

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, November 3, 2021

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

Committee Members Absent: Ken Rodgers and Erik Henricksen

Committee Members Excused: Jeffrey Dains

Council Staff Present: Jason Tintes, Anj Olsen, Doug Cook, Leah Palmer, Michelle Fure, Sara Maaske, Christine Kuennen, Fadumo Mohamed, Lt Salah Ahmed, Andy Streasick, Leslie Kandaras, Guthrie Byard, Zehra Baris Gumus-Dawes 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 12:33 p.m. on Wednesday, November 3, 2021.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Jasmine, seconded by Murphy to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2021 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Police Work Group

Leslie Kandaras, Chief of Staff to the General Manager, Metro Transit, spoke to the TAAC committee. I am currently the staff coordinating the needs of this work group. I am joined with three other members of our staff that is coordinating this work. I want to have Michelle Fure, Lieutenant Salah Ahmed, and Leah Palmer introduce themselves as well.

Fure said I am the manager of public involvement for the Met Council. I have been working on this effort for quite a while. It has been my privilege to do this work. For my primary role so far has been to provide a communication and engagement lens to the working group activity. But also, I was the manager and contact for the Citizens League when they were doing their engagement work on this topic. So, I can answer questions about their work or anything else related to that.

Ahmed said I am an active Lieutenant with the Metro Transit Police Department. Currently assigned to the Patrol Division. I am also part of the work group, and I am happy to be here today.

Palmer said I am also with the Metro Transit Police Department. My primary work is in policy analysis and research and some special projects such as this work group. I am very happy to be here.

Kandaras said our purpose here today is really to give you a brief overview of what this work group is and what they are working on. Then we are hoping to use the bulk of our time to present to you on both your perspectives on transit safety and security. Topics you want to make sure are coming in front of the work group or are under consideration in front of the work group. But also, to get your sense of process. I will get into more of this in the presentation. But the work group has specifically said they are interested in hearing about transit

security from people with disabilities. As the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee, we really wanted to get your sense of how we can most effectively do that.

Next slide. Metro Transit Police 'Work Group Overview. Just to give you a brief overview. Back in August of this year, the Metropolitan Council formed the Metro Transit Police Work Group. This is really an extension of work that has been going on for over a year. In June of 2020, Chair Zelle committed publicly that the Met Council was going to review Metro Transit Police Department to really understand the current policies, practices and procedures, and look for opportunities to really strengthen the police department's work.

So the Council, as the oversight body of the police department, has really been working towards that goal for over a year now. As Michelle mentioned a few minutes ago, the first phase of this work is the Citizens League led community work. And right now, the Police Work Group is working to build upon that as they fulfill their charge. and the Council, and most specifically the review was to develop a set of recommended transit security outcomes with potential strategies on those outcomes. And to report back to the full Council with their recommendations by February 28, 2022. As part of the recommendations, they also must identify the data that they have expressed the Police Department to provide for them. We know providing that degree publicly is really critical to accountability and transparency. So that is a high-level statement of what this is meant to review.

Before I go any further, I want to check with Michelle to see if she wants to say a few more words about the phase that happened before this. The Citizens League work. That was a really extensive process for that portion.

Fure said I can point you to the detailed report that the Citizens League provided. They took a really intentionally inclusive process for engaging the community where they had a community committee of people who represented a number of different locations, age groups, ethnicity, identities. That included some people who are living with disabilities in their work. So, they used that team to really shape the engagement and make sure that the engagement process was as comprehensive and inclusive as possible.

Certainly, any time you are doing a broad engagement effort during a global pandemic, there is some difficulty in reaching folks. But they have a positive response rate to the survey and some of the more in person outreach that they did. Some of the key findings are reflected in the structure of the Police Work Group and the guidance that the work group is providing for that work. Namely they want a better security presence on the system. They want to see some additional response to some of the quality of transit ideas around reliability of transit, lighting. Just a more vibrant ridership base on regular route transit in particular. Because there certainly is more decrease in ridership currently and there has been for some time. Having more people in the system is really going to improve that. They also expressed that the security presence because there was some clear guidance from community members that they don't necessarily feel that there needs to be more police officers in the system. But there does need to be someone with authority and can help solve problems and deescalate problems that may be in the system. Those came through the report as well. Those were pretty consistent across the board. A lot of the folks that participated in the process said these things. Those are a high level of pieces.

We also did some front line employee engagement. So bus drivers, transit operators from rail and people that work on the system in terms of mechanics and station maintenance, etc. They also wanted to see a stronger security presence on the system, making sure that the customer needs are being addressed in this regard. So this is really a supplement to what the Citizens League did. But it echoed a lot of the things that came through there. As I said, I would be happy to share the report with you if you haven't had the opportunity to see it. And I can answer any questions.

Kandaras said next slide. Work Group Charge. So building off of what Michelle shared. Hopefully I can do some context of the starting point from where this work group is heading. The work group started meeting back in late August. Right as the Citizens League was wrapping up. When the Council formed the work group, part of the charge to the work group was to do and consider these things that you are seeing on the slide. So, the work group has been charged with ensuring recommendations and security for riders and employees. They have been charged with acknowledging the history of systemic racism and policing. They are charged with identifying and reviewing opportunities and to strengthen policies and procedures data practices. They have been given specific topics to dig into. Part that come up to the Citizens League work and through other work at the Council and what Council members are doing themselves in their districts. Some of the topics the work group is discussing the use of force, how the code of conduct is enforced, interaction with youth, the general

MTPD oversight and governance, officer training and disaggregated data needs. As Michelle talked about, the Citizens League engagement is considered a key input into this work. But at the same time, the Council recognizes other opportunities to coordinate other stakeholders and the real foundation into this work. But at the same time, the Council has other opportunities to create additional stakeholders' data. Best practices into the work group that work as well as they did and prepare themselves into developing recommendations.

That gives you a sense of the shape of the work group's efforts as they move forward through their process. This Friday, they are going to meet for what I believe is the sixth time. And they are basically meeting every other week until the end of February when their recommendations are released to the full Council.

Next slide. Discussion: TAAC Member Perspectives. This is our final slide. As I mentioned, we were hoping to use this time to listen to you to hear your perspectives as a member of the TAAC on your thoughts and your personal experiences or your ideas related to transit safety and security. The four of us are here to listen and to take notes and take this back to the work group to make sure they have your thoughts and your ideas as part of their work. Then as I mentioned at the beginning, if there are opportunities for us to additionally plug your group in. We are interested in those process ideas as well. Chair Chamblis, a Council member leading the work group, has expressed that we can potentially build in TAAC members to a future meeting of the work group if they are interested in having the work done. There may be other ways that we can make sure we feel connected to this work as well. So, with that we are here to listen to and learn from your committee.

Chair Fenley said thank you. I think we would be interested in any overlap of our two groups.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I was really excited about this topic. About the work that you guys are doing, in the by pop community or in the equity community. I know you guys are asking for committee member's input. I am a little taken back by the fact that TAAC has been around since probably the 70's or 80's rather. We always seem to be at the tail end of the project. You guys got four months to go yet. But you had all these other committee meetings and these stakeholder input. But now you are coming to TAAC, and you are saying "Please give us your input and insights as far as travelers with disabilities in the communities.

There are many of us on this committee that share many positive experiences and some pretty dangerous experiences too. Personally, I have been maced on the bus twice. I was locked into my chair in a space that I couldn't get out of. Even if I wanted to get out of the bus. Because the bus driver was so scared about what was going on. He wasn't for sure if I was unstrapped or not. I like the fact that you guys are talking about lighting and other things like that because lighting does give the perception of safety. And if we light some of our really dark areas. Sometimes, those things that happen in the dark won't happen in the dark anymore. They will find a different place to make them happen. or those things will come to the light, and we will be able to see who those perpetrators are. So lighting is a very crucial piece of successful transit in our region.

I am glad that you guys are talking about that. But more importantly, do you have officers similar to the ambassador program that Chair Zelle was looking at? Do you guys have officers that are appropriately engaging folks with mental health issues? And folks with different disabilities. Not just somebody in a wheelchair. Not just somebody with a mental health issue. But somebody who has multiple disabilities. And maybe are triggered by a number of things. Maybe they are triggered by the sounds or authority on the bus. Do you guys have ways of deescalating that before the cops are actually called and a uniformed officer is dispensed?

I personally want to be a part of this process going forward. I think four months is not enough time to get everything on the table and to try to work out some of those things. So the earlier you can engage us in the future, the better off we will be. I personally like what you are doing so far. I hope that you guys would use the embedded social worker or the embedded ILS workers or the embedded ARMHS workers into the process. Because they can tell you what some of those problems are going to be before they happen so you can diffuse those things before they happen and not be reactive after they happen.

Ahmed said I just want to say we are really training our officers to use de-escalation as our first thing when we deal with any encounters. So officers are trained in their academy. We also have policies that we have to review and acknowledge that talks about de-escalation that needs to be taken when dealing with people with mental illness and anybody who is having difficulties dealing with the police at that time. So, we try our best to really see what we can do when we are not able to do de-escalation, we try to reach out to others in the police force to come and assist us. So, our training is up there, and we are trying to do what can to make things much better for everybody?

Palmer said in the Training Academy that new officers go through, there are different components that are taught where we would bring in someone who teaches about autism and people who can teach about mental health crisis and try to be cognizant about all the different types of riders and the people that officers may come in contact with as well. The Training Academy is always a growing, changing, thing as we try to address individuals' needs and things like that as they come up. But it is part of what they go over too.

Chair Fenley said I am sure that you know this but deaf and hard of hearing is a big one as well in terms of awareness for officers on the trains and buses and stops too.

You mentioned addressing systemic racism. I think that is vitally important. I also think that for us, as disability advocates, to address ableism. I think we can't do that in a vacuum. I think that we have to be pushing on systemic racism as well. Otherwise, we will not achieve what we want to achieve without pushing on the factors that oppressed folks of color for centuries in this country. They are the same factors that folks with disabilities and stereotypes all come from similar parts of the human condition. So, I think it is important to say that those things don't operate in a vacuum. There are plenty of folks of color who have disabilities too.

Myhre said there was a lady on the train that had emotional issues. She was screaming and yelling. She took the Green Line and I just happened to take the same train. Do you do any training on sensitivity? I am a person with a mental illness, but you still treat me as a human being. We need to make sure that we are safe, and we are O.K. but if someone calls the police, is that person going to be O.K.?

Have you been watching or know anything about what the Capitol has been doing? Because the Autism Society has made a big deal about safety at the bus stops and, on the trains, and have an app. There are a lot of things about mental illness and a lot of things about what happened at the Capitol too. So you might want to be looking at their stuff and all of the rules and regulations that they put into place at those hearings.

The other thing is how do you train bus drivers that have this happen? Never have had it on the train but mostly on the bus. Where a drunk or somebody likes a girl, which I am, gets in your face. I know how to protect myself to a certain point. But have you had any training where, even a man, gets in your face? Luckily, there were people on the bus to help me. But can the bus driver help? Have they done training for when somebody gets too friendly? I had to push him away.

Just because I am a person with a disability, I have a crutch. I ride the bus in the morning, afternoon and evening. I have seen when cops come in and take a homeless person off of the bus. Because they shouldn't be riding it anymore. Are you still looking at this for safety reasons? I have seen cops on the train checking to see if people are paying their fares.

Kandaras said you raised some questions that I am not an expert on, like the train. But you are raising topics that I definitely want to bring back to the work group for discussion. The role of the bus operator or the train operator. We have a Lieutenant here who can address the questions that you raised. You are bringing up a really good point that other transit personnel can be part of making a safer, more welcoming environment. You gave us a lot to look into. Thank you.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I don't know if my comment should fit in this spot. But as long as we have the Lieutenant from Metro Transit Police Department. I did want to bring up one thing that I noticed at the Mall of America Transit Center. In the transit center, particularly where the family restroom is. That door is locked. So they don't unlock the door. They said the reason they locked the door is because they don't want homeless people and vagrants sleeping in there. I suggested that they keep that door open because it has a nice new shiny sign there that said: "This door must remain open during business hours." So I suggested that they keep that door open for these very reasons.

He then decided to tell me the reason they lock it is because they don't want homeless people or drug addicts in the bathroom. So I proceeded to tell them: "You don't know if I am a drug addict or not or a homeless person or not. And I still need to use the restroom. So you need to open the restroom."

He opened the restroom. Left it open. It was open all night as far as I could tell. The next day I went back. At a different time. It was locked again. I proceeded not to say anything. Because I didn't want to spend the next hour and a half tracking down an officer to make them open it again. And when I did talk to the police officer, they said the reason they couldn't keep it open was that they didn't have keys to it. Only somebody else had keys to it. So then they had to send somebody else out to open it. And here is one of the suggestions that I will say. I hope Ken is in this meeting too.

We have had some of the similar concerns at the airport with folks probably using the lactation rooms or the nursing mother rooms when they are not supposed to. So what we have done is put a camera there. So there is a buzzer when somebody wants to this restroom. They push the buzzer. The camera immediately pops up so the dispatch can immediately see that and then they can open that door remotely. I believe they can do it currently at the transit center restroom. But they may not be trained on how to do it.

Staff said this was a transit police department issue not a transit issue.

Kandaras said I am not familiar with what Darrell was saying. But we can follow up with our facilities staff as well. If the Lieutenant has some information on what is going on at the Mall of America, he is welcome to address this situation. Or we can take it back to facilities to see what is going on.

Lieutenant Ahmed said that I will follow up to see if this is our issue or if the Mall of America is doing it. So I will do an immediate inquiry to see what is going on at the station at the Mall of America.

Vice Chair Paulsen said the Mall of America staff didn't even have a key to the restroom. They had to wait until somebody else brought the key.

Myhre said to answer Darrell's question, when you go back to the Mall of America and talk to the policeman, I see why they are locking it because I have seen homeless people in the bathroom in the older stations. I have had to report drug stuff. I didn't know if it was diabetes or drugs or what. They said thank you. I have seen homeless brush their teeth and get dressed in there. I can see why they are doing it. But at the same time, I have a good point too.

Vice Chair Paulsen said just for clarification, it is just right to the Metro Mobility drop off. So it is next to the actual drop off where Metro Mobility customers would be sitting and waiting for their bus.

Fuglie said just a quick question. How far does it have to escalate before a passenger can call the Metro Transit Police? I had an issue the other day and it was between a passenger who was upset with the driver because it was taking him too long to secure me down to the bus. But it wasn't. He was in a hurry, and he kept going on and on and the bus driver kept apologizing to me. Because he kept calling me names. And so, I told the driver not to even argue with him anymore. The driver kept an eye on me while traveling because he was just going on and on. So, how far does this go before I can call the police department?

Palmer said first of all, I am sorry that happened. That is uncalled for in so many different ways. The minute that you feel unsafe and the minute you feel uncomfortable even, go ahead and call. It doesn't hurt anything. The police officer and safety folks are there to help you. And help the operator in case it got escalated. It seemed that it didn't get worse. The minute you feel something could happen, it doesn't have to happen. It doesn't have to get physical or something like that. If you feel uncomfortable, give us a call.

Kandaras said I just wanted to say something as well. We have pretty good signage on our vehicles. But in addition to calling the police, whenever you are at a point where you feel unsafe. Sometimes you feel like you are in a small space you can text it to the control center so they can dispatch the police if needed. That is another resource as well.

Chair Fenley said Leslie, can you remind us if this work group is ongoing or is it going to wrap up sometime in the future?

Kandaras said the way the business item was structured, when the Council created the group back in August. Is that it would sunset eventually when its recommendations were complete and sent to the full council in February. Now that being said, on one level, the work will never be done. Each of the Metropolitan Council is exercising their authority for the police department and Metro Transit generally, so even when the work group hits that milestone, the committee's recommendations it starts us on a new chapter. It doesn't end the conversation. I think the actual nuts and bolts of what that process looks like, the group formulates those recommendations and submits them to the Council. I think there will be opportunities. That will happen in a public space. There will be opportunities along the way for people to follow and weigh in. It is hard to speak exactly on what will be in the moment. Certainly, that is the spirit in the moment.

Myhre said are they going to come back later on?

Chair Fenley said they mentioned early on that they would like some overlap between these two groups. I know that their work isn't going to go on for that much longer. But still, I think we had an interest from some TAAC members about some overlap participation in the workgroup and it sounds like that was welcome. You

said Council Member Chamblis said that they were interested in that as well. So there will be overlap, again, this conversation will never end. But I want to make sure that folks who don't have access to the chat, Andy Streasick reminded folks that you don't have to physically call in to the Metro Transit Police. You can text them and interact via text. This is something that has been going on for quite a few years now. I think it has been successful. But the number is 612-900-0411.

2. Priority Seating Video Update

Anj Olsen, Marketing Development Specialist, spoke to the TAAC committee. I was approached by Customer Relations in establishing a public seating campaign, educating the public and operators on priority seating and who gets that.

Next slide. So Far: Earlier this year, we shot some video with some help from our TAAC members. You should be using priority seating. This video will be split out into customer facing video and into new driver training. It was pushed back to late October. It is now pushed back to early December. And then regular driver training will take place in January 2022. So this is for the updates and things like that. So segments that were filmed and captured will be added to our how to ride videos, which is being planned right now. So if we are teaching people how to ride the bus, we will actually include elements of priority seating and making room for those who actually need it. segments will be used for How to Ride videos in the new future.

Next slide. Upcoming (Late December/early January and beyond). So upcoming with this campaign is larger than just video. So we are moving forward and placing ads on the Blue Line and Green Line station monitors. And downtowns will be adding them on the BRT Pylons (A, C and Orange Line), the Orange Line will be launching on December 4. We will be doing a social media campaign promoting the video. We will have bus side advertising on five buses. Reminding people that priority seating is for those that need it. Interior cards on all buses. Posters in all garages for operators. A reminder that advertising/advertorials in Access Press and other supportive publications. Adding priority seating information in future campaigns. As the aforementioned on how to ride the bus and how to ride the train. Adding the previously shot videos as well. And then recently, we also added the symbol for disabled parking will be added to a hard to remove cling on all the priority seating on light rail trains. We switched over from cloth to plastic seats. This will serve as a reminder of who should have priority for the seating.

Next slide. How will we monitor the campaign's success? We will be monitoring the social media pages regarding interactions. We will also be monitoring Customer Relations and TIC (Transit Information Center) call-ins regarding priority seating and unable to board calls on a quarterly basis and an annual basis.

I can take any questions.

Chair Fenley said I know there are a lot of TAAC members that participated in this happening. A little bit of back story. We have been pushing for the proper usage of priority seating. I know that it is difficult. There are plenty of disabilities that are non-apparent. But still, we would like to have this space open for folks with disabilities. This was just one of the recommendations that the Metropolitan Council and Metro Transit picked up on and are rolling with.

Olsen said I worked with Doug Cook, who worked in outreach, and he helped me connect with TAAC members who served to evaluate the script. Who served as models in the videos as well as it is people in the communities who are serving and demonstrating how it should be used? So I wanted to say I have a heart felt thank you for those who participated. We couldn't have done this without you. So, thank you.

Chair Fenley said it is happening. It is a direct result of this committee' work. We do appreciate the support from you, Anj, and your colleagues at Metro Transit. Do any TAAC members have questions?

Myhre said I do like the new seats on the trains. I thought they were awesome. They are easy to clean and get the smells out of there. I don't know if winter is going to be a problem because people put their feet on the seats with wet shoes. We will have to see how that works. Thank you for what you are doing.

Olsen said switching over to the plastic seats makes it easier to wipe them down.

Jasmine said I wanted to thank you guys for being so great and helping us when we were doing this. I have a comment in the process. I am anxious to see it. I can't wait till I am hoping to see it. my comment was afterward we were sent release forms.

Olsen said that was my error.

Jasmine said in the future, if you guys could remember to bring them with you when we are doing it and we can get whatever assistance everybody needs for signing those.

Olsen said that was completely my human error when that happened.

Jasmine said I didn't know what process was for the decision.

Olsen said I appreciate your problem and you are absolutely right.

Jasmine said I am glad it went smoothly, and I am glad that you had the people to do this with. It was much needed and overdue. I am excited to see what the outcome will be.

Chair Fenley said I am looking forward to seeing our TAAC models in this video. Members on this committee will gladly share whatever is produced through their networks as well. I know that a lot of us represent organizations so we can help spread this information around as well. So once you have final stuff, definitely share it with us.

Olsen said I just saw a draft of it today. They were just creating some edits that needed to happen before we are ready to release it.

Myhre said can we also do it in different languages? Because I have seen so many people from different cultures sit in the area that is for the disabled. Please hire people who know how to speak the language.

Olsen said that is the next step. We place a lot of our videos on UTube. It has settings that automatically translate into other languages by closed captioning.

Myhre said also the other people that ride the train. Make them top priority too because people who come home from work sit there too.

Jasmine said there wasn't a ton of talking. It was mostly action.

Olsen said we added voice overs afterward. So there is narrative that happens. It has been edited into the video.

Jasmine said and the audio description that happens will be in there.

Olsen said correct.

Chair Fenley said anytime you do auto captions, make sure to go in there and double check them because they are not 100 percent.

Olsen said we also hired a service that does other translations. When we translate materials, we tend to translate them into Spanish, Somalian and Hmong.

3. Metro Transit Branding

Anj Olsen, Marketing Development Specialist, spoke to the TAAC committee. I was Asked to give a small presentation on how our metro systems are named. We have light rail; we have Bus Rapid Transit systems. You may know some of them like the Blue Line, Green Line or our trains. We have the A-Line, the C-Line and the upcoming Orange Line. Those have a process on how they are being named. So this is a little introduction on how that takes place. So let's go ahead and get started.

I mentioned before the the Metro Blue Line and Metro Green Line. If you are not familiar with those already, the Metro Blue Line travels between the Mall of America, the airport and into downtown Minneapolis.

The Green Line travels between the Union Depot in downtown Saint Paul, the University of Minnesota and downtown Minneapolis.

Next slide. The Arterial Bus Rapid Transit system, also known as A BRT, uses letter designations. The letter designations for these routes tells us that they travel in residential communities without using freeways. We already have the A-Line and C-Line service. Then we have the D-Line. They will be launching the next year in December. We also have the B-Line, with the launching expected in 2023. The E Line launching in 2025. The F-Line is still being determined.

The A-Line travels along Snelling Avenue, then turns onto Ford Parkway, which then becomes 46th Street. That stays on a residential avenue. Which is why it is given letters.

Next slide. We still have Arterial Bus Rapid Transit. These have a color designation. You have the Metro Red Line; it goes from the Mall of America down to Apple Valley. We have the upcoming Orange Line., which will travel from Downtown Minneapolis to Burnsville. Then we have the Purple Line, which is still in talks being negotiated on where that will travel. But all three of these will travel on highways. So that is why they get the colored designations.

Next slide. There are videos on our UTube Channel on Metro Routes, Current and upcoming Metro Routes, which may be informative, and the map of the future and current Metro Routes, which may be informative. If this is sent out, using whatever adaptive materials, to be used for hearing or understanding how those are being set put on references to be used for hearing or understanding how they will be represented. Being in Marketing, I do not have a say in how these are named.

I am open for questions.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I believe Sam was the one who brought it to our attention last month or the month before. She wanted to know a little bit more about it. I am impressed how you took this from what you are hearing from our membership, and you are actually putting it on the agenda for the next month. I would like to see in the future how you came up with the names and came back to us in the future. Arterial means you are going from a side street to a highway, right?

Olsen said Arterial is just the mode of bus. So we know that regular bus service has local and express. And Arterial has limited stops. So, when the A-Line took over, the stops were a little bit more spread out. But we were able to offer service that was much faster. Because it wasn't stopping on every block. That is what gets designated with the letters. As long as it doesn't follow on the freeways or the highways.

Thorsen said I was wondering about the lettering, the sequencing of letters. I know in terms of I would expect that it would be starting A would be the first one. But it B is not the second one. Is there any kind of sequencing? I thought about sequencing so that it is not about an angle exactly. The other thing that comes to mind is the number of buses. Are numbers reserved, or as new bus numbers are added, is the sequencing because when you have got somebody with thought process issues, are you able to explain the gaps? It can help bring a more unified. I realize you are not the sole decider.

Olsen said the numbers I can't give an answer for because I don't know. I wasn't prepared to answer for that. The lettered designations we encountered delays on the B-Line. So instead of holding up everything, we just went ahead and did the other lines. And we will activate the B-Line when it is that time.

Thorsen said is that something that in the discussion is. In ADA we have certain dimensions or specifications. Is that part of the questions that are triggered?

Olsen said B, for the lettering. If everything goes smoothly, it would be A,B,C,D,E. as our brains would associate. The B-Line was an exception to the rule.

Thorsen said it helps to understand.

Olsen said so after the E-Line comes the F-Line. And then G, H, I. and so on.

Myhre said to go back to what Patty was saying about the topic we just had. We had this discussion yesterday. Someone said they wanted to go to Walmart in West Saint Paul and all they saw was the 68 and they didn't see the letter on the side. So do you do any training on all those letters? You gave a good example that I can

think of. As Darrell was saying, one letter has more stops. And another letter has less. So we can teach people with disabilities what all these different letters mean. We need a way of distinguishing them. We know the 68C goes one way. Things go a different direction determined by letters and numbers.

Olsen said so you are talking branches. So the 68C as you mentioned before. So that part I am not prepared to answer. I don't have that information for the branches. I was prepared to talk about the Bus Rapid Transit systems.

Myhre said when we get on the trains, we have to know certain things if we want to do certain things. We familiarize ourselves with certain things like certain stops. Blind people have their techniques. The people with processing issues have techniques. The people in different kinds of wheelchairs also have their techniques. Everybody has their techniques on how they deal with getting where they need to go. Are there any tips on the trains like how we do with the buses to get where we need to go? I understand that if I get off at a certain stop, then I can get over to that other train or other bus.

We do it for the city buses, but the trains are a little bit different sometimes. We have to rely on being on the train and watching the screen, if you can read the screen. Then you have to know how many stops. Everyone has a technique.

Olsen said so, on trains, we know that there are overhead readers that announce the next station. But there are annunciators that announce the next stop. We can't control the volume of people speaking on the trains, obviously. So the challenge is if there is other technology or other things. That is something to be looked into. Our Metro maps are being developed all the time and updated to show connectivity.

If you take the Blue Line, you know that the Blue Line connects to the A-Line at the 46th Street station. Which in turn connects to the Green Line, eventually, if you take it. It is just understanding the connectivity and the maps. It tends to help with that.

Our TIC office and the professionals help a lot with that understanding what connects. So if someone is getting off at Lake Street, on Highway 35. They are taking the Orange Line in December. What routes are being connected there? And how can they move from point A to point B?

Myhre said do you think we need to sit down and talk about it? For someone who can't read maps very well but can sometimes understand communication and objects and shapes. Whatever you can get. We could bring in a group of people and talk about this. This can open up so much more independence by connecting not just the buses, but the trains too. So I think it should be talked about.

Olsen said I wonder if that might be an outreach opportunity.

Myhre said I think that would be great. If TAAC could bring or you could send out this, the community could speak to you about what they think, like and love. You would get all your opinions so you can figure it out.

Olsen said I work in Marketing. My job is communication and advertising.

Myhre said that is what you would do. You would get the people out there and whoever's job it is to. You market it and then you get their attention to understand how that all works. It goes hand in hand with my question.

Chair Fenley said I think I know where you are headed with this. We can have a conversation offline about educating the community. I think that that is what your desire is.

Myhre said my desire is you can get on a train and a bus and not have a lot of confusion. And you know how to do it with the marketing, the educational videos, all this that we are talking about today. It is all great ideas. How do we do it so everybody can enjoy both sides of it? That would be my dream and hope for today.

Chair Fenley said I do know, from what I understand, that the desire for some of this naming convention did come from local elected officials, I think, county commissioners. I think that drove some of the naming. If this is not correct, please tell me Anj.

Olsen said it was mentioned that there were some political reasons behind things. But they were leaving it rather vague. I have a note in the chat from Michelle Fure that this is correct.

4. Scenario Planning Outreach – Advisory Committees

Chair Fenley said there was an email sent out a few weeks ago to TAAC members requesting potential input and I figured that we might have some time on the agenda at the very next meeting, this meeting. So I figured I might have them come and make the formal ask to TAAC members and give us a little background and explain what exactly is being asked. So, take it away Sara.

Sara Maaske, Senior Communications Consultant, spoke to the TAAC committee. I am going to ask Michelle to kick us off.

Michelle Fure, Manager of Public Involvement, spoke to the TAAC committee. We have a great opportunity today to talk to you about the very beginning of the long-range regional planning effort. To a lot of the points that were made earlier today. It is better to engage early, and make sure that we are getting people involved in a very preliminary level. So they can have more influence over the project. That is why we are really here today. I just want to give you a quick, one minute summary of what the regional plan is. And then Sara and Baris can spend some time talking about what we are hoping to engage you all on moving forward.

So the Long Range Regional Plan currently called it's the one that is currently in place is the 2040 Plan and it is Thrive MSP 2040. It includes a lot of different guidance and policies around the development in the region that is the, not the most important thing, necessarily, but it is one of the unique responsibilities the Metropolitan Council has is to create this regional plan every 10 years following the census and related predictions of what the population will look like in the region 30 years into the future.

The next regional plan will be for 2050. We are just now receiving the census numbers and getting the process of engaging and trying to think about all of the critical issues and challenges that we are going to be facing in the region over the next 30 years. And as part of that process, we really want to engage our key partners and policymakers in this process to make sure that we are hearing from you and understanding the trends and expectations that you see in this region that we need to make sure they are included in the policy that the regional plan that oversees. Among the topics are transportation. So you have probably heard about the Transportation Policy Plan. That is part of this process.

The land use policies are right in the Thrive MSP 2040. So those are things that will be relevant to local government as they plan for their comprehensive visions for the next 30 years.

Water Resources Policy. Regional Parks Policy. And some other things about community designations and housing. So, that is the big picture stuff. It is quick, but ultimately, the policy that is set forth in this regional plan really affects all the different aspects of the work that the Council does. So, it is really important for us to be hearing from partners and stakeholders like you all. So I am going to turn it back over to Sara and she can introduce herself and let you know who Baris is. Since she is probably a new face for you. They are going to talk about our efforts coming up.

Maaske said my name is Sara Maaske and I am a Senior Communications Consultant. I not only support transportation services, but I am also supporting this council wide effort with the Regional Development Guide. This is one of our first steps. The first outreach opportunity is with the Regional Development Guide, which we are excited about. It is something we didn't get a chance to do in our last Regional Development Guide. We are looking forward to hearing input from all of our advisory committee members.

So what this is. It starts out with a thing called Scenario Planning. And what that does is it allows us to explore many possible futures and work through those to decide that the future we would like to see would be. So we are asking for from advisory committee members is to participate in a workshop that will help us identify some of the trends and the uncertainties that are facing the region.

So, internally, we have talked a lot about climate change, the pandemic, working from home, population as it is shifting across the region. Other issues that are significantly affecting the regional plans for transportation across the region. Housing, land use, parks and water quality, supply and treatments.

So these are just some of the high level things. We are really super excited to kick this off with the advisory committees. Rather than coming to each of the advisory committees alone, we want to bring all of the advisory committees together in a way that we can talk about the different impacts, trends and uncertainty together. And hear how things intersect across the different topics we are talking about.

So, what we are looking for is about four to five volunteers from each advisory committee. We are scheduling the first round of workshops in December. And a follow up round in January. We are still figuring out those dates. So we need to stay tuned for those. It is a 90-minute committee member time commitment for

presentation, structured conversation, and interactive exercises. So you will get a chance not only to do some big group conversations, but we will also be breaking out into small groups to have conversations about some of these transit uncertainties. We are planning to provide key information ahead of time so that you have information to review before you come to the workshops.

I am going to let Baris introduce herself. She is really the subject matter expert on scenario planning. So if you have any questions about that process, she is here to help answer those.

Zehra Baris Gumus Dawes said I everyone, I am Baris Dawes. I am the project manager for this scenario planning efforts at the Council. I am sorry, I cannot turn on my cameras. My Wi-Fi is crashing. We are really hoping to get your opinion on some of the key issues that impact the region, now and going forward.

So we are hoping that you can bring your unique perspectives and help us figure out what are some of the challenges that we are facing as a region, and how we can address some of those going forward in our Regional Developmental Guide. I am happy just to be here and sit through the session and take any questions that you might have. I just want to reiterate that the scenario planning piece is really a portion of our Regional Development Guide efforts. We are hoping that we can have a conversation about not just one future, but some of the other types of futures that might play into our future. I will leave it at that and if you have any questions for me, I will be here. Thank you.

Fure said one of the questions we have been getting when talking to the advisory committees is we are inviting participation because of who you are and what you represent as a member of the TAAC. But also, as people in our communities who are conscientious of how not only the environment, but how the policies around the region affect everyday life. We are not intending this to be any kind of necessary position from the TAAC. This is not a formal engagement in terms of, you have to bring all of the viewpoints of the TAAC members to this work. It is really individuals who bring the TAAC perspective. And bring your own personal perspectives on to this process. So don't think about it as you have to go back and get everybody's feedback. It is not that kind of engagement. It is really very much in line with the initial phases where we are just trying to get a sense of some of the possibilities moving forward. And there will be a number of additional opportunities. In the coming years, there will be two to three more years here before we have a finalized plan put together.

So we are getting to you in a very fundamental level but there will also be other opportunities. In fact, probably places where the TAAC as a whole can certainly weigh in on a handful of other things as well. So I just wanted to clarify that this is not intended to be a representative exercise per se as much as it is that we just wanted to get people with your unique perspectives at the table to have this conversation.

Chair Fenley said two quick questions. Then I will open it up to TAAC members. Who all is being invited, or who will be represented on this scenario planning outreach? And then it is high level or is there detail happening in these as well?

Maaske said I will answer the first part and then I will ask Baris to hop in on the second part. We are asking representatives from all of the advisory committees at the council. I do not have the list in front of me, but it represents all of the working areas that we have in the council. And we will also have the opportunity to have the few Council Members there. It should be really exciting in terms of being able to. We don't often get Council Members in the room with our advisory committee members. I think that will be a really rich conversation.

For the second half of that question, Baris, do you want to take that?

Dawes said I would say that the conversation that we will be having will be a fairly high-level conversation. It would specifically relate to the types of uncertainties and trends that shape the future. So we will be looking at something like "What happens when climate change is really serious or what about racial disparities that we are experiencing?"

Types of trends or uncertainties that we look into and what we want from you is to bring from your experiences when you look at the future. What do I see that is going to make its imprints on our future? What are some key issues that jump into your mind? What do you want to hear based on your own experiences and your own views on what the region looks like now? What it is likely to carry forward. And what dimensions of that particular future would be rising to the surface? Does that answer the question?

Chair Fenley said that does answer my question. Thank you.

I count 10 advisory committees on the Metropolitan Council's website. So it is going to be robust.

Vice Chair Paulsen said if I am not mistaken, these are similar to the 2020 Plan and then the 2030 Plan. Thrive is what you are talking about. Thrive 2030, right? The 2020 Plan was when you went out into the communities. You went out particularly in the community I was in that time. It was West Saint Paul or Dakota County. These are those discussions, right? Then you are required by state statute or by organizational statute to put a report out. That usually falls to the report to the legislature. Correct? Or am I wrong?

Fure said the meetings that I think you are talking about were the formal engagement at the very end of the process where we have to have full public meetings and public hearings where we put a full public comment report together. We will definitely be doing that again. At the end of this process, we are talking about now is way earlier during the process. It is much more probational in terms of getting really good information from people who have experience in the region. So this will build on that for sure.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I just remember looking at really extensive land maps and stuff like that in the community. Am I right in those discussions or am I off base a little bit?

Fure said that will be something that will be a part of the full plan when it is all completed. But that is not going to be adopted until 2024 or 2025. So we are at the very early stages here. We will be talking a much higher level. Much more about concepts like climate and population, and stuff like that. Hopefully, you won't have to look at any detailed flat maps. But there might be some data that we share with you.

Clark said I am wondering what will be available?

Maaske said this is going to be a virtual engagement. We have not yet talked about what platform we will be using. The Council has approved use of both Webex and Teams for our purposes. So, we are still talking about what that is going to look like.

Clark said that kind of this is available.

Maaske said correct. We will be doing this completely virtually.

Jasmine said if I could make sure that I understood. This will require 90 minutes of each of our time. And it would be a two-meeting thing for now?

Maaske said the first part of this, we will be given two options. So that we can get as many people in the room as we can. And that you have an opportunity to participate at a time that is good for you. We will be offering a second workshop following up to this workshop in January. Then again, that will have two instances so that people can choose which one works best for their schedules. We want to make sure that we are making it as easy as possible for people to participate and so, options are always good.

Chair Fenley said so one 90-minute chunk of time is what we are talking about?

Maaske said that is correct. From December.

Jasmine said I am interested.

Vice Chair Paulsen said I am interested as well

Chair Fenley said If people are interested in this, I will ask them to get back to me after this meeting. we can set the number of four to five of us who will participate in this.

Myhre said I think it is a great idea that they are doing, and I want to commend them. The new lady said it beautifully. The news has been talking about this recently in a couple of different ways. And how our future is going to look. And how they think about Covid19 too. Throw that in the mix. I don't know what the future holds on that. It is the exact same thing that Minnesota wants to work on. So we are on the right track. We want to make sure that we stay being involved in the disabled. Because I use the buses and trains and the parks in the community. I don't mind being a part of it. I don't have to be. I will give my opinion any way I can. I don't have to be on the committee. I know that Minnesota has been talking about it. Because of our winters. Keep that in mind.

Maaske said there will be many opportunities to participate in engagement opportunities for the Regional Development Guide. If you can't make it this time, that is alright.

Rowan said thank you for the presentation. I just wanted to get a little more detail. You will also be examining demographic changes and the increases in the senior population and locations of senior housing, especially as is proliferates in the suburban areas and that sort of thing?

Maaske said I don't have the technical expertise to answer that fully. But we do have a data team that is looking at all of that data in the background. So this is the qualitative piece that is getting information from our stakeholders. Our advisory committees are really key stakeholders to start off with. We will start expanding that out. And as I mentioned in my message that this will inform future engagements. Not only with your committee, but with people outside of your committee. We are really excited to kick that off here doing that internal look first.

Chair Fenley said are you calling it a work group or a task force?

Maaske said we are calling it workshops. So it is not a formal group. We want to keep the same people participating for a continuity standpoint. But we are not formalizing a group per se.

Chair Fenley said I will send out an email to all of you. To just give you a reminder of this. I will be asking if you want to participate. All you have to do is respond to that email saying if you want to participate. Then we will go from there.

Streasick said I have a quick question. Is the idea from this to bring only issues that the Council can take unilateral action upon? Or can we bring up things that might require legislative advocacy? And those types of things.

Maaske said I would say that this is an open and broad discussion. And we are not putting any limitations on that open and broad discussion. So we are not putting any boundaries based on laws or statutes. It is safe to say that we want all of your ideas. We want to hear all of your thoughts on transit uncertainties in the region.

Chair Fenley said from what I hear, whatever comes from this group, you will take into consideration. Even if it is mundane.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

Chair Fenley said we did get a pretty comprehensive update from the Blue Line last month.

2. Green Line

This item was not presented.

3. Gold Line

Vice Chair Paulsen said the Gold Line was mentioned in the presidential transportation plan overall as the model BRT project for the country. It is in 90 percent completion getting ready for construction. So they will be doing some utility work or have already done some utility work.

4. Purple Line

Vice Chair Paulsen said the Purple Line did get their color designation that was approved by the feds.

These are two of the eight lines that the governor has in his transportation plans.

Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group

This was presented as an agenda item.

CHAIRS REPORT

Chair Fenley said I don't have anything to present today.

MEMBER COMMENT

Vice Chair Paulsen said I wanted to draw your attention back to my comment that I made relating to that Mall of America Transit Family Bathroom. And the fact that I will be going out there on a more regular basis to make sure that that transit facility gets used properly and all of the facilities that we put there get the same type of treatment as any other facility. Because I think it is ridiculous to have a very beautiful bathroom center stage and then not be able to use it for whatever reasons the police want to say for not using it. I think it is a copout. I think it is a waste of space. If they didn't want to maintain it, they shouldn't have put it there. So the fact that it is there, they have to figure out a way to maintain it. I hope we do something about it.

Myhre said. I have a member comment and I don't know who I talk to. But there hasn't been a clear thing on Metro Mobility about the seating order. Because of Covid, they blocked off the two seats in the front. And now, every vehicle that I have been in, mostly buses, some drivers are saying that you can't sit behind the driver, but there is no sign saying you can't sit there. For a while, you were blocking it off. Certain vehicles have limited seats, so I don't know how it works. But at one point, we were all following the same rules and ideas and I know the city bus wants us to wear a mask. I don't know if it is the same with Metro Mobility. I will wait until the end of the year and then I don't know who decides if we have to keep wearing them. How about the seating thing? By having the buses all different, it doesn't teach us and the people who need to learn that they can only sit in certain seats. I ride Metro Mobility enough to know that you need certain order to teach. There are certain people with certain disabilities. So they could follow your rules correctly.

Do I bring that back to Metro Mobility? Or Andy, or who do I talk to? Right now, it is all screwed up.

Chair Fenley said so for clarification, Heidi, if this is why some seats are closed off and some seats aren't.

Myhre said no, it used to be for a long time, two front seats. The one behind the driver and the one across from that. You go up the steps, and right behind it. The two first seats are cut off and the rest you can sit in. But now, it seems like they are getting more into the community and picking up more people. I don't know the rhyme of the reason, but every vehicle is set up a little bit different. Some have old seats you sit in the front. You have one that is available in the front row. And even the drivers don't know how to answer the questions.

Streasick said I understand the question. There were two there that I heard. The current rule from MMSC management, is that the seat directly behind the driver is still cut off to encourage physical distancing from the driver who is out in the community for a 10-to-12-hour shift. Every other seat is open, including the front seat on the door side. So, if the front two seats, Heidi, are both off limits that is a policy violation, and we can act upon that and get it fixed. The only seat that should be off limits right now, is the seat directly behind the driver.

Myhre said then you need to go back to your fleet of people and talk about it. What you are saying is not 100 percent happening correctly.

Streasick said I will say that we heard at the Community Conversation that some drivers are letting folks sit on that seat behind the driver upon request. We are aware that there are a variety of reasons that people might prefer that seat. So we are bringing that back to executive management based on feedback from community conversations. Or reconsideration about opening up that seat.

And then the second question you had about masks. Those are required on Metro Mobility. Identically, the way they are required on the city bus. The people making those rules are the federal government. That is currently a federal executive order that is in place into January.

Myhre said and then will you be telling us when we call to make our reservation, when we can stop wearing them? I will keep wearing them until you tell me I don't have to.

Streasick said we will communicate that out.

Jasmine said I would like to comment on the double seat thing because I pushed back on this one more than once. Because I feel like with the logic with having the one in the front door is flawed. You are having us sit in the seat that is right by the front door. Right when you come up. But I just had one that had absolutely no room. The purpose would be to put my dog and my feet. It was very tight quarters, and I did shove my dog in there. But it was very tight, and she is a very small dog. That would not go well for most people's dogs that are larger. The seat that is behind the driver is actually further away from the driver and there is plexiglass between that seat and the driver. This makes much more sense to me than having the front door one, which has no plexiglass if you make a be line to the driver. So I am not sure how that logic was discovered. But it is flawed, and I wish you folks would really take a look at that.

Whichever has the most room. Sometimes it is the seat by the door. I just had one and it was very tight.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Streasick said I just wanted to quickly point out here as some of you were probably thinking, as a disability advocacy organization, we would be remiss if not to note that there is significant correlation between folks that experience homelessness and people with disabilities. So, for a variety of reasons, including some that are in keeping with core functions of the TAAC. I would encourage the committee to push back on notions that we don't want homeless people in "X". Whether we are talking about trains or buses or bathrooms. These are members of the community and disproportionately members of the disability community. Poverty ought not to be a barrier to public amenities. So I just wanted to get that out there.

Chair Fenley said I thought about this when it came up. When Darrell was talking. I think the same thing applies to substance use disorder as well. Which is considered a disability too. These folks are members of society. I don't think that Darrell was saying that you want to exclude these folks. The point is that these facilities, since they exist, need to be maintained and properly taken care of for everybody to use including these members of society.

Paulsen said I deal with transient folks that are homeless and don't have a place to stay at night. There are over 400 kids on our streets just in Saint Paul. that don't have a place to sleep or anything to eat. The youth is the fastest growing homeless population that we have. So when I mentioned the fact that the cops said to me or that the transit officer said that to me because that is the general mindset of the public that we have to overcome, when I say "We" I mean people that serve people in the public, people that are transit advocates that are constantly overcoming that negative narrative. That these places are being overtaken by the undesirable and the homeless and drug addicts. These are people too. We are all people. We all deserve the same dignity and respect regardless of what our challenges are.

What I meant by saying that story is that it is a huge barrier to overcome in the public narrative because the public says these things not only to people with disabilities, but to people who need those services just like you or i.

Chair Fenley said locking the door is not the way to keep folks safe. If you have the facility, you maintain the facility and at the same time you keep people that use the facility safe. Whether it is you, Darrell, or anybody that is in the vicinity. But this could be an hour-long conversation. We only have two minutes left. Everybody should feel safe. And addressing homelessness is not this committee's job. But it is very real in the society we live in.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary