

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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TRANSPORTATION **A**CCESSIBILITY **A**DVISORY **C**OMMITTEE **M**EETING
Wednesday, March 7, 2012

1. Call to Order

At 12:35 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Ron Biss. **Public present:** Anne Lyman from DARTS. **Council staff present:** Pam Steffen, from Metro Transit, David Russell, Paul Colton, Greg Schuck, Mike Kuehn and Alison Coleman.

Members Present: Ron Biss, Margot Imdieke Cross, Bruce Lattu, Darrell Paulsen, Jerolyn Pofahl, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Diogo Reiss and Nichole Villavicencio.

Members Absent: John Schatzlein, Christian Knights, Wayne Wittman and Willie Daniels. **Members excused:** Kim Kang, James Williams and Heidi Myhre.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Imdieke Cross moved to approve the agenda. Lattu seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Approval of February 1, 2012 Minutes

Paulsen moved to approve the minutes. Villavicencio seconded the motion. The motion carried.

4. Legislative Update

Mike Kuehn spoke to the TAAC committee. The first committee deadline is March 16. Last week the report on the February forecast that will drive the budget for the rest of the biennium through June 30, 2013 was issued. It does not appear that the budget for this current biennium will continue to operate on a positive way so there will not be a need to do a supplemental budget bill, which could have led to more reductions in various government programs, including transit. The forecast showed that there is a \$323 million surplus. The surplus is money that is already committed. Five million would go into the state's budget reserves. The other \$318 million is some of the money needed to repay the more than \$2 billion that was cut in school payments last year as part of the budget deal reached in special session. The forecast also shows that the potential deficit in the next biennium from a projected \$1.3 billion to \$1.1 billion. That does not include adding in the cost of what is owed to the school district. The state is still looking at a \$3 billion hole going into the next biennium.

There was very little change in the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax revenues. That is a positive for the transit funding.

Kuehn spoke about bonding. The Senate uses their Capital Investment Committee to hear bonding. They were scheduled to go before the Senate to make the presentations for \$5 million for regional parks and \$25 million in state bonding requests for the Southwest LRT project. That has been postponed until Monday. The House is using their Finance divisions to review a number of financial requests for state bonding. They are going to be making recommendations forward to the House Capital Investment

Committee. The appearance before them with the bonding requests has not been scheduled at this point. The House bill recommendations of the Finance Committee should move forward in another week.

Support has been elicited for the transit request for light rail. They have solicited support from the three major chambers of commerce. They have met with large businesses like United Health and others in the area of the Southwest corridor. It is one of the governor's recommendations. The state commitment would be 10 percent or \$125 million over the next two or three years in state bonding to meet the state's commitment to the corridor.

This past Monday there was a hearing of the Legislative Commission on Metropolitan Government. That is a group of 14 legislators, seven from the House and seven from the Senate. There are four from the majority party in each House and three from the minority party appointed by the leaderships to look at the Council. Peggy Scott from Anoka County is the Chair of it this year. The Metro Council Governance Plan changes the delivery of how transit services would be planned for and operated. It changes the Met Council from being appointed and serving at the Governor's pleasure back to where it was before 1994 which is four year staggered terms for Council members with half of the terms being up every two years. That bill did pass in 2008 but was vetoed by Governor Pawlenty.

It created a new version of the Regional Transit Board. It created a new agency called the Regional Transportation Governance Board. It also created a new Metropolitan Transit Commission to do operations. It makes the new Regional Governance Board a Metropolitan Planning Organization for the region, which right now is the role of the Transportation Advisory Board because the Council does not have elected officials. Federal laws require that. The TAB is made up of local elected officials.

The new Regional Transportation Governance Board would be responsible for transportation planning, policy making and fiscal administration by absorbing the powers of the Met Council and Metropolitan Regional Rail Authorities. The Metropolitan Transit Commission would take over for Metro Transit on issues concerning Metro Transit, Metro Mobility and the related powers and duties of Metro Transit in relation to contracted routes. Under the bill both boards would go into effect January 1, 2014. The Regional Transportation Governance Board would be made up of two county commissioners from each of the seven counties, one city or town official from each of the 16 Metropolitan Council districts appointed by the governor and any other membership as required by federal law to comply with this Metropolitan Planning Organization guidelines that the feds require. It would replace the Metropolitan Council as the MPO in the region.

They heard it Monday night. Representative Beard is the chief author of it. It hasn't been introduced officially. They are probably going to lay it over. They are still pushing some of the individual parts of it, particularly the staggered terms for Council members. It is a major change in terms of delivery of the transit service.

There is a hearing tonight at 5:00 in the House Transportation Committee. Three of the bills being heard are the following:

HF2560 is Representative Scott's bill that would require the proportional distribution of any transit funding reductions. So a part of the metropolitan area would not lose more than a proportional cut in their current service across the board. The Opt Outs had their money from the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax withheld so they would spend down some of their reserves. This legislation would stop that from happening.

HF2321 is Representative Scalze's bill. It proposes to reopen the Opt Out statute to allow any city with little or no service that is in the metropolitan taxing district to apply for local replacement service. To have an Opt Out program. It would still be the same amount of money. If you had additional Opt Out

programs you would distribute the amount of money that the Opt Outs get, which is 3.74 percent of the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax revenues.

HF2696 is a bill that Representative Beard put in that increases the amount set aside for Opt Outs of the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax from 3.74 percent to 6.25 percent. This would take money that is used for other programs. It is about \$21 million a year that would then be used for the Opt Out programs and would be taken away from all the other programs that are funded from the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax like the Metro Transit and Metro Mobility services.

There is also a hearing in the Senate on Friday afternoon that deals with a couple of other bills. One is transit related. It requires local approval for the alignment of any light rail route in the future.

There is another bill that deals with Metropolitan Council planning. It deals with the relationship of our policy planning with what communities do with their local comprehensive planning. It says a lot of our policy plans would only be advisory in nature to local governments. Right now most of it is but there are some areas where it relates more to land use planning, regional systems, capacities, sewers, roadways and transit. There are some areas under current law that the Council has to sign off on as the comp plan impacts regional systems.

The last bill is the regional transit bonding authorization. That is requesting this year \$25.4 million in transit bonding authorization to sell regional bonds. It is fleet replacement and those projects identified in the capital plan for transit. Bonding authorization is requested every year. It got introduced in the House by Representative Holberg.

There is another bill that deals with mandating by July 1, a 25 percent across the board fare increase. It is a \$6 to \$9 million a year increase. That is based on a three percent ridership decline. The federal requirements of holding public input sessions and meetings would not give enough time to implement the fare increase by July 1.

5. Presentation & Discussion about Metro Mobility

Paul Colton gave the TAAC committee a presentation laying out a brief history of Metro Mobility, a summary of the laws that guide Metro Mobility, and then took a look at the demographic and operational trends of Metro Mobility.

1976 Project Mobility was a demonstration project in the City of Minneapolis to test paratransit service. 1979 it was named Metro Mobility and was expanded to the first ring of suburbs.

1984 Regional Transit Board was formed. They took over responsibilities for the Metro Mobility program.

1986 Service Expands by the RTB to what it is today.

1990 ADA Signed into law.

1993 Service Collapsed. October 1993 the National Guard was called out.

1994 Service Restructured. The Metro Mobility Service Center was developed. They got rid of the contractor to oversee the program. It was done in house by the RTB. The Metropolitan Council took over in the fall of 1994 from the RTB.

2005 Certification Changes. Metro Mobility was a self certifying transit property. They follow the federal guidelines.

2011 Installed the software module into the reservation system. It helps to identify an ADA ride.

There was a 17 percent increase in ridership between 2006 and 2011. The vehicle needs have increased by 12 percent. The productivity has increased five percent. Denials have gone down 90 percent.

In 2011 Metro Mobility delivered over 1,531,000 rides. That was based on 14,859 unique riders that use the service. They utilize about 355 vehicles. There are 92 communities and six contractors.

The state in 2006 defined the taxing district. This was the Metro Mobility footprint in the metropolitan area. The feds said they needed to provide service within $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the local fixed route network. This is a smaller area than the Transit Taxing District. So Metro Mobility follows the Transit Taxing District and provides service to the whole area.

The feds said Metro Mobility has to have comparable hours to the local fixed route network. They do that by community, based on the local service they receive. They developed a hybrid to that. In the ADA communities they use those hours as closely as they can. For areas where there is no fixed route they have established some default hours so that they are providing service and meeting those needs.

The state has no restrictions on certification. The feds say service is based on the inability to use the fixed route transit service is how someone qualifies for Metro Mobility. They are an extension of Metro Transit and the other fixed route providers. They follow the federal guidelines.

The state says they need to be door through door service. The feds say based on capacity and scheduling they need to do every ride. In terms of door through door it is at the request of the customer. Metro Mobility does both.

The feds say they cannot have any capacity restrictions. That means zero capacity denials. They can't limit trips. They can't have any waiting lists. They can't have untimely pickups or excessive ride times. The feds allow them to take reservations up to 14 days in advance. Metro Mobility does it up to four days in advance. They have to schedule all ADA rides within one hour of the requested time. They do the same thing for the non ADA rides. They can place the non ADA rides on standby. Sometimes they do. They use a 90 minute parameter. There should be ride times in less than 90 minutes. They can charge no more than two times the fixed route fare. There are no restrictions for trip purpose.

The general population of certified Metro Mobility by age is the older the demographic the much higher the percentage of the population that is certified. As of 2008, those over 85 who were certified for Metro Mobility is 12.24 percent. Ages 25 to 34 is 0.30 percent. The general public population is 1.5 percent of people are over 85 and 13.1 percent of the population is between 25 and 34. The biggest group is between 45 and 54 in the metro area. The highest number of trips taken are in the range of 45 to 64. That is about 44 percent of the ridership base.

By 2025 Metro Mobility could see a ridership figure of almost three million rides, if they continue at the pace of five percent a year. On a lower scale it could be two million rides.

6. Metro Mobility Stats

Paul Colton spoke to the TAAC committee. The IT department is creating the stats for Metro Mobility. A new and improved packet of information on stats will be available soon.

David Russell stated that there has been an increase in suspensions.

7. Agency Contact List

David Russell spoke to the TAAC committee. There is an increase in assisted living and elderly care facilities. There is more direct contact with individuals and filling out applications. Some applications from people who were born in the 1920's and 1930's were denied because there was no indication that

they had a disability. There is a growing list of agencies that have been losing their transportation services due to budget cuts. Metro Mobility is getting referrals from them.

8. Member Comment

None.

9. Public Comment

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee about the Northstar electrical outlet installations on the main floor on each car. There are 16 cars completed and two left to install.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:18 p.m.