multiple disabilities. I have walking, hearing eyesight learning, developmental, emotional. So I have everything. So how does a person with multiple disabilities that don’t 100 percent fit your way of thinking at the same time they do or don’t? it is a hard question to answer. But I wanted to look at it. Because I have gone to a lot of different things over the years for just disability things. People just like us who have multiple disabilities get pigeonholed into a disability way of thinking that doesn’t always work. So how do I get a variety package? So I can be happy and that person who is only blind gets what they need? Or the person in that wheelchair gets what they need? But I can get that variety package and still be able to use the bus. And still be able to call Metro Transit and Metro Mobility. Or use the different stops just like anybody else.

It is something to think about because I am one that doesn’t fit the norm. Just so you know, Human Services doesn’t always know how to work with people like us who come born with multiple disabilities and throw a giant wrench into understanding what is best for us. I am still trying to figure that out. I just wanted to bring that to your attention. I do like having where you can write in something in other or what Sam was talking about. I think that is a great idea. And you might hit something that you might not have thought about.

Chair Fenley said Eric, if you click “other” and type something in, can you have that field stay open again so you could put more than one “other” in? So there could be three “others” typed in there. So is not to have just one “other” typed in.

Streasick said I just wanted to call out in terms of the “why.” Be really careful if you are only presenting things as preference with regards to the different choice you used as a primary example between additional stops verses quicker service. Because for some folks it is not going to be a question of preference at all. If I can cut out managing to walk two city blocks. A third city block is going to prevent me from being able to utilize fixed route or push me on to para service if fixed route became less accessible. It is not really a preference, so much of it is a preference to make a choice to exclude somebody. So I think just making sure that if you are having that a question in preference language that you might be able to follow up and say something like would either of these options prevent you from being able to access the fixed route system? Or something like that.

Chair Fenley said I think that is a good point. So I would ask Eric: “Is there going to be context provided when this survey is sent out?” Like this is why you should answer this question. Because this and this might happen. I don’t necessarily think that this is a good idea. I think that is what Andy was addressing. I don’t think he was

being as editorial as I was in having an opinion. But or is it just going to be the survey? Without saying “this is why we are asking these questions.”

Lind said one of the things we are doing in general is we are always trying to improve survey practice in a number of different ways. One of them is being clear about why we are collecting any information on the survey. Being able to connect it to the decisions which is something that I heard in multiple times this afternoon. Don't ask something because unless you have the way that you are going to use the answer. It may be that when we are asking these questions, it is about different dimensions of service. It may not be directly connected to any one place. If it is, we certainly should be saying this is going to inform our decision about the maintenance or expansion of this line or closure of this stop. Whatever it might be.

Then the closing the loop part is that we report back to community people that took the survey. What the results were and what our actions are going to be. So that full, kind of “here's why we are asking it. This is how it connects to the decision. Here is the decision that we made. And some of the reasons why in this survey was an input into that.” So that is the ideal. We would like to follow that practice.

With respect to this question, there is also this bracketed part in the question itself. Which we envisioned as sort of a pop-up or note or explanation for people. “Why are you asking this?” We are interested in this identification regardless of whether you identify as being disabled. Your answers help Metro Transit that make its services more inclusive. And that is true in terms of whatever the survey might particularly be about.

But I do take that point and thank you Andy, for making it about the differences between preference and exclusion based on one choice set or not.

Byard said there is a follow-up question on the list that asks people to share their specific disability or ability status. This would be available for everybody, regardless of how they answered. So if they have a disability that is not on the list here, or you want to specify that you aren't blind but you might have low vision. That kind of information, the more detailed information is going to be really important. I just echo what Eric had said about the two-prong approach that we want to be more meaningful and have more data tied to some of our efforts like I run groups of accessible transit information and materials and the priority seating campaign but also want to just insure that people feel more represented when completing surveys like this.

Thorsen said I would like to reinforce some of what Heidi said. I would put in a strong vote for saying multiple disabilities. Because I can respond to that and answer multiple disabilities. By multiple disabilities, present different transit needs plus the multiple disabilities that I have present different needs than Heidi has. It is necessary in some ways that we have to isolate things so we can focus on them. Money, employee time on meeting different disabilities. But it is also important that people know in terms of feeling represented. I would say that somebody recognizing that my disabilities are Cerebral Palsy and essential tremors. Those are the two most relevant. They present different problems. And different problems I have on different days. That is a distinction I think is both important from the staff. Everybody working can provide services. I am not doubting anybody's attitude or approach or whatever. It is important for both the people that are providing the services and the people that are needing the Metro Mobility and Metro Transit issues. So we need to do more for that.

Rowan said the bracketed part of the question is one that I am interested in this identification. Whether you are interested in being identified as being disabled. Who are you expecting that bracketed part to identify with that part of the bracketed question?

Byard said I think one example might be here that why we are using and also ability status is that in part of the representation piece is that we want to be mindful of those that might not identify with having a disability. But interact with transit services, maybe in unique ways to them. And so for example, there could be somebody who is capitol letter D as deaf, who uses ASL, is not identified as a disability. They just use a different language. So we want to make sure that if that is something that applies to them, they don't identify bring disabled but they should still have the ability to share how they interact to transit services and what they use to interact with transit services. And that information is nonetheless is going to be very beneficial to us.

Rowan said just one quick follow up to this. We also, in addition to the disability community is we also represent the interests in the senior population in this committee. I am thinking that some of the senior population might not necessarily pick these items. But for instance, the example you gave the distance between stops, this is something very important to seniors who might be frailer or are hard of hearing. So I am just raising that issue to make sure that you make this broad enough to include that part of the community. Or maybe have a different survey that reaches that part of the community. Many of them would consider

themselves disabled and use mobility devices and that sort of thing. I think that some of the community may not identify with these questions, exactly.

Chair Fenley said that is a really good question. I really think that is why the bracketed portion is in there because it is trying to get at the folks who don't identify as having a disability. But would qualify under the ADA as having a disability. We are at an unfortunate point in society that having a disability is viewed as being negative or undesirable so people that do clearly have disabilities. So they don't have disabilities. I think that is part of getting at this too. The elderly are folks that are falling into that category, which is why we are really glad to have you here. But if there is a better way to try to tease out those folks who might not identify as having a disability but do have limitations that could be addressed through the Met Council knowing that their riders have whatever a limitation or impairment. I know these are not words that we like to use. But they are words that are in ADA, and they have legal meanings behind them. This is the only reason that I use the words. That is a really good point.

Rodgers said I have a quick comment about the text that you guys are referring to in brackets. I want to make a comment related to screen reader users and how we might access a popup or information that is incidental to a question that appears not in a normal way. I would strongly urge that popups are not used. They are notoriously very difficult for the screen reader. Sometimes the popup can open, and the screen reader can read it and then the screen reader cannot close it and get back to where they were before. And that is very frustrating.

Sometimes there is an issue with the popup, especially when someone is a braille reader and reading from their braille output. There is oftentimes confusion when popups come into the issue. So I would urge that you try to figure out a way to incorporate the text in the normal way that you are incorporating the rest of the text to avoid that kind of confusion for readers.

Henricksen said I just have a question. I was just curious. One of the "Why's" for getting to this granular level. Is to make responders feel seen or heard or part of the survey. Was there actual feedback from a survey response for this disability community? That they didn't feel heard? Or represented by these surveys? That would be a question for Eric.

Lind said not in this dimension of identity. And both thinking about how we talk about gender. How we talk about race, ethnicity. We have heard feedback over time from people that has led us to rethink and revisit our wording and our choices. Guthrie might have heard something more direct. But I think our approach here was to consider this dimension of identity in the same way. And just try to get it right. So, I haven't heard any specific feedback.

Henricksen said was that a true concern. I understand that. I needed to know it more granular. Because the fear of getting this kind of data from the first "Why" would be in a survey about maintenance and improvements to a particular fixed route stop or something like that. A majority of the people identifying as having a disability select "A". So the fear is focusing only on the improvements on that sector of the community when it is the responsibility of Metro to make it accessible for all. And not put more eggs in one basket when looking at it. That is just more of a caveat on how they might use it.

Lind said that is very important. I know there is a tradeoff with identifying these different categories. You might say the biggest categories is the one that gets the most attention. Or whatever it might be. But I also heard in multiple comments about how, when these disabilities interact. Obviously, uniqueness to help in getting people to the how they experience the system. I think, actually having information about that. How often that happens. It is going to be more helpful for our agency because I think a lot of times when we think about it right now, is that yes/no disability question. People who say yes, in transit, may say this must be a wheelchair user.

We have a really incomplete understanding inside the agency of dimensions of ability that impact people's experience. In that way I think it would help not concentrate but broaden our thinking around how we have to use the universal design to let everyone use the system. Because it is not just like is there a concrete path? So that is my reaction to that. It is a really good point to be wary of. I think the benefit outweighs the risk in my opinion.

Murphy said I know people think commenting about numerous things, that they fall into a couple of different categories. That is why we have the "Select all that apply." So anybody that was concerned they fall into two, three and four different categories so to speak there. There is one of them there that you could actually be able

to fill in if something does not get listed up there. Because otherwise we are going to end up with 25 different choices if we list every possible reason for being considered disability.

Chair Fenley said it would be hundreds, Patsy, not 25.

Murphy said I was trying to be nice about it. I didn't want to be too pushy about it. But thank you for stepping in and answering it for me. It would be pages long. I can speak especially for myself, with my traumatic brain injury. A lot of people are going to look at me. In fact, it has happened to me on Metro Mobility. Whether that is the drivers or whether it is the riders that will say to me: "You're disabled?" Well, it is because as a lot of our group know, injuries and unseen disabilities. So a lot of those things that are lifts are disabilities that we all deal with. Still, they need to be taken into consideration. I agree with a couple of other people that if you guys are looking at taking down information for data, so you know what people have and how many riders are dealing with wheelchairs versus people with low vision versus people with whatever. We need to be able to break it down. I believe that is great, what you have.

People have commented about Autism. I did put it on the chat. I did look at it and actually Autism is considered a developmental disability. If anybody is curious. Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD), is a developmental disability that can cause significant social, communication and behavioral challenges.

Chair Fenley said legally, yes, that is true. But Darrell's point was spot on. The Autistic folks consider themselves a unique group, not necessarily part of the DD folks.

Murphy said but doesn't that happen with a lot of us folks, though? Let's say with myself. My brain injury. That is not a disability. Don't we all want to try to say that ours is separate?

Chair Fenley said yes. It is an unfortunate nature of bureaucracy. They want to categorize folks. We definitely are not going to solve that right now. I think we would be wasting our time if we did it right now. I do want to get into a little bit of a wordsmithing. Not too wildly. But before that I want to read Trevor's comments. Because I know that not everybody has access to the comments. Because I think that he pretty much summed up a lot of my concerns with the words used in probably a lot of yours as well. So Trevor said for words describing disabilities, I would move away from the word "impairment." Use "deaf or hard of hearing. Blind or low vision". "Mobility disability" and "temporary disability." I would also add "neurodivergent, including autism and ADHD." So I think that gets at language that the disability community likes to use for itself. I do know that the words that were used in the survey originally Eric, and Guthrie? They are taking it right out of the ADA. No impairment. That is the definition of disability. The one or more things that impaired your life. So I do understand that is why you put that in there.

Myhre said my question is how many years can you get out of this? Because I don't know if the next generation. Because you have a good group now that can answer some of these questions. But how about the kids that are coming out of the high schools that have disabilities? Are we even talking about where are they going to live and what they are going to do? And they are taking the city bus, or Metro Mobility or any public transportation. Do they even understand that there is a world out there where they ask these kind of questions and then? Are we teaching this in high school? And then junior high. I think we should do this in grade school. All the way up to college.

Are we talking about this in a way that the next generation? So we can keep improving. There is never going to be a perfect answer to the question that we are bringing up today. Which I am glad we are. I don't know if the next generation. We are already seeing all the different things that just recently happened in history. We got the virus. We got the riots. So how in the disability community are we talking about this so we can keep on having TAAC meetings and transportation approvals? Something to think about when we put this together.

So we can talk about this and the surveys can keep getting better. Things that are getting together and talking about what we are talking about.

Chair Fenley said I think you are spot on. Guthrie expressed interest in getting at the third question, here. Let's go to John and then we will get to the third question.

Clark said I wanted to get back to Richard's really good plan about aging and people who are aging and not identifying themselves as having a disability. I am wondering if one were to use the wordage, disabilities/areas of functioning. Which prevent barriers or something like that. That is a way of easing into the subject without having to fully make the leap of identifying that as having a disability.

Graham-Raff said I just wanted to circle back to. I like Trevor's suggestions. Circling back to what Richard talked about. I would like to see the addition of something that gets to the difficulty walking long distances. Because that may not be related to mobility. It may not be related to anything else. But it is definitely something that many older people who are frail. But we don't want to use that word. Experience in terms of why they can't access transit stops.

Chair Fenley said let's share the screen again and get into that third question.

Lind said I will introduce this as our way of sharpening the understanding that flows with the first question. People can identify different disability dimensions. We wanted to specifically know how those might impact particular aspects of our service and just transportation in general. So, scroll down to question three.

3. Which of the following mobility devices or system technologies do you use to help you navigate transit services?

This would be select all that apply. The choices that we have. And this is not an exhaustive list. If there are commonly used ones that should be included, please let me know. We are most interested in getting the most commonly used technologies and devices. So, wheelchair or other wheeled mobility devices. Walker, cane or other mobility device. I guess the difference between A and B was about the wheeled nature of "it".

"C" Mobile phone app. Aira, other things we talked about Google Maps. And then open ended other.

So, I am sure this is a very incomplete list. This is our first cut at it. I would be interested to hear your perspectives on what should be included.

Myhre said the first thing when you read it. Metro Mobility has a hard time with this. And everyone else I don't even say the name anymore. Mine is not a cane, it is a crutch. If you are talking disabilities, there are two different kinds. There are people who use canes and people who use crutches. Just call it that. Because there are so many different names for different kinds of crutches that we use. That is what Metro Mobility calls it when I call in. They ask if I can use the stairs, or can I use the lift? You have to be careful when you put this together. I don't want to be pigeonholed in the way that I can't get out of it. At the same time, I am telling you the truth of what is really going on. So look at all your options before you put this out there in a way that can fit multiple people.

Streasick said I just had a couple of suggestions to this to add white cane to the list. Then just to piggyback back. I think I put some language in the Chat that might just be a multiple-choice option that would address age related reluctance to identify as a person with a disability. So I want to check out that language about adding that as an option to select.

Chair Fenley said fantastic additions, Andy. Do we need to add things to this list? Do we need to take things away?

Murphy said what did Andy say at the end? The very last sentence or two.

Chair Fenley said he had a suggestion for addressing Richard's concern about aging folks. For those who do not consider themselves as a person with a disability. There was some language regarding that. He put in the Chat "Age related condition that impacts sensory or Mobility function (for example, macular degeneration, hearing loss or arthritis.) Some good words to get at the age-related disability that you may have but not identify as having".

Myhre said do we have to be like correct with our language? Do we have to be like the ADA standard or the doctor standard? What language do we have to use to make our points across? And then how do we teach it to people who don't know all these fancy stuffs? So they get the real answer to their questions. The Met Council or Transit wants this information, but I have to be able to understand it in order to answer the question. Sometimes it might be written in a way that is not even understood. So how do we deal with that? Is there a teaching? Or do I have to do the work to understand it? Where does it fall under?

Chair Fenley said Trevor's feedback really got at that. I am a big proponent of moving away from the medical model. And having people identified as conditions or impairments or disorders. I am not a big fan of that personally. That is where we are legally, unfortunately. This is very much related to your previous comment too where this is the direction where things are going where folks with disabilities are really taking charge with their identity. And how other people view and talk about that. So, maybe this could be a way to somehow be part of that evolution away from that medical model into a more identity focused or social model view of disability.

But it is not easy. It doesn't happen in all one day. It takes decades and decades for language and people's minds to evolve. But again, much bigger picture aside of the work we are doing here today.

Folks can also feel free, if they want to really dig into this wordsmithing and send recommendations. You can do it via email. Everybody should have this in their TAAC packet that got sent out exactly a week ago on Wednesday before the holiday last week. Feel free to dive in your personal time if you want. Send it out to us.

2. January Meeting

This is the most immediate thing we should discuss. So we had this discussion for the July meeting as well. Traditionally, we can cancel the January meeting because it tends to fall right on or right after the first of the year. That is a holiday. People are out of town. People are hung over. None of us, of course. This year, it actually falls pretty late. So it falls on January 5th. We always have lots of work to do. But I will not express my opinion either way. But I do want to leave it open to the group to decide if or if not, we have a January meeting. If it fell on the first or the second, we would not be having this discussion. I would just say we should cancel it. But it falls on the 5th, so I want to make sure that as experts in your own field, you do this work. I want to at least give you this chance to do this work in the month of January.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I will be sober by January 5th. So I would recommend that we continue on with the good work that we are doing. Because we actually got a good momentum going and I think that we do have enough work to do on our yearly schedule to continue our meeting in January.

Discussion ensued.

The TAAC committee decided to keep the January meeting in place.

3. TAAC Anniversary

Chair Fenley said TAAC was founded by the Minnesota Legislature in 1992. That was 30 years ago next year. We have gotten a lot done. We have been a strong voice for folks with disabilities at the Metropolitan Council. Should we have some sort of a retrospective? Should we have interviews or photos or some sort of celebration? I am really just tossing things out there as an open discussion to TAAC members. Or should we do nothing at all?

Myhre said I think we should do something. Because then we are being recognized at the same time for all of our work. I don't want other parts to get recognized so much that that is all they know about. But if we get recognized, we can do an article or do something. The public would know we are here, and we would do great work. And I was 22 when it started. And I was riding the bus before that. The point is that the community knows that we are here and maybe we will bring some more disability people into the community of wanting to take Metro Mobility and the city bus. Help us make a new wave of the future.

Chair Fenley said is there anybody who does not feel like we should recognize the 30th anniversary of TAAC? I am taking your silence as support.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I think this is a fabulous opportunity for the TAAC members to showcase the three decades of work that we have done. And I think it is an opportunity that we can create a timeline. That would be a visual timeline that would propel us into getting some real concrete recognition and some longevity for the fact that TAAC has been around for 30 years. I got appointed to TAAC during the Ventura administration in 2000. And I having been serving TAAC in an official capacity for almost two decades. So, thank you for the opportunity and I look forward to building another decade or so.

Chair Fenley said that almost sounded like you are volunteering to lead a workgroup to plan whatever celebration we do.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I would love to do that, Chair. And I see some enthusiastic members on the call with me. I would love to work with them to do that.

Fuglie said David, do we have any information from the very beginning of TAAC?

Chair Fenley said I think that will be one of the major things that this workgroup does. They would do almost a historical research project as to how TAAC started, what they did originally, Darrell's timeline. But we can dig into the details of what exactly a celebration or recognition would be like. But I would love to take suggestions right now and Claudia, I will write down the history of TAAC.

Fuglie said I would love to see the TV stations and the presentations.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I will bring the cake. We will tell the Met Council they don't have to worry about the cake.

Myhre said when I was at the legislature, they were talking about Metro Mobility. They had a really great timeline up on the screen so that people could understand why we are asking for funding or why they want to change certain policies. So I don't see why we can't tap into the past. I know some things like an old Metro Mobility guidebook that had a picture saying: "the bus and one of our old people that used to be on our committee, passed away." Then inside would be like all the areas where you can use Metro Mobility. So there is a long history. I just happened to keep one of those old books and didn't realize there is a rich history compared to where we are now. Now it is pretty much digital. So something to think about when we put this together.

Sheldon said Darrell, I would be willing to help do a planning. And the second thing is I have an idea we could maybe do a public access show with disability viewpoints.

Vice Chair Paulsen said absolutely, Kari. There are a number of opportunities that we, as a committee, could figure out as to how to get it out there and get some attention around it. So, as a subcommittee, if we choose to form one, we would be able to go through all of these ideas. Whether we want to do them or not.

Sheldon said I am offering my assistance.

Myhre said I would be able to help, too. I think Access Press would love to jump on this and put it in their newspaper.

Jasmine said I wanted everyone to know that I have a radio show and that talks about disabilities.

Myhre said I think that would be a great idea. It would reach a wider variety of people.

Chair Fenley said since we are here and we already have three people who are excited to serve on this work group, subcommittee, task force, celebration, planning, whatever we want to call it.

Clark said I am a board member of Access Press. I can look into that. I think that the history aspect has real value to put together at this point.

Chair Fenley said I have John, Heidi, Kari and Darrell at this point. You can call or text any time in the next month or so, if you want to be on this committee.

Myhre said will this be on Zoom?

Chair Fenley said yes, it will be on. We haven't discussed meeting in person yet. I am guessing that this discussion is going to be delayed even more.

Myhre said because of the new variance and certain things. I understand and I would rather be safe than sorry. Something over zoom and you can send out an email to just give us the updates. And when to come?

Chair Fenley said yes. I will help organize when the meetings take place.

Is there anyone else who would want to be on the workgroup? The celebration planning workgroup. I will send an email out. Because I know some folks that are not here.

Vice Chair Paulsen said figure out where you want to be in the celebration so we can include everybody that wants to be a part of this.

Chair Fenley said the people who are on this workgroup at this time are Darrell, Heidi, Kari, Patty, and John. I will send an email out to the entire group asking for more folks and for ideas as well.

Patsy, Richard and Guthrie, said they will also be on that workgroup.

Chair Fenley said I think we are going to learn a lot about ourselves and our history here that we didn't know about. I am excited to hear what comes out of this. Guthrie brought this to my attention. This was not my idea. He did email me a few month's back. I do not deserve credit for this idea.

Myhre said could Guthrie be the one to go through the archive stuff? Because he might have access to it. He can access it for us and then share it with us.

Chair Fenley said we can work out details later.

4. Driver Recognition

Chair Fenley said so now we can move to some kind of driver recognition. To my understanding, this used to exist, but doesn't anymore. But I do know that this idea was Darrell's. So I am going to pass it to him and not take credit for this.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I have looked at the notes as much as I could under the Met Council. And I have found out that driver recognition and driver retention, when I typed it into the search engine, and it only came up about three times. So very small numbers at this time. One of those times was mentioned by our committee, particularly by TAAC. I did not look into the notes or the minutes as to what that particularly would look like. But I do remember when I got involved in TAAC in the very beginning. Let's say 2000. 2002 to 2006, rather.

Periodically, we would recognize drivers for going out of their way. The small things that the drivers do that are outside of their job scope and things like that. Or if they had good job performance or on-time performance. They got recognized for that. Those recognitions typically were done with only the paratransit side. And the Metro Mobility side. To push some driver retention and driver moral kind of thing.

What I would hope is that we would take that driver retention or that driver recognition. Maybe on a quarterly basis, or maybe twice a year and we would highlight particular drivers. Or particular services that fall into our transit system. And we would say these people deserve recognition. Whether they get a certificate or they have a cup of punch or a piece of cake. I believe when we do that, the numbers show that we retain those drivers and those individual people for a longer period of time.

I think given that opportunity, I think TAAC could play a role in that just like they did in the past. But I think it would be good for all of us involved to do some driver recognition.

Chair Fenley said so Darrell, are you thinking that this come strictly from TAAC and the disability community in terms of driver recognition? Or are you talking about in general?

Vice Chair Paulsen said TAAC could be the umbrella source of creating the recognition. But then we could partner with other organizations in the community that might want to do that or might want to come support the recognition of these drivers. I guess uniquely it would be different from what we had done in the past where we only focused on the Opt Outs or the paratransit service. But it would include the mainline service as well as the light rail. If we want to get creative.

Chair Fenley said I would like to hear from Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit staff too. Not putting on the spot. If you want to chime in. by all means.

Vice Chair Paulsen said if it is not doable or viable, it would take up a lot of work to do. Obviously, we can't do it during Covid19 or the times like this. I do think that this would be a worthwhile opportunity for staff and the drivers' honor to get some real recognition from people that they are serving.

Chair Fenley said personally, I really like this idea. When we tend to talk about drivers, it always tends to be what they did wrong. I think that what they do right, far outnumbers what they do wrong. But I would say it is an unfortunate part of human nature to really let the negative outweigh the positive. This would be a way to counteract that. And if it does boost moral. If it does, like you said, potentially contribute to driver retention, I think, most importantly, if it does help build a relationship between riders with disabilities and the drivers. I think that I don't see a downside to this short of making it happen logistically, with staff.

Vice Chair Paulsen said that last point of yours is where I think TAAC would play a huge role. It would give the public some sense of credibility to what TAAC has been saying this whole time.

Cook said from our perspective, we do a celebration for our drivers twice a year. But that focus we had beyond the transition school. They would come to the garage and get recognized. I know the drivers super appreciate that. I also think that this is a great idea. It is just the logistics of getting the drivers to wherever we are going to do that in zoom or in person. That could be doable.

Myhre said how do we spread this out so it is not just one-sided? The Twin Cities is pretty big and the suburbs that do it too. Then you have the Saturday and Sunday people. So how do we spread this out, so the playing field is really awesome and people like this idea and they want to be a part of this. But I don't want it to be where they know they are going to be recognized so they can move up the ladder. I want it to be that they really got recognized for their good work. So something to think about.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I think logistically we have to look at this and see how we can make this work. Because I would also want to include. I heard Doug's point very clearly. If you do two driver recognitions twice a year or once a year. Each time the driver recognition, event happens. The nighttime staff or the overnight staff, or the third shift, doesn't get their pizza. And they won't get their recognition and the pats on the backs or the smiles that the morning crew got or the afternoon crew got. So you are right to the point of logistics. It would be kind of challenging. But I would be willing to go into any garage during driver recognition and give them a couple of certificates if they so deserved it.

So it doesn't have to be at a centralized location. It would be easier if it was. But usually, we could all show up. But if it has to be a different guy deserved a different point at a time, we can do that.

Chair Fenley said I like that, Darrell. I like that Heidi, your point is spot on. I would view this. Building off of Darrell's original point. I view this as really bubbling up from the disability community. And then coming through TAAC. So, we would ask our community to give us examples of drivers who have gone above and beyond or who have done whatever. And then TAAC could decide.

Vice Chair Paulsen said it should come from the community first. then it could bubble into us.

Chair Fenley said we could address Heidi's point. We are not just doing Metro Mobility drivers. We are doing a conductor, a Metro Mobility driver. We are doing a third shift person. We are doing a suburb person. We could do more than one every six months. It could be three individuals who stood out in our community. Then we could tie that into what Doug was talking about. The twice a year one where maybe one or two of us or a few of us go to the recognition thing and we give them a \$1,000 gift card to Target. That was a joke. I am not committing the Met Council to paying for anything.

I think that this is a great idea, and it is something we should move forward on.

Sheldon said I think we also need to pay attention to or give recognition to the reservationists.

Vice Chair Paulsen said you are exactly right, Kari. I forgot them. Maybe we can include them at some point at the driver recognition program. Maybe Doug can elaborate and say that they are included at some point.

Sheldon said I was thinking that we could maybe have two separate ones. There are a lot of drivers and like you have been saying, we have for a second and third shift recognition. But we only have 6:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. recognition for reservationists.

Chair Fenley said that is a fantastic idea, Kari. I think that is something that is unique to our community, too. Because of Metro Mobility, where you have to book rides. I would say that we shouldn't do recognition without having at least one reservation recognition at the same time. Because they do play a vital role in getting us around.

Myhre said before we do the recognition thing, what is the qualifications in order to earn this award? When I won self-advocacy awards, I had to do certain things in my disability community to be honored. That is how they voted me and said I deserve this award. Then I went to Texas to get the ARC award. Just an example. What are the qualifications to fall under it?

Vice Chair Paulsen said Heidi, that would be for the committee or subcommittee to figure out.

Myhre said I wanted to bring it up for understanding. Not all reservations and not all drivers are up to what we talk about trying to clean up. At the same time there are some really good people out there that are doing fantastic work.

Vice Chair Paulsen said those are the ones I want to capture. The ones that are already doing the good work. So they can teach the ones that are not doing the good work. "Hey, if you do what I do you will get recognition from TAAC."

Chair Fenley said those are the details that we want to work out offline. I would view this as a work group.

Myhre said at least let us talk about this now. Then we will know what we are heading us into kind of like we at least have to have A,B, and C. and then we put a committee together and go from there. I don't want to commit myself to something I don't know what I am committing to.

Chair Fenley said the details of the criteria we do not have the time to discuss right now. that is a more kind of in the weeds discussion that I think a smaller group of us should have, I would like to have a staff member there as well because they are there every day with these operations with these drivers.

Yes, Heidi, it is a good point. I would view this as an ongoing work group that meets every few months. Or even a subcommittee that meets a few months. A driver subcommittee that meets every few months to really determine what drivers and what reservationists would fit into this. But initially, I think coming up with a criterion is very important, Heidi.

That will take some work. Do I have interest from folks? I don't think this would be tons of work. Maybe initially, sort of set up how this process unfolds. It would take some work. But after that, it would just be a matter of gathering stories from the community. And then deciding what drivers to recognize. I am happy to serve on this. I will send a note out to everybody, too. Regarding this as well.

I will get the ball rolling on this. I think it is something that is important to help out relationships between drivers, reservationists, the Met Council and the disability community.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

Ken Rodgers sent the TAAC committee an email update on the Blue Line

2. Green Line

This item was not presented.

3. Gold Line

This item was not presented.

4. Purple Line

This item was not presented. Darrell Paulsen will be serving in a different capacity on this committee starting in January.

Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group

Chair Fenley said the video is at least in its rough cut done. I don't know if it has had all of the accessibility features added to it. They do have a near finished product. I am willing to let anybody else add onto that if they want. I do know that the work group is doing a good job.

CHAIRS REPORT

This item was not presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Streasick said I have something in regard to Sam's question, earlier. I shot Sam an email to this effect. In case anyone else was wondering the same thing. When Metro Mobility makes any cuts related to fixed route with tractions. That will not impact our overall service area footprint. That would impact what falls into ADA service verses non-ADA service. So, her question was would any future cuts potentially remove my access to service? Since I am already non-ADA. The answer right now is "No."

Our overall service area is defined by state statute. And that won't change. So, what will change with fixed route is what qualifies as ADA service verses non-ADA service. Not which areas we serve overall.

Myhre said basing it on the pandemic. Do you know that just because there aren't any riders anymore?

Streasick said the temporary changes that were enacted due to pandemic ridership levels, Metro Mobility ignored. So, when we make changes just based on fixed route, we only do what looks like it is of long-term decisions as a retraction. We also ignore every year Metro Transit contracts in response to summer hours with school closures for example. We don't. Because we know that is just an every year transaction that we expanded the following season. So, when we retract, we only do so in what looks like it is going to be a long-term service adjustment by Metro Transit.

MEMBER COMMENT

Vice Chair Paulsen said I would like to address something. Heidi said that ridership was down. Was she talking about Metro Mobility? I just became aware for a little while that ridership is up on our buses since October. Eighteen percent. And it is up higher on our trains. I could have those numbers mixed up. But one was 18 percent and the other was 38 percent.

So, what that tells me is that we are slowly regaining some revenue. And we are slowly regaining our ridership. I hope that really continues to happen and I hope that includes new ridership that will be substantial overall and help the system for a long time. I haven't dug too deep into it, but I did see the news report on Channel 5 a few weeks ago.

Sheldon said last month I remember hearing that there is an app that we can download or something to make our rides or something. I misunderstood; I think.

Chair Fenley said yes, there is an app that I think was rolled out a number of months ago. I don't think that is for booking Metro Mobility rides. But I think that I could be wrong. We can take it offline and get your answer.

Streasick said that is another 10 second answer. That app is for booking the premium on demand ride through Airport Taxi. If you ever use the subsidized taxi service. You can set up and book rides online with the taxi company.

For Metro Mobility, you can book rides online, but that is not new. It has been in place for some time. So the newer addition is for the Airport Taxi app. But I can help you get set up for Metro Mobility.

Myhre said is there ever going to be, I know we got the phone calls, and we get emails. Is there ever going to be a text sent to a phone where you can get a text knowing when they are coming? Instead of a voicemail to your phone?

Vice Chair Paulsen said that already does happen. Some of us can opt for a text message. Some of us opt for a phone message. I do have friends and family members that do the text option. So that already does happen.

Myhre said so where do you go? Do you go to the website to get it?

Vice Chair Paulsen said I can take you offline and show you.

Chair Fenley said thank you, Heidi. We will make sure to get that figured out on how to get your text.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:32 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary