

# **Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, December 04, 2013

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Ron Biss, Margot Imdieke Cross, James Williams, Mark Hoisser, Chad McGuire, Colin Stemper and Patty Thorsen.

**Committee Members Absent:** John Schatzlein, Kjensmo Walker and Heidi Myhre.

**Committee Members Excused:** Bob Anderson, Darrell Paulsen, John Lund and Nichole Villavicencio.

**Council Staff Present:** Pam Steffen, Jason Podany, Gary Nyberg and John Holley from Metro Transit. David Russell, Andy Streasick, Andrew Krueger and Alison Coleman.

**Public Present:** Claudia Fugile.

## **CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum not being present, Committee Chair Biss called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:45 p.m. on Wednesday, December 04, 2013.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

Due to lack of quorum there was no motion to approve the agenda.

Due to lack of quorum there was no motion to approve the minutes of November 6, 2013.

## **INFORMATION & BUSINESS**

### **a. Metro Transit Internal and External Bus Announcement Project**

Gary Nyberg and Jason Podany spoke to the TAAC committee. They currently do have automated announcements on routes 10, 17, 18 and the Red Line BRT service. Those routes were used for a test. They wanted to see how it worked and get feedback. They have staff to support it with available staff. By the end of next year they are planning to implement this on all of the Metro Transit and Metropolitan Council bus routes. There will be next stop automated announcements. The entire Metro Transit fleet will be announcement ready by 2017 as new bus procurement occurs. Currently 577 of 958 buses or 60% of the fleet is announcement ready.

There is also another initiative. There is a LED "stop requested" sign used for scrolling safety messages. They have the ability to scroll other types of messages also. Onboard announcements are currently made by bus operators who are to make announcements per Metro Transit policy and ADA guidelines.

External announcements. The way the onboard announcements work is when you open the door it triggers the external announcement to occur. Then it will say welcome aboard, the route, branch, the direction and the destination. At certain busier bus stops the announcement may be said a second time for the people at the back of the line to hear. The threshold is to be determined. There are over 1,200 unique route branches equating to over 1,200 external phrases that have to be put together to make this work.

Related ADA Guidelines. "Where vehicles or other conveyances for more than one route serve the same stop, the entity shall provide a means by which an individual with a visual impairment or other disability can identify the proper vehicle to enter or be identified to the vehicle operator as a person seeking a ride on a particular route."

All of the buses are equipped with global positioning systems. The buses know where they are at all times. The bus is using the automated vehicle location system to know where it is in relation to each stop along the route. So each of the bus stops are in the system as well. The system is set at a default of 600 feet. The announcements are made on the bus when the bus enters the designated bus stop zones.

Internal announcements. Announce transfer points with other fixed routes. Announce signalized and major intersections (stop signs and traffic lights). Announce major destination points. Announce intervals along a route to help people be orientated to their location. Announce other stops upon request of an individual with a disability.

These are some examples of announcement solutions. At a typical bus stop the announcement would say "Humboldt Avenue" as they approach the 600 foot distance before the stop. Then there is the mid block stops. For that they would have "Dakota Avenue and Colorado" for example. After the bus turns they would announce the next intersection would be announced as "Hennepin and Lagoon". They would announce "approaching the next intersection (Hennepin Avenue)". They would announce all of the transfer points. For any location that would have five or more routes they would say "this is a major transfer point."

They would announce landmark information. Some examples of landmarks are: established retail centers, government centers, high schools and universities, hospitals, office complexes, major activity centers like the Mall of America, convention centers and event venues. They are still working on the logistics. They are looking at a recording studio. They are also looking at text-to-voice solutions. A female voice is used on Routes 10, 17, 18 and the Red Line. They are evaluating software and voices.

Potential future phases: announcements for public outreach, announcements for advertising, induction loop implementation (to enhance the sound and make it clearer), onboard computer screen of bus movement and next trip information on connecting routes and other information.

At this time, during detours, they will have to depend on the driver to do the announcements.

They spoke about buses in a line at a bus stop that has various routes and destinations.

Imdieke Cross said there is a law that says if somebody is standing at a bus stop with a service dog or a white cane that no matter where that bus is in its loading process, it is obligated by law to stop in front of that individual and ask them if they are looking for that particular bus.

Pam Steffen said that the Metro Transit drivers are trained to do this.

Andy Streasick said that the Opt Outs are also trained to do this.

## **b. Designated Seating Signage**

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. Last month we talked about taking a look at the different types of disability signage that there is on buses and trains. She showed a few different signs to the committee about what they have on the buses and trains. She showed examples last time of the different signage. She narrowed it down to what they have on existing buses and trains. The graphics department created some options that would replace the existing signs. The goal is to streamline and have the same message on all of the vehicles. She showed an example of the signs with various colors and images (a person with a walker, a person in a wheelchair, a person with a cane and a person with a crutch). She asked for feedback on the visual images and the wording ("Priority Seating is for customers with disabilities and seniors. Please move when asked.")

The committee discussed the colors and liked black letters on a yellow background with the red on top and the pictures of the people with the action shots (person with a walker or a cane or a crutch is walking.) Steffen will have a graphics person create a sign and send it to Chair Biss to pass along to the rest of the committee for final approval. She asked the committee to help identify where the signs should be placed. She will remove all the existing signage that they have and replace it with the new signage.

c. **Discussion on Metro Transit's Response to TAAC's Letter of Concerns of Accessible Seating on Generation II LRVs.**

Chair Biss led the discussion. Imdieke Cross said she wanted the future cars to resemble the cars on the old line where there was dedicated seating, not the new line. She said it is still a matter of discussion and there is room to negotiate companion seating within close proximity to the wheelchair seating. She said there are not enough people here to discuss this fully. She would like to table this discussion until the next meeting.

The LRV car door with the greatest access to dedicated seating should have a little wheelchair symbol next to it or above it. So that they know when they enter that door they are immediately next to the wheelchair location. This should be discussed in the next meeting.

They discussed going to the Legislature to get the TAAC role clarified and expanded. To get their role as a committee redefined in statute so that there is clarity and people know exactly who they are, why they exist and what role they play in these decisions. Chair Biss will check into this.

**MEMBER COMMENT**

Pam Steffen said there are service changes coming Saturday. Buses are back on Washington Avenue.

Thorsen went to a new post office and found that there were no automatic door openers. Imdieke Cross said that there is a program out of the Access Board where they are pursuing resolution with post offices. It is outside the state jurisdiction because it is a federal office but there is a federal program through the Access Board. They are accepting complaints and pursuing resolutions.

**PUBLIC COMMENT**

Andrew Krueger said the Metropolitan Council will be releasing the open seats for TAAC. The application for the members has been finalized from a Council perspective and was emailed to Chair Biss this afternoon. Those should be published either later this week or next week.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:12 p.m.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary