

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

December 13, 2021

LOCATION: Due to COVID-19 this meeting was held electronically.

Committee Members Present: Deb Barber, Reva Chamblis, Molly Cummings, Christopher Ferguson, Kris Fredson, Francisco Gonzalez, Phillip Sterner, Raymond Zeran

Committee Members Absent:

TAAC Liaison Present: David Fenley

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was present when Chair Barber called the regular meeting of the Council's Transportation Committee to order at 4:00p.m. on Monday, December 13, 2021.

AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Sterner, seconded by Zeran to approve the minutes of the November 22, 2021 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

Aye: 6 Barber, Cummings, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran

Nay: 0

Absent: 2 Chamblis, Ferguson

TAAC REPORT

Fenley stated that it wasn't official from Chair Zelle yet, but the 2022 appointments to TAAC are confirmed and names should be released publicly by the end of this month – thanks to Council members Sterner and Wulff for allowing Fenley to participate in the appointment process. At the December meeting, members discussed the Travel Behavioral Inventory (TBI) survey with staff. Results from the last survey, showed that 10% of respondents had a disability and the survey team wanted to get a little more detailed information on those riders. Discussions led to cultural corrections on the language being used and two additional questions to be incorporated into the next survey. 2022 is the 30th year since TAAC was formed and members decided to have some sort of celebration; a workgroup was formed and will meet early next week to decide on the details. TAAC members proposed to reinstate the recognition of operator as it has done in the past. Fenley will reach out to staff to see how to restart that effort.

Cummings asked that Fenley keep Council members informed on the 30 year celebration.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Charles Carlson reported:

TBI Survey

The survey is underway and have received over 6500 household's completed survey well on the way to exceed the goal of 7500 households. When the survey launched in June, staff shared strategies to deploy to reach BIPOC, Hispanic and

low income residents who are underrepresented to date. Staff will be sending a memo to Council members that outlines the progress of those efforts but want to highlight the success with TAP customers participating through text and email – expect to get nearly 800 completed surveys from this outreach.

Transportation Economic Development Program

This program is administered by MnDOT and distributes about \$20M of trunk highway funds, with a maximum of \$5M per project. MnDOT expected to announce the awards for 2021 funding this week. The program provides competitive funding awards to construction projects on state highways that provide measurable economic benefits.

MVST

Year to date receipts total \$332.5M, which is \$20.4M above forecast.

President Biden’s Continuing Resolution

On December 3rd, President Biden signed a continuing resolution that extended government funding FY2021 levels until February 2022, that will have the effect of pushing Congress’s work more than halfway through the federal fiscal year of 2022.

Snowstorm Impact on Operations

Metro Mobility advised customers of the impending storm through the website, social media, and rider alerts. The messaging advises customers to cancel discretionary trips. Friday on-time performance (arrival within 30-minute pick-up window) took a significant hit particularly in the East zone with 79% compliance. The West zone was at 92% on-time and South zone was at 90%. OTP is typically in the upper 90s. Although performed rides on Friday was only 14% below the previous Friday, cancellation prior to the 10th were 23% higher than the previous Friday and same day cancellations were 54% higher than the previous Friday.

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

Purple Line

The Federal Transit Administration has approved the METRO Purple Line to move into the Project Development phase of the FTA’s New Starts Program. The Purple Line is a 15-mile Bus Rapid Transit Line that is set to operate between downtown St. Paul and White Bear Lake starting in 2026. Now that the project has entered the Project Development phase, the Metropolitan Council takes over project leadership from Ramsey County. Thank you to our partners at Ramsey County for their help in getting the project to this point. Congratulations to Craig Lamothe and his team on this important step.

COVID

To date there have been 680 cases at Metro Transit, with 59 cases since last meeting. The month of November ended with 87 cases in comparison to 137 cases in November 2020. 79% of Metro Transit employees have reported as fully vaccinated and since the start of the Council’s weekly testing requirement for unvaccinated employees there have been 70 positive cases.

Operator Hiring Update

The new service changes went into effect on Saturday, December 4th, the same day as the start of Orange Line service and these changes have put Metro Transit in a better position to deliver reliable service. As of this morning, Metro Transit is 15 operators below the ideal level. Preliminary ridership on the Orange Line on opening weekend was December 4th – 809, December 5th – 256 and December 6th – 655.

Snowstorm

Operations and Facilities staff prepared for and maintained bus and rail service during the first big snowstorm of the year this past Friday night. There was 6 total accidents and 36 stuck buses reported during the storm that dropped as much as 20" of snow. Transit Control Center and Rail Control Center staff managed and communicated out updates internally and to customers throughout the storm. Facilities staff stayed working during the storm and over the rest of the weekend to clean up facilities for customers.

Mass Transit Magazine's 40 Under 40

Metro Transit principal engineer Carrie Desmond was recently included on Mass Transit magazine's 40 Under 40 list. Since joining Metro Transit in 2018, Carrie has supported improvements to the Heywood Garage, managed design work for the new Minneapolis Bus Garage and been a leader in the transition to electric buses.

BUSINESS

Consent Items:

Motion was made by Sterner, seconded by Cummings and carried, to approve the following consent item:

Aye: 7 Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran
Nay: 0
Absent: 1 Ferguson

1. 2021-345: Signature Authority for MVTA Transportation Facility Projects

Motion: That the Metropolitan Council authorizes the Regional Administrator to execute a grant agreement with Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) for Transportation Facility Projects consisting of various facility modernizations and enhancement projects in the amount of \$550,000.

Non-Consent Items:

1. 2021-346: Distribution of \$20M of Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriate Act Federal Funding

Metropolitan Transportation Services Transportation Planning Manager Steve Peterson presented this item. Sterner asked if the money will help Anoka County pay the bill due to Metropolitan Council to which Peterson responded that it's at the recipient's discretion on how the funds will be used.

Motion by Cummings, seconded by Chamblis:

That the Metropolitan Council approve distribution of \$20M of Coronavirus Response Relief Supplemental Appropriation Act (CRRSAA) federal funding to the local governments using the state-aid formula as shown in the attached table.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection, Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as Consent to Council.

Aye: 7 Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran
Nay: 0
Absent: 1 Ferguson

2. 2021-347: Release of the 2022 Regional Solicitation and Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) for Transportation Projects

Metropolitan Transportation Services TAB Coordinator Elaine Koutsoukos presented this item. There were no questions or comments from Council members.

Motion by Fredson, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council concur with the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) action to approve the attached Regional Solicitation package, including the Highway Safety Improvement Program (HSIP) Solicitation for 2026-2027 funding (2024-2025 funding for Travel Demand Management and Unique projects) and to release the solicitation.

Motion carried.

Aye: 7 Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran

Nay: 0

Absent: 1 Ferguson

3. **2021-343:** Contract for Fuel Supply for the Northstar Commuter Rail Service

Metro Transit Commuter Rail Manager Jeremy Spilde presented this item. Zeran asked what would happen to the contract if the Northstar service is ended. Spilde responded the contract isn't a guarantee, so we would not be obligated to spend the total amount if the service ended. Cummings asked what factors might have led to only one bid. Spilde responded that Procurement sent an email to several vendors that were given the opportunity to bid and receiving only one response could be because we don't have a bulk fuel tank on site, so the fuel delivery has to happen at night when the trains are parked which requires the vendor to have a third shift employee.

Motion by Fredson, seconded by Cummings:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to award and execute contract 21P221 with Mansfield Oil Company of Gainesville, Inc. to supply diesel fuel for Northstar Commuter Rail in an amount not to exceed \$4,514,400.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection, Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as Consent to Council.

Aye: 8 Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran

Nay: 0

Absent: 0

4. **2021-352:** Southwest Light Rail Transit (Green Line Extension) Emergency Declaration for Repairs to Currie Maintenance Facility

Metro Transit SWLRT Project Director Jim Alexander presented this item. Ferguson asked if this is a case where this would be at the contractors cost and not ours. Alexander responded that the first order of business was to secure the building but now have brought in another consultant to help with the evaluation of those details, so it is still to be determined. Zeran asked if there could be potential litigation. Alexander answered that is not anticipated, as we have been working cooperatively with the City of Minneapolis but would be advising the Council if we were to head that direction.

Motion by Cummings, seconded by Chamblis:

That the Metropolitan Council ratify the Emergency Declaration for repairs to the Currie Maintenance Facility for the Southwest Light Rail Transit (SWLRT) project to Ames Construction in the amount not to exceed \$220,000.

Motion carried. Hearing no objection Chair Barber stated this item could proceed as Consent to Council.

Aye: 8 Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Sterner, Zeran
Nay: 0
Absent: 0

INFORMATION

1. Metro Mobility Update

Metropolitan Transportation Services Metro Mobility Senior Manager Christine Kuennen presented this item. Sterner asked if the service area in Rosemount/Inver Grove Heights will be shrinking. Kuennen responded it wouldn't be a reduction of service area but examining what is the ADA area versus non-ADA and ensuring the service hours roughly match Metro Transit's service but right now what we would be looking at for a service area would be expansion. Fredson asked what the current hourly rate is and if historically we have ever raised the hourly rate beyond the agreed upon contract amounts. Kuennen responded that the rate in the existing contracts is minimum starting rate of \$17.75 and that in 2016/2017 we made an adjustment to hourly rate and made it a requirement that the contractors applied that increase to the wages. Kuennen added that staff are exploring what the rate would need to be now to compete in the marketplace. Chamblis asked how the new iHail application was communicated out to customers. Kuennen answered that information about the launch of the application was put in the newsletter, sent to online subscribers, and updated on the website. Several Council members thanked Kuennen and staff for their work and creativity with service for healthcare workers and food service delivery during the pandemic.

2. Better Bus Stops Update

Metro Transit Senior Planner Berry Farrington and Principal Project Coordinator Paul Lamb presented this item. Gonzalez asked how this work can be imbedded into future projects the Council does to help decrease the needs for retrofitting, improvements, etc. Lamb responded that a discussion regarding the clear glass was had with the BRT group to include in shelter construction on future projects and was included in the most recent local route shelter procurement. Lamb added that the last the last two or three local route shelter contracts also discontinued the use of longer benches to allow people to wheel fully under the shelter. Sterner and Cummings thanked staff for their work and expressed their appreciation for the accessibility and art changes to shelters.

3. Development Trends Along Transit Report

Metro Transit Planner Amy Yoder presented this item. Sterner asked if improvements to TOD along the RedLine/Northstar would improve ridership or would increase ridership be needed for TOD to work. Yoder responded that answer probably goes beyond the TOD office and the scope of this report. Fredson pointed out how University Avenue and Snelling Avenue have drastically changed with the start of the Green Line & A Line. Chamblis asked if we will be looking at the job opportunity numbers along the BRT/LRT stations as it correlates with new development. Yoder responded that the Research Team in the Community Development division has presented on some of those numbers, but the TOD office could consider looking at this in the future.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 5:52p.m.

Becky Gorell
Recording Secretary