

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAACCOMMITTEE

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

Committee Members Present: Acting Chair David Fenley, Darrell Paulsen, Ken Rodgers, Kari Sheldon, Patty Thorsen, Diane Graham-Raff and Richard Rowen.

Committee Members Absent: John Clark, Heidi Myhre and Margot Imdieke Cross.

Committee Members Excused: Christopher Bates.

Council Staff Present: Paul Lamb and Yumi Nagaoka from Metro Transit, Councilmember Chai Lee, Richard Koop, Christine Kuennen, Heidi Schallberg and Alison Coleman

Public Present: Rick Kreuzer and JoNette Kuhnau from the City of Minneapolis and Claudia Fuglie

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Acting Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:35 p.m. on Wednesday, May 1, 2019.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by Rodgers, seconded by Thorsen to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Paulsen, seconded by Thorsen to approve the minutes of the April 3, 2019 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Public Transit & Human Services

Heidi Schallberg, Senior Planner in Metropolitan Transportation Services, spoke to the TAAC committee. This is a very brief information item on a plan update we are doing. We will be working on updating this plan this year. The purpose of this plan is a federal requirement. It is something we are required to update. It is a plan that is designed to improve transportation services for older people with disabilities. It will potentially increase coordination of the different services that are available to those groups within the region.

One of the ways this plan is used in the region is to help guide federal funding investments in services that improve mobility in older adults and people with disabilities. This is run through MnDOT on a statewide basis. There is a certain pot of money through the Federal Transit Administration for enhanced mobility for these two populations. Sometimes it gets referred to as Section 5310. A bureaucratic reference of the section of the code that enabled the funding. These funds can be used for a lot of different types of projects. Some of the most common ones are for the purchasing of vehicles that are used for shuttle services. It can be used for improving accessibility such as sidewalk connections or accessible pedestrian signals. Then mobility management services, is something the region has been doing more of in the past few years. The funds have gone for accessible pedestrian signals in the past. Some of the money has also been used for vehicles to be purchased for organizations such as Lifeworks, Mankato Rehabilitation Center in Rosemount and Newtracks, which works a lot in Ramsey County.

This will be our third version of the plan. We did our first one in 2007. The current one that we have been operating under was adopted in 2013. This will be the third version. One of the key functions of the plan is to basically help identify what the needs are for the region for the two population groups in transportation in the region. And then identify strategies that are prioritized to help address those needs.

In the current plan we had nine needs that are identified. They range from funding to acknowledging the service. For different groups it could be fragmented. There are regulatory barriers to coordinating those. The need for increased awareness and information on different options. There is not a lot of coordination within those services. Then just some of the functional ones as far as limited capacity, the need for increased service. And then accessible pathways, cost and the logistics of trip lengths for some of the trips.

The plan includes 28 different strategies that are prioritized. They are grouped together in two or three main categories. So they are categorized as strategies that help coordinate and consolidate services and resources, and mobility strategies such as providing additional service. Or maybe technology improvements. Two existing services and then support for the community training and organizations.

In this plan update, we are using a steering committee to help us guide the plan update. There are about 16 people on that steering committee now. Chair Fenley is one of the individuals on that group serving for the Minnesota Council on Disabilities. I appreciate your time and commitment to that. We do have a former TAAC member Bob Platz, from Lifeworks, serving on that group. As well as representation from the Department of Human Services, the Board on Aging, Metro Transit and Metro Mobility. We have four of the counties who have representatives. Scott County, Hennepin County, Washington County and Dakota County. As well as MnDOT representatives who were not able to attend the first meeting, but they are planning on participating in the future. Groups that represent senior adult daycare and group homes as well.

We will be using this group to help guide that. Part of our work is to do an inventory of what the available services are in the region. A big part of this will be to have a workshop with a larger group of stakeholders probably in the last half of June. That will help identify the current needs and strategies that will be for this new plan.

In the current plan, what we need to change to best reflect the conditions today and what work needs to be done. The plan we anticipate. The bulk of the plans should be done through August. Then we will have a public comment period and then the adoption of the plan that will be sometime this fall based on our different committee schedules. What we are doing in this process is something that that committee has an interest in coming back with updates as we go through this planned development.

Chair Fenley said do you have a list of improvements that were realized or things that had been done in the previous years so 2007 to 2013 and 2013 to today?

Schallberg said that is something we are working on when doing that inventory as part of that. So we will be getting information from MnDOT as far as everything that has received funding. So they have the results data on all of those projects. We don't have that available today but some of it will be more qualitative as far as documentation of some of the work done in the region. One of the strategies in the plan was talking about the potential for free and reduced fares. One of the things that has been done is since this plan has been adopted. Metro Transit introduced the Transit Assistance Program Providers on the fixed route system for those with lower incomes. That is part of the plan to help document what has been done.

Paulsen said what does mobility management mean? What does that look like and where are your dollars coming from? Are they distributed by competitive grants? How does a non-profit agency or organization obtain those dollars? Most of the time it is usually tied to performance outcomes or a competitive grant process. Is that how you operate? How are those funds being distributed?

Schallberg said mobility management is a vague term. Part of it is creating partnerships and trying to increase coordination. They may have a lot of different providers. Like a one call, one way to get information from the rider perspective. To be able to do that is a lot of coordination work that is happening behind the scenes. There are plenty of different groups that are providing current services. As far as the process for that, this has been done in our region, currently in the county level. It is something that counties have applied for funding. Some is federal money. MnDOT runs an application process. You have to be considered and reviewed by committees to get that funding. That is something we will be able to get the information from MnDOT on their reporting on the results of that. It is something that most of our counties have started doing that to some degree so that the four counties that I mentioned that are on our steering committee are on different places than that. Scott County and Dakota County and Washington County have been doing that. Hennepin County and Anoka County recently received some funds through that application process to start doing this work. One of the things that the counties have done, both Dakota and Washington Counties have used some of that funding to do plans to identify the needs of the situations in their individual counties.

Paulsen said when will we be able to see the data?

Schallberg said the data results are previously funded projects. That is something that we are aiming to have available for our workshop in the last part of June. We could come back with an information item and present on that. We might be able to present at the county level.

Thorsen said the vehicles you are talking about, is there a requirement in the funding that those be accessible or useable to individuals who have mobility devices like wheelchairs, walkers and scooters? Are there requirements as far as training of drivers of the issue that they need to be aware of in order to provide the service to insure that the quality meets the needs of the riders?

Schallberg said as far as I am aware the vehicles paid for with federal money would have to be accessible, especially for a program with the focus specifically on seniors and people with disabilities. To your question about the drivers, I am not sure of the details on that. I would be happy to find out more information from MnDOT and follow up with the committee. I know that it was something that was called out as one of the strategies in the plan as far as coordinating requirements for training for drivers. It would be something more consistent.

Chair Fenley said so what ends up in this plan? Hopefully it is approved by the feds. Everything that ends up in the plan can then have money spent on it? So if it is something not traditionally used for this money goes into the plan and is approved by the feds, then can money be spent in that area?

Schallberg said I think that for some reason, and I am not clear why, I don't think this plan has to go through an actual federal approval. So it is federally required but we will not have to be contingent on getting FTA approval. It would be done at the Council by being submitted to the state. The state uses that as an element on their funding application for that. I would say that any other types of funding, it is generally common to be asked, for example, other types of federal transportation funding that we manage through the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB). Applicants are asked if the project is included in an approved plan. To make sure there is some kind of plan in process behind something.

Graham-Raff said the application process for 5310 funding. Is that an ongoing open application and as long as funds are available or is it a set application period where applicants respond to our requests for proposals and in general year-to-year. Or are all of the allocated funds spent or is there a carryover or use it or lose it? Is there room for more applications or is it something that is competitive and always spend everything that you have available?

Schallberg said it is on a set schedule through MnDOT. They manage the process and generally have a schedule. I think typically in the past they would have been doing applicant workshops this time of year. They are not doing it this year. They have the process on hold right now while they have had some staff changes. They are just trying to work through some potential improvements that they have identified that they would like to make to the process. So for the next round of funding. What I have been hearing from their staff on the program is that it would likely be released sometime toward the end of the summer. They do have a set schedule and so applicants will have a workshop that they can come to to learn about the application process and the application deadline. They have a committee that is managed through MnDOT. My understanding is I can get more information on how it has been in the past. My understanding is that it is varied as far as some years in the past has been more competitive than others. In some years they haven't had enough projects to fund that. I think we are seeing the increase of mobility management too. That is kind of a different direction for the funding being used. You can use those allocated dollars for mobility management as well.

Since this plan was adopted in 2013, that is one of the biggest changes we have seen in our region in the Twin Cities. That is where we are a little bit different from the rest of the state. We have had counties apply for those funds to do more mobility management and county based work. We are almost up to seven counties but not quite. It has been a more common activity among counties.

Rodgers said the moneys have some very specific requirements that they have to meet plus isn't there a match associated with the dollars?

Schallberg said yes, there is a match with those federal funds. I am not sure what the match is.

Rodgers said I know the vehicles are 80/20. But there might be some other match level for programmatic stuff like mobility management. But I know there is a match. It is not just for free money that they get to do whatever they want. There is very specific criteria laden criteria. I know that at one time I was on one of the panels that

looked at reviewing some of the RFP proposals. That was many years ago. Can you tell me which office you work with at DOT?

Schallberg said as far as the 5310 planning? It is the Office of Transit.

2. Hennepin Reconstruction

Paul Lamb, Principal Project Coordinator at Metro Transit, spoke to the TAAC committee. The City of Minneapolis is going to be reconstructing Hennepin Avenue in downtown Minneapolis from Washington Avenue to 12th Street. It has been over 30 years since the last reconstruction of the major infrastructure in a project down there. Of the sidewalks and streets there has been cracking of the sidewalks and asphalt. It is time for a redoing of the roadway and sidewalks. They are also looking at improving the pedestrian bicycle safety downtown and increasing the modality of the multimodal options downtown. It would be more friendly for people walking and biking and using devices. I gave a presentation to this committee last September. At the same time Minneapolis was doing some workshops with the Minneapolis Advisory Committee. People with disabilities as well as the Bicycle Advisory Committee. Some of the information from that is used to inform the design for the project.

This project is still in the design phase. I will talk about the schedule later on. There is some utility work that has started downtown. It is still in the design and I wanted to share this to give you an update and see if there are any questions that came up.

The project is going to be a full roadway reconstruction. Building phase to building phase. They are going to be removing the sidewalk and roadway and completely reconstructing that. One of the interesting things about this project is that they will be removing the left turn center lane in this stretch of downtown and then reallocating that space to behind the curb to provide more space for a bike lane behind the curb. And put more pedestrian space in the walkway.

There will be a sidewalk, which will be a consistent 10-foot clear distance. And then a bikeway. For those areas where there will be a bus stop. There will be a bus stop between the curb and the bikeway. After the curb there will be four lanes of traffic. Then the curb on the far side would have, for those locations where there isn't a bus stop, the bikeway would be immediately behind the curb. Then a wider section of sidewalk, keeping that pedestrian clear zone and also having some space for some furnishing like trees and benches, patio café's and outdoor seating areas.

Metro Transit has been involved in bus stop design and providing information to the city. We are looking at a consistent layout along that corridor between Washington and 12th. As well as having design consistent with the A-Line bus stops along Snelling Avenue and Ford Parkway in St. Paul. There will be a marker in the front of the bus stop and a real time sign with an annunciator giving information on how long to when the next bus will come. We have a larger shelter than what has been out there on Hennepin Avenue. It would be 30 feet or so. The shelters will all have light as well as heat. And benches in the shelter as well as in the bus stop area. Also, some additional lighting around the bus stop. Streetlights and more pedestrian level lighting. More frequent than some of the streets are less pedestrian friendly.

In terms of the bus stop area, and layout. The bike path would be between the bus stop and sidewalk area. And this is something that the City of Minneapolis has been working with. That is some of the reason we are engaging with the city. The Bicycle Advisory Committee and Pedestrian Committees as well as people with disabilities to get feedback on what a safe crossing area is. How to engineer and design that to minimize the conflict to provide a safe crossing.

The slide shows the 10-foot sidewalk area, six-foot bikeway, the bus stop area, crosswalks. Designated area where pedestrians can cross to and from the bus stop area. It also gives a larger picture of the complete bus stop area. It shows the sign at the front of the bus stop, the shelter and then upstream from that is recycling and trash receptacles. Some trees in some areas, a bench and a longer area where the shelter is going to be towards the front of the bus stop.

Because of the number of buses that will be coming through here, areas where a second or third bus could stop and let passengers on and off. There will also be a tactile strip for the whole length of that bus stop. To provide some tactile information.

Some other improvements throughout the corridor. Outside of the bus stop areas there is a street consistent with a 10-foot wide pedestrian sidewalk area that I mentioned before. Also, all along the stretch the city will be

putting in push buttons at traffic signals that provide information whether the person crossing should wait or whether it is O.K. to cross the street. Also improving the pedestrian ramps and bringing those up to current code as well as accessibility improvements around the end of the warehouse light rail station to putting in a curb so people with low visibility don't walk into the street. Also putting in one of those APS push buttons similar to the design and Prospect Park light rail station on the Green Line.

In terms of the time frame for the construction, this will be a four-year construction project. Phasing it into two different zones. The first one would be on the south end of the corridor of 12th Street and 7th Street. Having utilities go in and do the work and moving in the utilities in 2019 and that started on a couple of the blocks in this stretch. And then doing the sidewalk and the roadway reconstruction in 2020. Then in 2021, moving on to the north end of the corridor from 7th Street to Washington. Doing utility work in the first year 2021. Then doing the roadway and construction in 2022.

Also, on this slide is a map of a detour for the route. All of the buses will be detouring on to Nicollet Mall. That has gone into effect the middle of April. We are looking on doing that for the entire time of the projects. That would be four years.

On the north end of the corridor the buses will go from Hennepin to Washington. Nicollet on the south end of the corridor. It is complicated because of the one-way streets. Generally, the buses going south will turn on 11th Street and then again on Harmon Place and then turn west on Spruce Place and then make the final turn back to Hennepin. Northbound buses are a little easier. They would turn on 12th and then take that over to Nicollet Mall. Go up Nicollet Mall and then turn on Washington.

On that slide there is also the transit call numbers if anybody has any questions about detouring or how to catch their bus.

Rodgers said you mentioned the 10-foot length of the sidewalk. Does that 10-foot width change when there is an outdoor restaurant patio?

Lamb said my understanding is that any restaurant patio would be within a furnishing zone. It would be outside that 10-foot width. There would still be a 10-foot clearance.

Rodgers said at this point, are there plans to table the intersections street level? Bringing this street level up to the sidewalk level like on Nicollet?

Lamb said I would like to ask the City of Minneapolis if they would like to answer that.

Rick Kreuser, Project Manager for the City of Minneapolis, said no. They would be the standard six-inch curb around the radiuses with the standard ADA accessible ramps.

Rodgers said I would like to highlight that and bring that to everyone's attention. We were told the same thing for Nicollet Mall reconstruction. And yet, when it was done, we had tabled intersections which are impossible for blind people to cross. I want to avoid that mistake moving forward.

My comment is I have been a part of the workshops that have been going on. Some of our comments and suggestions are not being welcomed. That's a little concerning for wheelchair users and blind users like myself. Specifically, I will give you some context. We have constantly raised issues about the crossing of bicycle paths with sidewalks with streets. They used to call them floating islands for the transit stations when the bike path moves from the street onto the sidewalk. We have raised issues about concerns with bicycles being that close to pedestrians. I know there have been some identified potential remedies in terms of trying to separate those areas with some sort of landmark.

My biggest complaint at this point is the crossings of the intersections where one crosses either the side numbered streets or Hennepin Avenue. Because of the effort at bumping out curbs so that pedestrians don't have to cross so far or so long into the street. They are trying to shorten the length of people who are in the middle of the street when they cross, which creates havoc for blind travelers who are used to traveling and stopping at the bottom of the pedestrian ramp.

When you change those locations, it makes it impossible for a blind person to know that that location has been changed where people wait. So if I am trying to cross Hennepin Avenue, for example, and I stop or my dog stops as they were trained to stop, the end of pedestrian ramps, before stepping into the street level. But the sighted pedestrian steps out into the street, because they have the bike lane space to fill, which is being encouraged. That can be confusing for a blind traveler who now hears people standing in front of them, which

technically for the blind person, is in the street. Those issues have been raised consistently. And they have been ignored. We need to consider that. I don't know that there is a great solution. That may be what we end up with. If we are on those committees, our issues need to be heard and considered. I don't feel like they are necessarily being taken seriously. The planning goes forward and the next meeting we have, those plans have been incorporated into the updated plans. I don't know what we can do to hear our voice of concerns for safety any more loudly than we already are. I would appreciate it if you could bring that forward to those that need to hear that. I do believe it is all of us together that can make the right decisions for what is safe for everybody. But we have to be able to be heard as well.

Kreuser said I will bring up JoNette Kuhnau. She is part of our design team on this. We are working to finalize those designs at those intersections now. We do take comments very seriously. There are a lot of different comments from users of the street and the sidewalks. We have to balance those the best we can. But I will let JoNette talk. She has a handle on the design.

Chair Fenley said this community is unique because we have federal and state laws that support our rights for accessibility. That would be the Human Rights Act and the Americans With Disabilities Act. We are not thrilled with going up against bikers because we know they have pretty heavy weight in terms of political influence in Minneapolis. So that is not the point here. The point really is that the rights of folks with disabilities does supersede the rights of other folks. I think there are solutions. I think Ken can help with that. It would make everybody happy and would obey the law.

Rodgers said I would just summarize it. There is a legal precedent that people with disabilities are guaranteed accessible paths of travel. And there is no such guarantee with bike paths, bike lanes and protected bike lanes. Now, having said that, I'm all for trying to build safety into the biking system. I believe in safety. That is really important. To pit the two organizations and groups of people against each other is not a fair way to do business either. The best solution is to bring everybody to the table and let us all figure it out.

Chair Fenley said we are not saying that pitting two groups against each other is intentional. It ends up being what happens. People with disabilities do ride bikes as well. We are a diverse community. It is not just people who are blind and people who use wheelchairs. There is overlap in these communities.

Kuhnau said I am a consultant working with the city on this project. A couple of things I just wanted to mention. The workshops that we had back in September and the input we got from the Minneapolis Advisory Committees. There were a couple of significant refinements that were made to the design as a result of that input. One is that all the intersections, the crossing of the bikeway, is at sidewalk level. To emphasize two bicyclists that the pedestrians, this is a pedestrian space. So if you have been on Washington Avenue in Minneapolis, you might be familiar. The pedestrian ramp occurs before the bikeway. The bikeway is at street level. When you are getting ready to cross, the bikeway and the street are at the same level. So when you get to the ramp, you first cross the bikeway then you cross the street. On the Hennepin Avenue design, what we are proposing is the crossing of the bikeway is at sidewalk level. Then the pedestrian ramp. So that if you are at the pedestrian ramp, the next thing that you are going to encounter is the street.

We purposely did that to keep those crossings shorter. Emphasize that the pedestrian crossing of the bikeway. The pedestrians have priority there. Then also make it look more like a traditional intersection. So that we don't have these bikes that might be coming on the left. There are some people waiting in the bike lane as they are waiting to cross. That was a change that we made to the design based on the input that we heard. We also talked quite a bit in the workshops about how we channelize people into the bus stop areas. So on the slides, one of the things that is on there is some railings next to the shelter. To really channelize people to those designated crossings and guide people to those spots so that both pedestrians know where they are expected to cross and bicyclists who are on the bikeway should know where they are expected to have interactions with pedestrians and when to yield to pedestrians.

Jasmine said with the measurements you gave us, are the Metro Mobility stops built into that as well with the transit situation?

Kreuser said yes. We have talked to Metro Mobility a little bit about this. They would be stopping at the same bus stops as regular buses do. So they would be able to let people on and off at the bus stop where there is a clear minimum of six feet. In a lot of cases 11 feet for loading.

Jasmine said is it going to be clear that Metro can stop there as well as buses?

Kreuser said I know when we talked to Metro Mobility, they said they would be stopping at the same bus stops. We will communicate back to our bus operations to let drivers know that as well.

Graham-Raff said will there be signage along the bike route reminding the bicyclists of their responsibility to stop with pedestrians? Some people consider themselves pedestrians even though they are going at 30 miles per hour. I also look at these intersections and see a lot of places where we will be hearing "They came out of nowhere." People who are slower to cross streets are likely to hit that interchange place right about the time that the light turns green for bicyclists come up. Just looking at the placement of the shelters that this person would step right into the bike path right about the time that the bicyclist says: "I've got my green light" and continues going forward.

Lamb said I can try to answer the second question. The city can answer the first question. My understanding is that the railings expand off of the shelter area. They are to give bicyclists and pedestrians a better area to see. It pushes that crossing out away from the shelter and gives both bicyclists and pedestrians more reaction time to look around before they get to the crossing. It provides more of an opportunity to look and see and be aware of their surroundings before crossing both on the bicyclists side and the transit customer side.

Graham-Raff said what about people who are using guide dogs who have not been trained to look for bicyclists when they are in the middle of the sidewalk?. That is an issue.

Kuhnau said to answer the first question, everywhere bicycles should expect to have pedestrians cross that bikeway, they are always marked as a crosswalk. Meaning that pedestrians have the right-of-way there. There also are messages on the bikeway itself as bikers approach these areas where it does say "Yield to pedestrians". Periodically along the corridor. There are signals along this corridor every 300 feet. From a bikeway perspective, this is not a high speed through biking facility. We have tried to design it that way. There are curves in the bikeway and other things that reinforce that this is not a bicycle highway.

Chair Fenley said these are very complicated design problems that you all are faced with. There are a lot of bikers out there. There are probably more bikers than folks who have the concerns that we brought up today. But that does not minimize the importance of concerns of folks who have low vision or are blind, aging or use mobility devices or have cognitive disabilities. That is why you are here. Why we are here too as a committee to provide that perspective to use. So we really appreciate you coming here and listening to us. The solutions might not be perfect, but at least knowing that you are taking our concerns into consideration and you are looking at these design solutions is nice for us.

I have two questions. Is there parking on this stretch of Hennepin Avenue?

Kreuser said there is one place for drop offs that will be eliminated as part of the project.

Chair Fenley said about Met Mo parking at bus stops. Will they be able to drop off anywhere else besides bus stops along this corridor? Or will it be designated just for the bus stops?

Kreuser said after talking to some people at Metro Mobility, there would be dropping off at bus stops and then if there isn't a bus stop on that block, they would be dropping off at the nearest side street. There were some concerns about the bikeway being immediately behind the curb and finding a safe place to let people off. In those locations they would be dropping off at the intersection of the cross street.

Chair Fenley said Metro Mobility does door-to-door service. It takes a bit longer to drop off than it takes a bus to do that. So this Metro Mobility van may be sitting there for 20 minutes. As this individual is either brought from the building to the van or from the van to the building. What is the response to that?

Lamb said my response would be how to talk to the operations staff and probably have ongoing conversations between our bus operations and people in Metro Mobility to find that out. First time to handle it on day one after this is open. Then have the conversation on what is working and what is not working. Adjustments need to be made for that.

Rodgers said it sounds really good to say that on blocks where there is not a bus stop to let Metro Mobility board and disembark. They will just use the side streets. But we have one-way streets. If it is the wrong way, there isn't a convenient place for Metro Mobility to stop. Because they would be unloading into traffic. Those are things that probably, a person who is not familiar with Metro Mobility and their services, wouldn't think about. But we think about it all the time. Because we have to deal with it all the time. I want to caution with the side streets. Every side street is not appropriate.

Lamb said we will talk to Metro Mobility about that.

Paulsen said somebody who doesn't frequent this area a lot, but wants to, I would love to see how this works out. Instead of having the discussions for day one and then having more discussions after that. You should be having those discussions right now. So that they know on day one it is not going to look pretty for the cameras, and everybody says we are doing it so well. We already know that the problems are going to exist. Let's have those discussions now. Before it opens.

Chair Fenley said we have example following example. We are presented with something and we say this is going to happen and nothing is taken into consideration and that exact thing happens. One suggestion if there are creative routes and drop offs that don't necessarily have to go up and down Hennepin Avenue but can navigate the one-way streets, depending on where they are going. So maybe they can sit there a little longer. To get the drop off and pickup times. Hennepin is not a good street to maybe sit 20 minutes at a bus stop where there are going to be six buses looking to pull in there within those 20 minutes or maybe even more.

It highlights the unforeseen things that happen in our world that people with disabilities are far too familiar with. There's that Metro Mobility van that is people with disabilities and there are a bunch of other folks saying: "Those folks with disabilities are holding us up and getting in the way." That's the more cultural aspect of this kind of things that happen. Planners don't think about how is this reinforcing stereotypes in our society? Planners don't think about that.

Christine Kuennen said I know Clay Stenback, our Operations Manager, has been working with Dave Hanson, the Assistant Director of Field Operations at Metro Transit, and the conversations have been at that level. They have had some conversations about this topic that I am not privy to the details. But I will bring this back to Clay. I will say that I know that Metro Mobility has been approached on this. Because Clay has generally updated me. So it is not just starting now and we have had some involvement. The cultural negotiation between bus operations at Metro Transit and the needs of Metro Mobility is a real thing. I think that there has been a closer relationship develop in the last three years. Some of those kind of operational concerns on dedicated pathways were worked out with the Marquette and 2nd Avenue alignment. That same issue is present when Metro Mobility does stop in those corridors and takes extra time. We will make sure that bus operations at Metro Transit is closely aligned with what our needs are.

As far as where, if there is a need to stop other than a designated bus stop, at Metro Mobility we generally just give the contractors the guidance that they use a safe operating judgement for the safety of all concerned. If there is not a safe place to wait for 15 to 20 minutes on that corridor, they will go off around the corner to find a different spot. As close as possible along as it is safe. With safety being the highest criteria. So I think some of this is operational what if's. We have to see what does occur with some testing. I will ask that Clay take a look at some of the common address drop off locations that would be affected. And make sure we have a plan of action that we could provide to operators a Plan A and a Plan B location that they could go to. That is the best answer I have for now.

3. Legislative Update

Christine Kuennen, Metro Mobility Senior Manager, spoke to the TAAC committee. She read the report from Brooke Bordson.

House and Senate Overall Transportation Proposals

The **House** bill includes a number of new revenue mechanisms to fund the regional transit system, including a metro area sales tax to fund transit operations and capital expenses and allow for expansion of the transit system. Like the Governor's proposal, the House bill separates out Metro Mobility with its own appropriation. Currently, the Metropolitan Council receives one General Fund appropriation for Metro Mobility, light rail operations and commuter rail. With Metro Mobility on a path to consume nearly our entire base appropriation within this biennium, no General Fund dollars will be available for any other transit service in the very near future. The House passed their transportation bill 74-58 on Monday evening, after many hours of debate and voting on amendments on Friday and Monday.

The House bill also includes authorization for the Council to issue regional transit capital (RTC) bonds in 2019 and 2020. RTC bond authorization has been provided since 1989. Bond proceeds are used to purchase replacement buses and vehicles for the transit system, including Metro Mobility vehicles.

The **Senate** transportation bill continues the base level of General Fund appropriation to the Council, and does not provide new revenue, RTC authorization, or a separate appropriation for Metro Mobility. Chair Slawik provided testimony to the Senate Transportation and Finance Committee members noting her concerns about adequate funding for transit and the need to address the growth of Metro Mobility. The Senate bill will be taken up on the floor today (Wednesday).

Metro Mobility Service Area Expansion

The House transportation bill would expand Metro Mobility service into Lakeville. Funding in the House bill would cover the expansion. It is estimated that extending service into Lakeville would cost \$2.06 million in the fiscal year 2020-21 biennium, and \$2.31 million in the fiscal year 2022-23 biennium.

The Senate transportation bill would expand Metro Mobility service to Columbus, Forest Lake, Lakeville, Maple Plain, and Ramsey. There is no increase in the Council's appropriation for these additional costs. It is estimated that extending service into these five cities would cost \$3.464 million in the fiscal year 2020-21 biennium, and \$3.755 million in the fiscal year 2022-23 biennium.

2019 Session Timeline

Under the timeline agreed to by legislative leaders, major finance bills are to be passed off the floor by the end of today (May 1). The House and Senate will then each appoint conference committees to work out the difference between House and Senate budget bills. Legislators plan to have agreed upon targets for each budget area by May 6, with conference committees reaching agreements by May 13. That would leave a week for the House and Senate to pass the agreed upon bills by the May 20 end of session deadline.

Paulsen said that he was disappointed that the Public Affairs staff couldn't make it to this meeting or any of the other previous meetings for the TAAC.

Kuennen said I can't speak to the previous meetings, but this meeting there was a direct scheduling conflict. There are only two people in the department. It is very difficult especially when the sessions are conflicting with this committee's meeting time. It may be interesting to consider alternative ways to communicate between meeting sessions. Coordinating times that better suites both parties.

Chair Fenley said that is a good suggestion. Maybe we could do something with a phone call. Have it be on a phone line where it is less busy like on a Friday. Where we could have a call-in option for TAAC members who are interested in these issues to get an update and then to field questions to these two legislative folks who are overworked. We all know that at the Capitol, when they do things, that is what they do and everybody has to be up there and wait for them to make a decision about something or not make a decision about something. We do have a lot to offer them as well.

Kuennen said she would be happy to talk to Brooke and see if she can coordinate and do a phone call.

Chair Fenley said he could help coordinate the phone call on Friday.

4. Metro Mobility Budget

Christine Kuennen, Metro Mobility Senior Manager, spoke to the TAAC committee. How does Metro Mobility spend its money? In order to speak to the benefit of the program, and the fiscal responsibility of the program. We have a lot of finalized numbers from 2018, that I will speak to. I will put it into context with some of our peers and I will also talk about some of the trends that we have been seeing with that.

So in 2018, Metro Mobility's operating expenses totaled \$76.3 million. This includes \$1.65 million in salary and benefits. \$65.57 million in services including the vast majority of that is our contracted services. The average hourly rate paid to our primary service contractors was \$43.50 per hour. The expenses also include \$6.5 million in materials, including fuel, computer hardware, software and other material expenses. \$10,400 in training, professional development, seminar and conference travel. \$83,900 in utilities and costs. \$131,000 in total financing, capital outlay and \$2.3 million for other expenses including allocated support costs, postage and other miscellaneous expenses.

Primary funding source. State appropriations. Plus \$8 million in fare revenue. And about \$700,000 in investment earnings. So that is 2018.

The subsidy per passenger trip in 2018 was \$28.68 per trip. Our costs and our ridership is increasing. One of the most notable leaps in recent years is our subsidy per passenger for Metro Mobility increased approximately 10.5 percent in 2017 although our in-service hours only increased 4.7 percent for the same period.

This was just at the beginning of my tenure. This was a discussion in a purposeful decision. This is basically the result of the infusion of the monies needed to provide a \$2.00 per hour minimum wage increase for Metro Mobility drivers due for needs of hiring and retention. That was an act system in 2017 and then added \$2.82 dollars per revenue hour paid to each contract since then.

If you look at a graph of our operating expenses. There is a big jump in 2017 that is carried forward and has increased our costs. We have also taken purposeful steps to provide additional resources in fleet and driver count helped by the wage increase needed to improve our service quality while meeting our rising demand. Over that same time period, we have improved on time performance for both pickups and appointment times and have improved our onboard time. So, our three key performance indicators from a customer experience perspective. We have invested in that.

This has had the effect to reduce our relative productivity, which is the tradeoff. But we think it is an important tradeoff. Because the FTA too requires that we meet certain service quality standards regardless of productivity.

For 2019 we have a projected expenditure of \$82,317,979 in our projecting of ridership growth of six percent. While our costs are increasing, we are still very lean on our expenditures relative to our peers. We did an analysis in 2016. Industry growth has remained consistent. We conducted a study to evaluate peer agencies and ridership throughout the United States to gain an understanding of performance measures and trends. There are 11 other cities Pittsburgh, San Diego, Milwaukee, Portland, Los Angeles, Houston, Denver, Baltimore, Las Vegas, Cleveland and Austin Capitol Metro.

There are charts that I can distribute by email rather than describe them here. But basically, it shows that Metro Mobility is on each of those indicators on the low end compared to their peers regarding their cost efficiency. Even if you look at the jump from what was a \$25.00 per hour subsidy at that time, and now a \$28.00 one, we would still be the third lowest of all of those per subsidy per passenger.

That is all I have for now. Wanting to know if you need more information and how you need it. So I can assemble it in a package you want and email it out.

Paulsen asked about the \$2.00 raise in pay for the Metro Mobility drivers compared to the mainline drivers. Are we competitive with driver costs and driver retention costs within the region and with our mainline service? Metro Mobility provides a very special service. They should get paid more for that.

Kuennen said I do recall the research that we put in the \$2.00 in October of 2017. At that time, we had a minimum wage requirement of \$14.00 an hour. We brought it up to \$16.00 an hour with this money. That is still the minimum wage. Our providers actually start higher than that. This is the floor. The Metro Transit starting wage is closer to the \$19.00 to \$20.00 an hour in the current contract. Metro Transit starts part time without full benefits. Many of our providers will start with full time work if it is available. It is difficult to do an apples to apples analysis when it comes to that market of a driver. We are always looking at the driver market and our ability to hire and retain the drivers that we need to fulfill our service. Especially as we look to scope the next contracts. We are looking to put a wage accelerator, cost of living index accelerator into the contract so that we can have a stable workforce.

Right now, this is a \$16.00 per hour minimum wage increase that will remain for the term of the contract until such time that we decide to put more money in.

Rodgers said the subsidy per ride has risen to that \$28.00.

Kuennen said yes, \$28.68.

Rodgers said relative to the subsidy increase, has the duration of the trips increased? Is the average length of a trip the same?

Kuennen said the average length of a trip has been increasing. We are just at 11 miles on average now. That is increasing.

Rodgers said so when the subsidy rate was \$20.00. The reason I am asking these questions is that is how we formulated the initial cost share with the Premium Same Day ride. We took that \$20.00, which was the subsidy rate at the time, that we introduced the Premium Same Day program. We based the \$5.00 for the rider versus the \$15.00 for Metro Mobility based on the subsidy of the average ride. So if the average ride subsidy is now \$28.00, to be fair, we should be looking at that subsidy rate equal on the Premium Same Day side. I am just trying to compare the two from the \$20.00 subsidy to now \$28.00 subsidy what is the standard length of trip based on when we started the program with a \$20.00 subsidy to now with a \$28.00 subsidy. So if you could get some information at some point in the future, I would appreciate that.

Now that it is \$28.00 subsidy, I am interested in knowing what the change is in the average trip. If it is not that much different, if it hasn't risen that much, then we need to be looking at the subsidy split. How we are doing the same day now to be fair.

Kuennen said I can certainly provide that information to you in the email.

Chair Fenley said when will that \$15.00 increase to \$23.00?

Kuennen said that is a policy matter to be debated and discussed. I think there are some other considerations at play. I know that the average length of trip on Metro Mobility has increased in that period of time. I will provide that information. I can also see what the taxi rider behavior is in the same period of time. We also have other options that we are considering as well. We are a public transit organization and taxi service is not public transit. We have to look at what we are subsidizing.

Chair Fenley said you have a price in there for fuel that said \$6 million. That included other things too. Does that mean that you spend less than \$6 million for fuel?

Kuennen said correct. There is a line item for materials, which includes fuel. Fuel is the largest item in that section of the budget. It does include computer software, computer hardware and other material office equipment.

Chair Fenley said I am curious what the current expenditure on fuel is. Just because at the last Metro Mobility Conversation, there is this idea out there that there is this large expenditure on gas, and we are wasting gas driving around. If we can save this small percentage of the budget, people would think you are spending a lot more money on fuel. I am curious to explore that.

I am very curious about what other metro areas do in terms of cost per ride and the subsidy per ride. In comparison to other metro areas. I'm sure you don't cherry pick the other metro areas to make us look good. You probably go by size and similar service and similar operating rules. I would like to see where we stand in terms of other metro areas. So in talking about this service we can say: "Look, you can complain about those folks with disabilities costing all this money, but in Minnesota we are doing it better than everybody else." This is independence.

Rodgers said this was done by the Legislative Task Force two years ago. The comparison was done by the Legislative Task Force. That was a comparison of Metro Mobility with the peer groups across the US. I will just remind you that at that point, when we did the research, we weren't sure where we stood. But it was pretty clear, and it is included in the Legislative Report to the Legislature, that we were required to do at the end of that task force. That we are a very tight, lean and well oiled machine. According to our peers. And generally run way tighter and less expensive than our peers.

Kuennen said yes, the charts that I will include in your email are those same charts including additional ones that were not included in the Legislative Task Force report. I think the subsidy one is very interesting to a lot of people. There are also other charts that speak to our operating expense per revenue hour, passenger trips per revenue hour, passenger trips per capita, and things like that. So you can look at the experience of the system along with the cost of the system.

Chair Fenley said is there any discussion on the table for a second pay increase?

Kuennen said there is analysis going on and some language being crafted in the scope of work for next contracts that will include an improvement of the minimum wage increase as well as cost of living or market analysis. A wage accelerator for reservationists and drivers.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

This item was not presented.

2. Green Line

This item was not presented.

3. Gold Line

Paulsen said we had our meeting last Thursday. We talked about some station concept designs. Then we talked about the cost to be delivered to that project for 2019. The cost would be \$419 million. There are some improvements and amenities we could add, which also include some pedestrian improvements and some pedestrian walkways. We can deliver that but that is another additional \$39 million. We felt that we are still on track with the environmental phase of the project. When we end our two years this is what we will leverage with the feds to get the federal match. One of the things we talked about is the tunnel. Even the lady that serves on there from the business committee from the theater. She says that the multi-million-dollar tunnel. We could probably sell it to the community that we don't really need that. Just before we adjourned, we talked about not having the meeting next month. We wanted some things to roll out.

4. Rush Line

Paulsen said this is another line that runs north to south. I serve as a member on that committee. I don't attend that meeting very much. But they were at a public event last week at my daughter's school. They did get a lot of good feedback from the community. They said they talked to more people at that school event than they ever had in a long time. They actually brought some of our committee members on that committee. They are encouraging them to come to the public events and do the engagement with the community.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MEMBER COMMENT

Rodgers said just for the benefit of people who don't understand how bus stops work, it is the policy of Metro Transit that buses do not jump buses. They pull into a bus stop. If they are in position one, then there are three more buses that pull in behind him. They all slowly wait for the first bus to leave. Then they all move up to the first position when it is their turn. So every bus stops at position one.

If they jumped buses. So if the fourth bus in line loaded up and then jumped all those other buses, they would never get to the first position. The first position is where blind passengers wait for the bus. So they would miss their bus.

One thing that concerns me with the comment about Metro Mobility using the bus stops. If they are in position one, and they are delivering a rider through the door or wherever they are going, that is going to be a long wait for those other buses that are waiting to get to position one. A blind traveler is going to be waiting at position one. That is a problem that needs to be worked through. I would like this to be forwarded to the Hennepin Avenue people. It is something they are going to need to look at.

Jasmine said this is a question for Ken. I have seen buses pull up parallel to another bus. Can they do that?

Rodgers said they cannot do that. That is not their policy. That would disenfranchise blind travelers. That is a discriminatory act. Whenever we witness this type of behavior, or buses jump buses. Now that we are aware that that is not proper protocol, we need to be reporting that. They have records of all the buses. They can

retrace their GPS movements and they can tell when a bus jumps another bus. The driver will be brought in for reeducation and a manager will speak with the driver. If that happens more than once, they don't just keep getting reeducated. They advance the discipline to termination. They take it very seriously. When you do call to complain that you witness something that has happened to you, they will call you back and tell you what happened.

Yumi Nagaoka said in our department when we get that information, we do the research to verify that the driver was in the area that you claim them to be and send that on. But whenever there is an element of diversity or ADA, we copy our diversity department on it so that they are making sure that the managers are following up appropriately. So it is not just going into thin air.

Jasmine said is there just one specific spot for bus number one to stop each time? How many feet off can they be for us to see?

Rodgers said it is right in the vicinity where the bus stop is. Usually a transit T-Pole that identifies where that location is. Or close to it. You shouldn't have to walk the length of the bus. Let me just clarify. If a bus picks up in the second spot and they pull around. But there is no passengers in the vicinity of the front spot, they can do that. But there have to be no passengers in the vicinity. If there is anybody in the vicinity that may be standing waiting for the bus, they have to stop in the first space.

Kuennen said I still am on the email distribution list for Metro Transit Operations. So I am aware that just a few weeks ago Metro Transit Bus Operations reissued their bulletin regarding their policy on stopping at bus stops in context with ADA and serving customers with disabilities. It was pretty clear. Maybe you can facilitate getting a copy of that for the committee to review so that there is some policy to be working from here. If you are experiencing that as a customer, when you contact Customer Service, it is best to make sure you are clear on the route number and if there is a route letter. Because sometimes route numbers and route letters have different bus stops. If a bus pulls up next to another bus at a stop, it might not share that same stop. Some routes skip stopping as part of their operation.

Chair Fenley said I will keep this on the back burner to maybe have someone from Metro Transit come and present to this committee. We would combine other policies to the presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:27 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary