

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, June 7, 2017

Committee Members Present: Chair Walker, Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Ken Rodgers, Kari Sheldon, John Clark, Heidi Myhre, Lukus Zuker, Bre Royer, Margot Imdieke Cross, David Fenley and Patty Thorsen.

Committee Members Absent: Lisa Childs.

Committee Members Excused: Dona Harris and Robert Platz.

Council Staff Present: Jovita Oghumah, Doug Cook, Berry Farrington, Caitlin Schwartz, John Paul Zanaska, Pam Steffen and Jan Dietrich from Metro Transit, Mai Thor, Christine Kuennen, Leslie Kandaras, Michelle Fure, Dana Rude and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Mark Olivares from Saint Paul Smart Trips and Barb Harris from Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Walker called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:35 p.m. on Wednesday, June 7, 2017.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Rodgers, seconded by Bates to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2017 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Legislative Update

Leslie Kandaras spoke to the TAAC committee. She is a Senior Project Coordinator in the Government Affairs Department of the Metropolitan Council. This is a post legislative session. January 3 was when the session started. When the legislature started off this year everyone knew it was going to be interesting. The state was coming in with a \$1.65 billion surplus. There are many new members. The party control of the state senate had shifted. Setting up a divided government with a Republican House and Senate and a DFL governor. There were also many unresolved issues from last session. The year 2016 was a bonding year. The legislature failed to complete a bonding bill during that session. That was an item they took up again this year. At the end of 2016 the tax bill that they had passed ultimately was not signed into law after a drafting error was discovered that could have been quite costly in future years. There is a lot going into this session. Some competing priorities the governor continued to release stress using the surplus to invest in an array of areas including education. The legislature was more focused on getting the robust tax bill passed with tax cuts and credits. It set up an interesting dynamic from the very beginning.

For transportation, Governor Dayton had proposed in his budget, the metro area sales tax that would have provided a half cent sales tax to all transit services here in the metro area. It would have relieved pressure on the general fund, which is used to fund the Metro Mobility transit. By May, the budget conversation had changed dramatically. Earlier in the session the House bill had proposed dramatic cuts to metro area transit. It would have left the Met Council with about a \$120 million shortfall. It would have required a 40 percent cut. By the time the special session was done. A few days after the constitutionally required adjournment date for the regular session, the transportation bill that had passed was ultimately signed into law. There was \$70 million above the base level for metro area transit. It ends up being just shy of \$250 million in 2018 and 2019 for metro

area transit. So it was a better outcome but still short of what Governor Dayton's sales tax proposal would have yielded. That would have yielded closer to \$300 million for the 2018-2019 budget. It would have also provided ongoing consistent funding into future years. In looking at the Transportation Finance Bill, while staff is glad to see that the House, in particular, reversed course and put additional funding into transit. It has already set up a problem for the 2020-2021 budget cycle where they would be going into the budget discussion with a \$110 million structural deficit. Certainly, the issues regarding funding transit here in the metro area are far from being resolved but it is helpful to know what they have to work within 2018-2019.

Also in that Transportation Finance Bill, there were a lot of different policy proposals that were included. For example, it is clear that the state will not fund the operations for SouthWest light rail. They are also preventing the Metropolitan Council from using certificates of participation backed by the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax Revenue. There are some other provisions like that where an opportunity for the legislators to put some parameters around the work the Council does. But ultimately many of the controversial policy proposals that had been floated were not included in the final package. For example, the Transportation Bill that first passed the House and Senate was vetoed by the Governor a few weeks before the end of session would have dramatically transformed the Metropolitan Council itself. It would have changed the governance structure so there would no longer be an appointed board by the Governor but rather people who are elected as county officials or city officials would populate the Council. That is just one example of some of the more controversial issues that ended up dropping out before the final deal was reached.

One of the proposals that was left in the bill was the Metro Mobility Task Force. That language was included in the final deal signed by Governor Dayton. It requires the Metropolitan Council to convene a task force on Metro Mobility to look at cost savings and efficiencies. It stipulates who can be members of that committee. It requires that the report is finished by February 2018. It requires that the Council has already convened the task force by September 1, 2017. It will be moving quickly. That was the Transportation Finance Bill.

Also in the brief special session that occurred after the constitutional adjournment date, the legislature passed a bonding bill. That included a few key transit priorities. It includes over \$12 million to complete the funding commitments for the Orange Line. It also included over \$8 million for the transit station at the Mall of America.

In the tax bill, there was additional dollars to pay for fleet replacement and other capital projects. That was an important item for us. Council staff had anticipated in getting over \$40 million of authority in the 2016 tax bill that ultimately did not become law. It is necessary that we receive that authority this year and that did happen. That will make it possible to replace vehicles, Metro Mobility vehicles and a lot of other items that are crucial to the system.

It is written in the law that by July 1 the appointments open for the Metro Mobility Task Force. By August the appointments have to be made. By September the Task Force has to begin. The Metropolitan Council is the organization convening it. The Metro Mobility department will be organizing that.

Stroller and Tie Down Videos

Jovita Oghumah, Assistant Manager of Training at Metro Transit and Doug Cook, Customer Advocate at Metro Transit, spoke to the TAAC committee.

As they started their presentation, Ken Rodgers asked if the videos were audio described. "Are the visual elements of the video accessible to the audience? There are two people who are blind on this committee that can't see the videos."

Ighynah and Cook said they were not.

Rodgers suggested that they not use them. "If they are not accessible to all of us we should not be viewing them. That is part of our state law that requires us to follow accessibility guidelines. The guidelines for videos require that videos with visual elements be audio described as well as captioned."

Sam Jasmine said "I would not be able to comment if there is something wrong in the video. If we want to bring attention to it because it is not video described. We can't know."

Pam Steffen said that "this in an internal video for the operators. She said it is worthwhile to see the videos. After this meeting, she can talk about getting the videos to Ken and Sam in the way that they can view them.

David Fenley said "you are asking people who utilize public transportation to comment on something that is being used to train people that operate public transportation. Their point is very valid."

Jasmine said that “afterwards is too late.”

Pam Steffen said “I am not saying that it is not valid. Because we have staff here it would be great to view these videos.”

Rodgers said “quite frankly I object. And I would ask that they would not be shown. I think this is a very powerful message that we need to send that if people want to address us they need to address us accessibly. That is just my opinion.”

Jasmine said “I would be willing to stand with that.”

Fenley asked the presenters “did you know what audio described videos were before you came into this room today?”

The presenters said no they did not.

Imdieke Cross said “Madam Chair I would like to make a motion that this committee not view this video.” Rodgers seconded the motion. The motion carried. The videos were not viewed.

Rodgers said “I would like to suggest that the presenters describe the major points of the videos. That is going to have to suffice for now. I think this underscores a deeper concern that if this agency is producing materials that are not accessible. That is a problem. I don’t know if it is the purview of this committee specifically to move that forward but somehow, we need to get the message to the powers that be that this is not a practice that should continue. This needs to be addressed.”

Imdieke Cross said “this goes to a more systemic issue that people approach this committee really not knowing what we do but certainly not making their presentations addressing our accessibility issues generally or making sure that this material... it is more than this video. This is very systemic of the Met Council and how they interact with this committee. From our perspective, there is a huge problem with the Met Council and their understanding of accessibility.”

Rodgers said “this is nothing personal to either of the presenters. This is more of a systemic issue like Margot said. It just happens that you are the guys that get to press the point. If you could describe the major elements of the video in your presentation as opposed to viewing them, we can move forward.”

Cook said the first video that we are not watching has to do with mobility securement for our new operators. All of the new operators view this video when they go through their training as part of their training with securing and learning about ADA and what the requirements are. There are statements in there straight from ADA that talk about what the responsibilities are. It shows them the proper way of securing a person in a wheelchair or a person in a scooter using two different systems that we have. There is a four-point securement system. Then there is a new system called a Q’POD, which is on the A-Line buses that is a three-point restraint. It also talks about the role that operators play in securing or not securing Segways. They are more viewed as a stroller or walker. It mainly focuses on mobility devices and how they should be secured and what the responsibilities of the operator to do so safely and what would happen if they had issues on the bus and they couldn’t secure the person. It goes to procedures for that and calling Transit Control Center and getting information from them. They can either find a better way to help this person that might have an issue with their scooter or wheelchair and then proceed from there.

Oghumah said that the stroller policy has been revised. The purpose of the video was to bring that revision to the operator to let them know how to treat customers when the situation arises. The new policy does not require people to fold their strollers. That policy does come into effect and the video was done to supplement that and bring that knowledge to the operators. The operator is required to respectfully tell them what is required. When they do not comply, they can call the control center for help.

Steffen said that one of the reasons for the change in the stroller policy is that the transportation department did a survey on all the other agencies, the peer agencies in the system. What they found out is that the peer agencies have changed their policies to not have the customer fold them up. In light of that and trying to force customers to fold up their stroller does cause contention between the customer and the stroller person and could result in assault against the operators. That is something they are trying to negate against. The video shows how to handle a situation when someone with a stroller is sitting in the seats reserved for those with disabilities.

When you see that happening, get the bus number and email Pam. The video would have shown how to deal with this situation on the bus. The video suggests that the operator give the person with the stroller a courtesy ride for their next ride if they would be willing to fold up their stroller and move. They want the operators to ask but they are not enforcers.

Cook said that the stroller video uses staff as models. They are trying to board a bus. There is a woman and a child with a stroller. They ask her to fold the stroller. There is usually not just a stroller. There are bags and bottles falling out. If she can fold the stroller, great. But they don't want to cause conflict between the customers and the driver. The driver should be asking the person if they can. If they can't then the driver calls customer relations and let them know that. Then they can reeducate that driver because they should be interacting with the customers to avoid any conflict.

Oghumah said that the drivers are trained once a year on procedures with the Professional Operator Development Course. They include the issues of mobility devices. If an operator doesn't follow the rules they are disciplined by the managers at the garage level.

2. Metro Mobility Statistics & South Zone Update

Dana Rude spoke to the TAAC committee. He is a Project Administrator for Metro Mobility. The service measures for April continued to show improvement. They were up around five percent for the entire system in terms of on-time performance. The total number of late pickups has declined markedly since mid-winter. The same trends also hold for appointment times where the on-time arrivals were around 90 percent. The total number of missed trips was at its lowest point since 2015. As they come into summer they are going to be going into the slow season or what has historically been the slow season. You can expect to see the overall ridership plateau over the summer months. It will begin to pick up in late August or September.

The complaints as a result of that show a noticeable decline relative to the March numbers. They remain consistent with the downward trends overall. Productivity is stable. It is below the contract minimum. That is deliberate on our part because staff is attempting to address the on-time performance issues. The higher productivity, given the same number of drivers, vehicles and an increase in demand, usually means the on-time performance will be slim. The reverse is true if demand begins to fall. On-time performance can go up and productivity will go up. That relationship is not a one-to-one situation. There is a certain amount of variability.

On-time performance is simply the number of rides that Metro Mobility has been able to deliver within the half hour window. Where they have arrived for the pick-up within the half-hour window. According to the riders guide they are allowed half an hour from the negotiated pickup time. The percentage is the total number of trips we have delivered on time. Where the driver made the pickup on time.

When it comes to appointment times they measure the total number of trips that had a requested appointment time and then the percentage of those that were picked up within one hour prior to the appointment. So if you have a 9:00 appointment, the driver can drop you off from 8:00 on. That is considered on time. As long as the driver gets you there by 9:00. If you get there after 9:00 you are late.

It is important to mention that if you end up with an appointment time where you get there late, to get your money reimbursed for that trip, you would have to call Customer Service at Metro Mobility and tell them what trip you were on and they will get you a free ride coupon that you can use for another trip. You should see the free ride coupon within a week of your call to Customer Service.

3. Better Bus Stops

Berry Farrington, a Senior Planner at Metro Transit, Caitlin Schwartz, Community Outreach Coordinator at Metro Transit, and Barb Harris from the Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council, spoke to the TAAC committee. They are here to talk about the results of their year-long community engagement process. Better Bus Stops is a project to enhance access to opportunity by investing in bus stops. They focus on neighborhoods for this project for both the capital investments at bus stops and the community engagement process that are areas of concentrated poverty where 50 percent or more residents are people of color. That includes parts of Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Richfield, Minneapolis and Saint Paul. The goals for the capital project is to add 150 new shelters and improve up to 75 existing shelters with light and heat. As of the end of 2016 they were approximately half way through those goals. Thus far they have 74 additional shelters placed and 40 existing shelters improved.

The community engagement process was March of 2016 through March of 2017. The model that they used for this community engagement process was the partnership between Metro Transit, the community engagement team, which is comprised of three non-profit organizations: Nexus Community Partners, the Alliance for Metropolitan Stability and the Center for Urban and Regional Affairs. They worked with them to lead a subcontracting process with 11 community-based organizations. Barb Harris and the Minneapolis Highrise Representative Council being one of them. She is here today to tell a little about her work. The reason they had this model is to utilize the expertise of community organizations in their own neighborhoods and constituencies allowing them to amplify the voice of the under represented communities, folks that aren't historically engaged in or invited into the process. To really work with these organizations for them to design and implement their own unique engagement strategies. They know best what works with their communities.

All of the players at the table in this model were paid to be there. They were all compensated for their time and this created the conditions for leadership development and ownership over the process and the learning they are going to share today.

Barb Harris spoke to the TAAC committee. Barb and her team focused on engagement within several of their high-rise buildings in Minneapolis. This includes a lot of work with seniors and those with disabilities and utilizing their existing network of resident leaders and building events.

They are the public housing high rise tenant organization in Minneapolis. Representing over 5,000 low income, largely elderly persons and over 50 percent persons with disabilities and over 50 percent people of color. The very demographic in part were what Metro Transit staff were looking to reach out to and frequently were underrepresented in big meetings like this. Also, people who are dependent on transit. Most of the high-rise residents do not have vehicles. They take the bus, Metro Mobility and LRT to get around to take care of their daily business.

They knew there would be a lot of interest in participating in the surveys. She is going to give one short story of how they were overwhelmed they were when after organizing resident leaders to help with completing surveys they set up a tabling event in one of the high rises in the lobby. They wanted to reach out beyond the big meetings. They publicized it with flyers on every floor and at Council meetings passed out by the social workers to encourage people to fill out this survey. We had a drawing throughout the time of this survey process. Overall there were four drawings for \$25.00 in cash.

They got to the meeting area of the lobby 20 minutes early to get set up. They set up the refreshments and the surveys. There was a board where people could also post their three most important criteria for where they thought Metro Transit could put bus shelters and what was the most important. There were between 18 and 20 people waiting when they got there. They were waiting to fill out the surveys. They wanted to be sure to be counted. They were happy to see some of the changes that have already been put into place.

Farrington said there are 11 organizations that are doing work similar to what Barb described. In total, they estimate about 7,000 people participated in the community engagement process. It was important to hear from people in the community what was important at a bus stop. What features are important like shelter, light and heat. What should they take into account as they prioritize where they put those investments?

Metro Transit sponsored a survey and Barb's team brought that survey right to residents. There was over 2,000 people to participate. They were really pleased to see that. They looked at the demographics of who did that survey. That was the communities that they wanted to reach. The demographics represented the transit riders as a whole in terms of age and income. About 20 percent of the people self-identified as having a disability. So, they felt like they got voices in places that they didn't always get to hear from.

In addition to the formal Metro Transit sponsored survey, many organizations customized that survey or made their own questionnaires. As an example, one group did a survey where they used a dry erase marker where you can circle what is most important like a shelter, bench or a shade tree. They got over 2,000 responses through those as well. Organizations in total did about 200 community events. Staff showed up in 11 different cities in addition to our focus area cities.

What did they learn from this process? They wanted to get information to help them update their guidelines for how to prioritize bus stops for shelters. They heard it is a community priority to put shelters where most people are waiting for the bus. Also, to place them near hospitals, social service centers and senior housing where people could benefit from shelters. Where people rely on transit and don't have access to their own car. They also heard it is important to keep placing shelters. All of the features at the bus stop shelters would be lighting,

heat, benches and maps. Priorities at bus stops and beyond: Safe street crossings, personal safety, maintenance at bus stops and shelters, frequency of bus service and operations, equitable distribution of resources and fares.

In addition to adding shelters, part of that is making sure that a clear pathway through the bus stop and adding ADA pads where there aren't any and where the sidewalks are in poor condition. The shelters have benches, not lean rails. Currently Metro Transit maintains those bus stops and shelters. They don't have the staff to clear snow from all of the bus stops. They prioritize based on the GoTo card information where limited mobility boardings are. Going forward and partnering with the cities and counties who are removing snow so that they can coordinate that better.

4. Fare Increase Engagement

Michelle Fure, Manager of Public Involvement at the Metropolitan Council, spoke to the TAAC committee. First, she will do a quick overview to remind the TAAC members of the fare situation with both the proposed increase and where they are with the budget. She will also provide an opportunity to give comments on the fare increase. They began this fare proposal engagement process before the end of the legislative session. Before the session ended they were anticipating a deficit in the Metropolitan Council budget related to transit. Today they are not anticipating any further problems with the budget at least in the coming biennium. All the numbers that you saw before. All the numbers in the bill cover the budget. Things that changed from the \$84 million number that you had were the anticipated revenues from the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax went up. They got more of the budget from that.

Then the financing mechanism related to SouthWest LRT changed from the time they initially talked to groups and the end of the legislative session. The Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB), which is responsible for spending the quarter cent sales tax for the five counties in the metro area is going to dissolve. As a result, the counties of Hennepin and Ramsey and all the other counties will be using their sales tax differently. Hennepin County in specific will be planning to spend their sales tax to help us finance the SouthWest LRT so the Council will not have to bear the cost of that any longer. So that number went away as well. It was somewhere around \$60 million that the need from the legislature ended up being and the money in the bill did cover that. They are not anticipating any further deficit.

Because they began the process and they always finish processes that they start. That they get all of the information and wonderful feedback that they have been hearing from the public and the communities throughout the region is still used as part of the decision making processes. The Council will consider all of the things that we are hearing and that is up to them whether or not to have a fare increase. They are not sure when that decision will come. It has initially been discussed that they will consider that in July sometime. It could really be any time because they don't have the pressure of the budget as they did before. They have not set those dates yet. As soon as they know when those decisions are going to be made they will communicate that. The public comment process goes through June 26. They will be continuing to receive public comment and go through the public hearing process until that concludes on June 26.

Just to give you a quick overview of the items on the current proposal for discussion. It is an increase of either 25 cents or 50 cents on local fares. On express fares, both in the off peak and the peak time frames would also be 25 cents or 50 cents. The current local off-peak fare is \$1.75. The 25-cent increase would be \$2.00 and the 50-cent increase would make it \$2.25. The current local peak fare is \$2.25. The fare increase of 25 cents would make it \$2.50. The fare increase of 50 cents would make it \$2.75.

The current express off-peak fare is \$2.25. A 25-cent increase would make it \$2.50. A 50-cent increase would make it \$2.75. There is also a policy proposal to eliminate the off-peak fare for express service and charge one express fare. The current express peak fare is \$3.00. The 25-cent increase would make it \$3.25. The 50-cent increase would make it \$3.50.

For the Metro Mobility service, they would raise fares either 50 cents or 75 cents. The current Metro Mobility off-peak fare is \$3.00. A 50-cent increase would make the fare \$3.50. The 75-cent increase would make the fare \$3.75. The current Metro Mobility peak fare is \$4.00. The 50-cent increase would make the fare \$4.50. The 75-cent increase would make the fare \$4.75. There is also a policy proposal to charge an extra \$1.25 a trip for non-ADA trips longer than 15 miles. There is also a policy proposal to only accept Go-To cards with stored value and/or cash for fare payment on Metro Mobility. There is also a policy proposal that if you are able to transfer to fixed route service from Metro Mobility there would be a discount that they could offer.

Transit Link Service. They would align fares with Metro Mobility fares. Currently the Transit Link fares are based on distance. They would remove the distance-based structure. Transit Link fares are currently the same in peak/off peak and are based on distance. Less than 10 miles is \$2.25 per trip. From 10 to 20 miles \$4.50 per trip. More than 20 miles is \$6.75 per trip. Proposed Transit Link fares are off peak \$3.50 or \$3.75. For peak fares would be \$4.50 or \$4.75. There is also a policy proposal to charge an extra \$1.25 a trip for Transit Link trips longer than 15 miles. There is also a policy proposal to only accept GoTo cards with stored value and/or cash for fare payment on Transit Link.

Other policy proposals. One reduced fare, all day, for seniors, youth (6-12) and Medicare card holders on regular route transit. The current fare is 75 cents (off-peak) and proposal is for the fare to be \$1.00 a ride. They would eliminate the bonus for stored value card purchases of \$10.00 or more. Currently all purchases of at least \$10.00 get a 10 percent bonus. Increase downtown zone fares from 50 cents to \$1.00. Eliminate the five percent discount for the Transit Schools Program. Make the Transit Assistance Program (for qualified low-income riders) permanent, and charge a \$1.00 per ride fare on all transit for participants. Consider offering a reduced Metro Mobility fare for customers who transfer to a regular route bus at designated station (discount amount is to be determined).

Metro Mobility fare tickets are no longer going to be accepted as of June 30, 2017.

There have been two public hearings relating to the fare increase. There will be another one tonight and one at the Council meeting next week. There are seven or eight public meetings related to this. There was also a Metro Mobility gathering related to the fare increase. The fare proposal was separate from any legislative action and has been consistent from late April until today. The information they have collected has been for the fare increase. They have been out to Hennepin County twice in the last few days following the end of the legislative session.

The comments from the TAAC committee members are as follows:

Chair Kjensmo Walker said "my comment is to eliminate the off-peak fare for express service and charge one express fare. I think that is a good idea. I want to reduce fare service all day for seniors, youth and Medicare holders. I think that is a great idea. Other than that, I think a 50-cent fare increase would be better for people's pocketbooks if we are going to do a fare increase at all."

Sam Jasmine said "I am for a 50-cent fare increase. I am not for the increase of out of ADA compliance place having to be penalized for being there and paying a fare to get probably most places they would go."

Heidi Myhre said "My comment is I was a little confused. Trying to keep all this what is going to happen/what is not going to happen. I hope we make really good choices. But if you are going to lay this out no matter if it is public, Metro Mobility, whatever how you do it. Everybody gets it and I don't have any problems like I got screwed. Because someone's not following it because you didn't do a very good job with clarification. If it happens I can just see some people going that is not what I did over there when I bought my tickets. That is not how I was told it was going to be used. We need really good clarification no matter how this gets laid out."

Margot Imdieke Cross said "clarification. You are saying that even though you are going to get \$70 million over your base funding. You are going to increase fares."

Fure said "Chair Walker, committee members, the decision has not yet been made. The Council members make that decision. We are going to complete the public comment process and submit that information for consideration to the Council members but the decision is yet to come. And what that decision is."

Imdieke Cross said "why would they want to increase fares if they are getting an increase from the legislature? What is the justification? I guess I was assuming that the fare increase was related to the deficit. But apparently not. You're saying that that is on a separate track? And that the fare increases are something that they have been planning all along regardless of the deficit or no deficit but now that there is going to be an increase in funding. I'm still searching to figure out what the justification for that fare increase is going to be and how you are going to sell that to the public. I mean I think people are going to be very upset. I am just a little confused. I'm with Heidi."

Fure said "Chair Walker, committee members, the budget was one of the issues that was certainly important to this conversation. The other is that the region is not capturing sufficient revenue from fares. Fares have not been increased for eight years, almost nine years. So the Council is interested in hearing from the public about

the impact because it is between 20 and 23 percent of the overall revenue that we are capturing from transit as a whole. That is regular route bus. It is even lower for the Metro Mobility and Transit Link services. The regional policy is to capture about a third or about 30 percent of our revenues from transit fare. So that is one of the reasons why the Council is interested in at least considering this. I would say that this is not a for sure conversation. The Council has not made a decision about whether they are going to raise fares. So I would not characterize it as something that we were just going to do all along. It was certainly something that because the process tends to be fairly long we needed to begin it so that we could make sure we would complete it in time if we had to capture revenue even more than we were expecting to get. So we knew a fare increase would not cover the full deficit in the discussion, initially. But at the same time we felt it was valuable to have the conversation since it has been a long time since fares were increased in this region.”

Ken Rodgers said “yes, in lieu of the increased funding from the legislature, I oppose very strongly any increases in the fare rates. Especially in Metro Mobility. That will prevent people from using Metro Mobility. Or having to budget how they use Metro Mobility. And I am against that.”

John Clark said “there is also a policy proposal to only accept GoTo cards with stored value and/or cash for fare payment. So either one of those might be eliminated?”

Fure said “Chair Walker, committee members, the idea is that you could pay with a GoTo card. You could pay with cash or you could pay with a combination of both.”

Christopher Bates said “first, I’m opposed to the cost increase. I mean government is always doing that to the folks who are most vulnerable and that’s wrong. That’s morally wrong. Secondly, if you’re going to have an increase, I also oppose that extra \$1.25 a trip. I mean from where I live it is 20 miles to downtown Minneapolis. If I have to do that two or three times a week that gets expensive real fast when you are on a fixed income. And that is also from the people in my area.”

Lukus Zuker said “I am new to the Twin Cities. I am wondering why eight years without incremental increases in fares. Instead of jumping 50 cents could it have been 10 cents for the last eight years? You know what I mean?”

Fure said “Chair Walker and members that is really important feedback. The way this region sets fares. It is on a case-by-case basis. Previous to this there were increases much more frequently than this. But the last time it was almost nine years ago. I’m not really sure why other than we were not in a position where we were running into these revenue shortages perhaps but it has been a long-standing policy of the region to capture about a third and we have been under that number for quite some time.”

Lisa Childs said “I do have a quick question. How are you defining seniors? What is the age?”

Fure said “it is 65.”

Childs said “65? And then I do like the idea of one reduced fare and I would like to hear more information about that transit assistance program. I know that many of our provider partners would be interested in hearing more about that. Thank you.”

Fure said “Chair Walker, committee members, we would be happy to bring those folks back to talk more about that program. It has been in pilot so it is not a current program. But it was very successful in getting more people to ride more frequently too, which is an efficiency measure. So it is a good thing.”

Sam Jasmine said “my comments are that I certainly hope that if, because it sounds like you are going to do it, from previous comments that I heard it was going to be done whether we wanted it or not. I hope really that you are seriously having a plan of what to do the next time that there is a shortfall and that this money then is going to be, there is going to be some kind of savings that is set aside so that when we have problems, it is not nailing us for the problems. And the other point that I would like to make is that when you do do this, if you do raise the amount of money that we have to pay, I cannot stress enough that we have to start fixing the problems. We keep coming back to the table with the same problems. We have to start fixing them.”

David Fenley said “quick question. So what, how do these new prices if implemented, compare to other metro areas of similar size? And also, can you compare the 30 percent recapturing? And also just to another comment. I know that I think except for New York City, all public transportation in this country is highly subsidized. That is just a comment. Can you answer the first two questions?”

Fure said “Chair Walker, committee members, I actually don’t have the information about how this compares. How the fare numbers compare. We can certainly get that to you. Get that back to you even before you might meet again. We will follow up on that. As far as the revenue recapture. We are right in with peer agencies but a little low. Most peer agencies are getting 25 percent or so. So it is a little bit below that. It is basically in line. You are absolutely correct that transit across the country is highly subsidized.”

Christopher Bates said “what is the federal government’s contribution to transit in this area? Do they give us money for transportation for Metro Mobility and Metro Transit? How much does the federal government provide? Especially since they mandate ADA.”

Fure said “Chair Walker, committee members, I don’t have the specifics on that. There are some small programs that do provide some revenue for some of the specific non regular route transit but for operational purposes. We don’t get very much federal funding for our system. So it’s a small percentage of whatever we get. We get more capital funding from the federal government. But I honestly don’t have the numbers. We will follow up on that.”

Dana Rude said “for this year with the NTD, there was about \$4.5 million. It was from the federal government for the operation of Metro Mobility out of about \$65 million in the budget. Because it is ADA, we are allowed to use a significant percentage of that without any offsets for operations. About 80 percent of that if I am right. Although I think in general it is usually applied to capital projects.”

Ken Rodgers said “I would like to make a comment. My comment is a reminder to all of us that it has been my understanding that especially for a gentleman that has recently moved here. It is my understanding in that Minnesotans have held a long standing value that we understand we pay more taxes. Because we value the services that we get from those taxes. And this public transportation, make no mistake about it, is a service that is provided based on us paying taxes. That money doesn’t come out of thin air. We pay for that. And then to be added the extra fare on top of that, we are being double-dipped. And that’s the solution to this structural problem of the finances that the state deals with. I don’t think that is fair. And that is why I strongly urge no fare increase. As Sam stated, we need to fix this structural budget problem differently. Instead of just keep pounding it on the backs of people that pay for the service in the first place. I’ll stop at that.”

Heidi Myhre said “why are we talking about it now? Didn’t you catch the problem way back in whoever is doing the work and the paperwork or whoever has to figure out all this? I mean you think that in Minnesota we have to do it after the fact instead of before the fact and then the people with disabilities and certain types of groups are the ones to get hit really hard. We like to build systems. But we don’t have a backup system when things fall apart to fix it correctly. And then the people who have to use the service, they are the ones who get hit hard. I think you guys need to go back and look at why did this fall apart in the first place and why did it happen in the first place. And so it doesn’t keep happening in the future. I’m not trying to punish you guys but I’m just being realistic. Someone’s not doing their job. Someone’s not doing the math correctly. Something’s missing.”

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

Ken Rodgers spoke to the TAAC committee. They just had their first meeting last Monday. In the last three months, it was reported out that the Blue Line Extension is now at 60 percent engineering. The funding mechanism was a high priority issue on the agenda last Monday. The CTIB, which is the County Transportation Investment Board, is dissolving. That board provided through taxes, a percentage of the funding that was going to be used for the Blue Line Extension. Because that is dissolving, that is going to go away and that will no longer be available to fund that portion that was tagged for moving our monies that we need to match the federal government for this project.

Hennepin County has agreed, and there is as I understand it, an agreement that has been made but has not been formalized, that Hennepin County will pony up what was going to come from CTIB. And how they are doing that is by adjusting the tax rate that they have currently been collecting. They have the authority to raise that tax for rail. It is not that there is going to be an added tax necessarily to what is paid as citizens, as Hennepin County residents. Because the CTIB monies are going away, that tax is going away. If Hennepin County did not raise their tax base, they would in essence be reducing out tax liability. But instead, Hennepin County is going to increase to a point, that will just match so that funding doesn’t end up being an added increase to citizens.

This is a very complex system. Everything is tentative and tenuous until they sign on the dotted line. The signing on the dotted line hasn't happened yet. It is supposed to happen in the next couple of weeks. At some public meetings. From Rodger's understanding, those agreements have already been made. Now it is just a matter of formalizing them. So bottom line is the Blue Line Extension has all of its funding and once they get past these next couple of weeks and everything is formalized, the Blue Line Extension has all their funding in place and could apply for the governmental match of 49 percent. They are moving forward and don't see anything aside from the Hennepin County vote this week or next week, to be in the way. Next stop, 90 percent engineering. They will be running that through the Railroad Authority. The increase could be a quarter percent, half percent or three quarters of a cent. They are not talking about a huge amount specifically. But the cumulative effect will be significant.

2. Orange Line

David Fenley spoke to the TAAC committee. They start construction this August in conjunction with MnDOT's reconstruction of the I-35W from downtown all the way to 75th Street. It is going to be completed over five phases. The last phase ending in October of 2021. They have a four-year project. Less funding woes than the Blue Line. They are incorporating the same accessibility features that the Green Line has agreed to incorporate. Also looking at other features that was provided them during the workshops that were done. They should come back to the TAAC in a few months to give more details.

Christopher Bates said that the Green Line is going to start construction in the late third quarter. They had to move it back a couple of months.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MEMBER COMMENT

Dana Rude introduced the new Senior Manager of Metro Mobility, Christine Kuennen.

Christine Kuennen spoke to the TAAC committee. "I was hired into Metro Transit 25 years ago in April into our Transit Information Center. I spent a few years there when I went over to our Transit Control Center. Spent 18 years there at the Transit Control Center. I left there as a manager. When Vince Pellegrin, our Chief Operating Officer asked me to go over to the light rail line for a couple of years. I helped activate the Green Line system. After that launched in June of 2014 I went back to bus transportation. This time in administration. So there I was responsible for budget workforce planning as well as our instruction center. That was the position I held until a couple of weeks ago when I started at Metro Mobility. I learned a lot today."

Ken Rodgers said "I just wanted to clarify to people when Dana gave his report. Typically, our reports include percentages. I'm a numbers person. It concerns me that we look at 95 percent and think that is pretty darn good. We are trained that 95 percent on a paper is good. That is an A. But there is that five percent that is sort of discounted in our brains. So to me it makes more sense, because we are looking at the production and productivity of Metro Mobility, when we review the stats. I would rather see the number we are not addressing. The five percent we are missing. What is that actual number? Because that number represents one ride for every number that is there. We look at the 95 percent. We are only looking at the success rate. We are not looking at the failure rate. I think that failure rate tells us way more that we need to be concerned about. Especially when we are at 90 percent for appointment times. That means that there is 10 percent that are not meeting that level. And those numbers are real people. I want us to be focused on the real people as opposed to the positive 90 percent. Or the positive 95 percent. I'm not going to rest until we get those. I would like to see that on all of our report outs. I think that tells us more of the information we need to see. It will help connect the fact that we are looking at 95 percent, which is what we immediately jump to as a positive thing. But we are hearing stories from riders and from friends that ride that aren't having that experience. That is what I want us to focus more on. That is why I put my request in for those numbers. Hopefully we will be getting them moving forward. And we can have a better picture of the stats we are looking at."

Margot Imdieke Cross said "there is an ADA march and rally on July 26. It is going to start at the Minnesota History Center. There will be a short session on civic engagement orientation. The march should start about 1:30 from the Minnesota History Center, down John Ireland Boulevard to the capitol where we will assemble in the rotunda and have a rally. We basically want to reaffirm our rights with the American With Disabilities Act.

There are a lot of bills being introduced. There is a lot of potential deregulation down the road and we just want to make a strong statement that we are solid, we are strong and supportive.”

Heidi Myhre said that there were problems with the bus scheduling that didn't work the other day. The numbers will not be counted accurately because of this.

Sam Jasmine said “to Ken's statement. I appreciate that because I too feel this needs to desperately be addressed. We have several numbers that are not being counted. The last thing I will say is that the system that is used to schedule rides, I don't know what the plan is. What a good thing to spend the fare raise on. To do for a plan B. We have got to have a plan B when the system goes down. We have three times this week that the Transit Team system has gone down. So you could not make any rides. That is just Transit Team. People can't get to work or pick up their children. People can't make their medical appointments. If you need to make a ride to get your child from somewhere because you knew you couldn't make your two-hour timeline that Metro gives you and you want to make a PSD, you still can't do that.”

David Fenley said “to Ken's point. My quick math landed at 10's of thousands of people. So those percentages are numbers of people whose rides were dropped or missed. That's why the anecdotal evidence is real even though I know we don't always like to talk about anecdotal evidence.

Since we have the new Director in the room, just a quick once over about disability and the persistent issues that happen here on this committee. We view the disability community as being about 50 years behind in the civilized movement. Historically segregated, historically talked over, looked past beyond. When we see that happen on a regular basis here we don't want to blame the presenters. What we want to do is see that information travel up the bureaucracy and maybe people who produce content for the Met Council know what audio description is. They know what accessibility is. There is an accessibility policy that has been passed by the Met Council. I think it was done within the last six months. So it is new. But accessibility is not new. And integration is not new. So I think that it is important for that information to go up the chain. Thank you.”

Christopher Bates said “the bonds for Target Field are being paid off early. I have already suggested to my county commissioner that the money that is generated from that should be reinvested in transportation in Hennepin County.”

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:38 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary