

Minutes of the

MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, March 21, 2016

Committee Members Present: Co-Chair; Edward Reynoso, Kadra Abdi, David Ketroser, Sindy Garcia Morales, Tie Oei, Steven Chavez, Harry Melander, Kimberly Carpenter, Nelima Sitati Munene, Jennifer Munt, Elham Ashkar, Rebecca Stratton, Leslie Redmond, Metric Giles

Committee Members Absent: Co-Chair; Acooa Ellis, Ishmael Israel, Shirley Cain, Ruthie Johnson, Vayong Moua, Leon Rodrigues

A quorum not being present, Co-Chair Edward Reynoso started the meeting at 6:05 pm.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

At 7:35 pm, after concluding the Regional Fare Change presentation and a quorum being present, Co-Chair Reynoso called for an approval of the agenda for the meeting. A motion was made by Steven Chavez, and seconded by David Ketroser. The motion passed unanimously.

A motion to approve the minutes of the February 21st meeting was made by David Ketroser, and seconded by Kimberly Carpenter. The motion passed unanimously.

REGIONAL FARE CHANGE PRESENTATION

Nicholas Eull, Senior Manager of Revenue Collection at Metro Transit, and Michelle Fure, Public Involvement Manager, [presented about a potential regional fare change](#). The presentation discussed the current projections for Metro Transit's budget shortfall, potential fare increase scenarios, Metro Transit's Transit Assistance Pass (TAP) program, and the upcoming public engagement process involved with a potential fare increase. At the beginning of the presentation, Nicholas indicated four suggested areas where the EAC could help:

- Feedback and weaknesses on the current approach
- Help ensure effective outreach and public involvement opportunities
- Help drive awareness and community participation in the engagement process
- Help push for a stable funding solution

Throughout the presentation, members of the committee made the following comments and questions:

1. Metro Transit currently has reduced fares for seniors (over age 65), youth from ages 6-12, and Medicare card holders. There would be a lot of overlap between the Medicare card holding riders and senior riders. Has Metro Transit considered adding recipients of medical assistance to these groups for reduced fares?

The three groups currently receiving those reduced fares are required by the FTA, including Medicare card holders. However, Metro Transit will look into recipients of medical assistance, though there may be some overlap with Metro Transit's TAP program.

2. The TAP program may ultimately save government money. Jennifer Munt shared an anecdote of how social services workers with Hennepin County often want to help set up people with jobs along transit lines, but without a way to pay for transit, many people can't get to their work place. Permanently establishing the TAP program could help these types of situations and ultimately save money spent by other government entities that service low-income populations.

3. Increasing fares for Metro Mobility could have a negative effect where it means that people only use Metro Mobility if they need it. How does this play into the decision to potentially raise fares for Metro Mobility?

Metro Mobility is mandated through the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide a substantial portion of the rides currently offered at Metro Mobility, but there are also a lot of rides taken for non-mandated purposes. The rides that could be lost with a fare increase would be discretionary rides. Additionally, Metro Mobility will explore looking into a distance-based charge for non mandated rides. The Council is potentially raising fares, while acknowledging the impact it would have on Metro Mobility customers. There are also efforts to work with the legislature to secure more funding specifically for Metro Mobility.

4. Many people use Metro Mobility for doctors' appointments and medical assistance. Do counties like Hennepin County help subsidize this cost?

Yes, counties help subsidize the cost of these rides.

5. While the prospect of increasing fares for transit and Metro Mobility is scary, it is a result of dealing with a legislative and political climate that is not friendly to public transportation. Other cities across the country have lower farebox recovery rates, but they have a more stable funding mechanism compared to being funded in large part by the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax (MVST).
6. Which of the fare increase scenarios would have the highest and lowest impact on communities of color and low-income populations?

Scenario 1 would have a larger impact on communities of color and low-income populations because its effect. Scenario 2 would have more of an impact on communities in the suburbs because of the additional fare increase for express fares. However, these projections only provide an indication of the possible impact they have.

7. Who at the Council will lead the engagement process? With which community organizations will they be working?

Michelle Fure and the Public Outreach team in the Communications department will be leading the effort, along with community engagement staff at Metro Transit and Council Members. They will be working with several of the community organizations that were consulted with the Public Engagement Plan, including the Community Engagement Steering Committee, the Equity in Place coalition, TLC Smart Trips and the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability.

8. One of the potential solutions for a more stable funding source would be a half cent sales tax, which is what Governor Dayton has pushed for. However, there is a lot of opposition in the legislature towards that type of sales tax.
9. Some of the suggestions that have been brought forth by the legislature include eliminating bus routes with a farebox recovery rate below 80%. However, this would eliminate almost every bus route. A later suggestion of 60% would still eliminate most bus routes.
10. Is Access Press involved in any of the community engagement and outreach processes?

Yes, they are included in the list of ways to advertise the public input process.

11. Are there grants through the FTA that the Council could apply for to fund the TAP program?

Nicholas was unaware of any grants that would directly fund the TAP program. Funds could be repurposed from other grants, but that would involve taking money away from the capital funds for Metro Transit, meaning funding problems would just be reallocated from one area to another.

12. What changes are being considered for transit passes like the UPass or the Metropass?

All of the passes would likely increase in price proportional to the increase in fares.

13. Youth from the ages of 6-12 are included in the groups who receive reduced fares. What is the reason for not including older youth for these discounted rates?

While it does not include everyone in the age group of 12-18, many schools are part of a fare program. All Minneapolis public schools, most Saint Paul public schools and several charter schools take part in programs that provide transit passes for students.

14. If the TAP program were to be established permanently, how many new people who use the program would be able to find jobs?

Mary Capistrant has been responsible for the pilot TAP programs at Metro Transit, and can return at a future EAC meeting to provide more detail about what expanding the TAP program would mean.

15. It is important to focus on how a fare increase is presented. It may be more effective to instead ask members of the public “how would a \$0.25 increase in transit fare impact your life?”

As an item on the EAC’s work plan for 2017, the potential Regional Fare Change issue will be addressed at future EAC meetings. Steven Chavez suggested it be a standing agenda item at EAC meetings until the fare change is finalized. In order to provide additional information and context to members of the EAC, Equity Manager Cedrick Baker asked the committee what other materials they would need. Members of the committee suggested the following resources:

- A full list of community organizations and partners working with the Council on this issue
- Processes and information about prior fare increases in 2005 and 2008
 - Any evaluation of how certain communities were impacted after previous fare increases
- More information (perhaps a presentation, as mentioned in comment 14) about the establishment of Metro Transit’s TAP program

Nicholas Eull and Michelle Fure agreed to return to the committee at the next few meetings to provide updates and the information requested by the committee.

WORK PLAN PROCESS FOLLOW UP

Equity Manager Cedrick Baker shared two draft documents based off of the committee’s work on developing methods for evaluating potential agenda items and evaluating those items. These two documents were created based on the EAC’s extended planning meeting on February 17th. The rubric for assessment will allow for the EAC’s standing committee to prioritize potential agenda items and determine what will eventually proceed to the full committee. The equity evaluation (based off of suggestions for a scorecard) will help guide the EAC’s recommendations that will accompany an item to the Council or a standing committee. It was noted that items on the initial 2017 work plan, including the potential fare increase, skipped the assessment process in an effort for the EAC to jump into their work plan.

A discussion of the equity evaluation followed based off of a discussion at the February 17th meeting about including health as a way to evaluate items. The conversation included the following points:

- Health could be used as its own criteria, along with race, ethnicity, income and ability on the equity evaluation.

- Would health better be seen as a portion of the “ability” row? Health could be viewed as only being an issue if it resulted in a change in anyone’s ability.
- Health could be revisited as a work plan item for the full committee
- In 2014, the Minnesota Department of health published a report on health disparities in Minnesota. It would be worthwhile for the committee to review this report:
 - The report can be found at: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/chs/healthequity/>
- Is health a cause of inequity or a consequence of it? Race, ethnicity, income and ability all seem to be reasons for inequity, and health can be a consequence of those four factors.
- An additional row should be added to the equity evaluation for “other” items, which would specifically list out health as a potential consideration

Based off the final comment, a motion to revise the equity evaluation to add a fifth row for “other” criteria, specifically listing health, was made by Rebecca Stratton, and moved by Nelima Sitati Munene. The motion passed. Cedrick Baker said he would make the necessary changes and bring the revised version before the EAC.

REPORTS

Announcements –

Kimberly Carpenter shared an event being held by Metro Blooms on March 22nd from 6-8 pm at 1718 Glenwood Avenue North in Minneapolis. Kimberly suggested that the work done by Metro Blooms be added to a future meeting of the Equity Advisory Committee.

Council Member Harry Melander, who is a new member of the EAC, introduced himself to the committee. He represents Council District 12, which serves all of Washington County except Hugo, Landfall and Oakdale.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 8:09 p.m.

Kevin Murphy
Recording Secretary