

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, November 4, 2015

Committee Members Present: Chair Kjensmo Walker, Christopher Bates, Adora Sage, Ken Rodgers, Robert Platz, Kari Sheldon, Heidi Myhre, Bob Anderson, David Fenley and Patty Thorsen.

Committee Members Absent: Julianne Bina and Douglas Moody.

Committee Members Excused: Nichole Villavicencio and Margot Imdieke Cross.

Council Staff Present: Pam Steffen, Claire Schleichert and Mary Capistrant from Metro Transit, Andy Streasick, Carol Critchley and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Lee Ohnesorge

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Walker called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:32 p.m. on Wednesday, November 4, 2015.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Fenley, seconded by Rodgers to approve the minutes of the October 7, 2015 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Debrief of the October Metro Mobility Fall Conversation

TAAC members who were at that event spoke about the Fall Conversation. Andy Streasick spoke first. Under state law Metro Mobility is required to have public meetings on at least an annual basis. With all of the changes there have been going on and the growing pains associated with those changes they thought it was appropriate to go out and do three of them this year. The first one being in the southern zone where Metro Transit South is currently operating in a brand new operating zone. They partnered with Communications to make this one a little bit different from public meetings in the past. It was much more of a communication back and forth rather than just presenting a packaged presentation. There were over 20 Metro Mobility riders attending the conversation. There were some TAAC members there. There was a total of 34 people in attendance. They asked several questions after a very brief presentation. They asked if you could change one thing about Metro Mobility, what would that be? They asked how does having access to Metro Mobility impact your life? They asked are there trips you are unable to take using Metro Mobility? And when GoTo cards are available will you use those? They just wanted to gauge where people are at with things and responses to those and anything else they wanted to say.

There was a brief presentation where Andrew Krueger welcomed people at the beginning and Andy Streasick spoke about some of the reasons for restructuring that took place and acknowledged that they are not yet where they want to be and what they are doing to work on that. From there they broke into small groups and had folks at each table have a conversation about those questions.

The TAAC members spoke about the meeting.

It was a good opportunity for people who use Metro Mobility to put a face to people that make Metro Mobility work or try to make it work. This gave people the opportunity to air concerns that they had. It provided

constructive criticisms. There was a larger turnout than expected. It helped to build a personal connection. It is not just a phone number.

It was a very good meeting with a lot of give and take.

Andrew took notes at the end of the meeting when Metro Mobility was picking up the attendees. It gave him a chance to see firsthand how it goes for the passengers who attended the meeting.

They talked about consistency when calling for a ride or on the bus.

Some TAAC members felt that they had to educate some of the people about how Metro Mobility works and mitigating concerns that they may have. If folks knew the rules and regulations of Metro Mobility it would help more.

There will be two more meetings this year. One in each zone.

People who use Metro Mobility are at different stages in terms of how long they have used Metro Mobility. Some people have just become certified and others have used it for a very long time.

Metro Mobility staff helped to correct some misinformation about Metro Mobility service.

It was suggested that people who came to the meeting should have their ride to and from the meeting compensated by Metro Mobility.

They held the meeting in Bloomington because it was in the South Zone and that is the new zone. Bloomington is the third largest city Metro Mobility serves.

The next two meetings will be held in Minneapolis proper and Saint Paul proper.

It was suggested that the Metro Mobility stats be presented again at the TAAC meetings. They will be presented as time allows. Paper copies of the stats can be brought to the meetings and left on the table for the members.

It was suggested that the General Managers of Transit Team and First Transit present to the TAAC committee and the conversation meetings.

2. Metro Mobility Update

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. Metro Mobility has several challenges going on right now. One of the reoccurring themes in the feedback that they got was related to drivers. Drivers are the face of Metro Mobility. It was suggested that the drivers be treated better so they would be in better moods. Some drivers complain that they are not getting their breaks. There are concerns that the drivers are not adequately trained.

Drivers have always received arduous training. Training that is disproportionate to how drivers are rewarded financially for the position. Under state law there are requirements in place that they can plead STS training to cover a wide berth of things from disability sensitivity to driver safety and everything in between. In addition to that, there is also training that they do with management at each of the providers and ask if they bring that. So at any time Metro Mobility staff can sit in and get notified of any monthly driver training that takes place at each of the providers. They can always go there to monitor or add things. That has always been the case.

What they have done in response to some of the feedback received is they have stepped up their bulletins to the providers. With the training a lot of it comes down to GPS usage. Drivers are too reliant on the GPS. Trapeze, the company that runs the software and does the Ranger GPS units. They are a transportation software company. They are not a map company. As a result, those Ranger GPS units are inferior to other GPS units like the TomTom in terms of what is in them. They are not updated regularly. There is not full time monitoring or improvement on these units. They were never meant to replace the map books. They are meant to be a useful tool but for a lot of drivers they are using them to replace the map book.

Metro Mobility staff recently did reiterate to the contractors to not just rely on the GPS. They want them to redo map training more frequently. Metro Mobility buys Kings Map books and places them in every vehicle. The drivers need to be comfortable using this map book even if it is different than what the GPS is telling them. They have also asked that providers do consider this as an operational decision. Providers are to empower their drivers to stray from the electronic manifest. If they are driving by someone's drop to go drop off somebody else, call dispatch and let them know you are dropping the person off. It is another thing if you are a mile away. Those manifests are done a certain way for a reason. But the reality is you could put together a

perfect route and it could change by the next morning when the buses are late and there are add on's. They do think it is important that the drivers be empowered with some flexibility to be able to call in and say they are going to drop someone off out of order. The dispatcher can always say no. The driver should be able to initiate that conversation.

Regarding the drivers taking two 15 minute breaks and a half hour lunch break. The owners of all of the companies say the drivers should get their breaks. When they look at the manifests there are breaks scheduled in there. The only thing that could be worked around is to have passengers added on to a run verbally by the dispatcher without ever being recorded into the manifest. With that in mind they have radios going on in the Service Center all of the time to just listen in. They haven't heard anything yet but it is something they are going to be vigilant on because numerous people have brought this up. Sometimes the drivers are too busy and they think they don't have time for lunch. They should take the break even if someone is going to be picked up late. This will be a point of focus now.

Yesterday was the biggest ridership day in Metro Mobility history. But today is going to be the biggest ridership day in Metro Mobility history. Wednesdays are always the busiest days. It will be the first day ever that they will be over 8,000 rides. They have to talk about what they do have to do to alter the system in the future to make sure this works. They are short drivers in all three zones. They are working with the contractor to see what they can do by way of restructuring, compensation and other things they can do to make the job a more attractive position to attract more drivers.

They are short on vehicles. Given all of the technology on the buses, it is not a quick thing to order them. If they got \$100 million out of the general fund tomorrow these problems are not going to go away in the blink of an eye. It is going to take time to deal with this unprecedented ridership growth that they are experiencing.

The appointment time priority has changed. Now it matches the on time arrival time. So that on time performance now doesn't just look at if the bus arrives in the half an hour window. It now looks at if the person meets the appointment time. They have seen improvements in that. Metro Mobility has held their contractors at a 95 percent on time performance expectation. They may lower that slightly. They will seek TAAC feedback on this.

They may need to look at non-ADA trips and STS service area. That non federally mandated area and see what needs to be done with those. Should those stop being guaranteed trips like they have always been? Do they become more expensive trips? They can't currently sustain the ridership growth that is going on. As of right now it might be true. They will know when the contractors get up to speed with the new zones. But they might not be able to currently sustain ridership where it is at. They need to work with each other to figure it out to make sure that the people who need these rides are getting them in a timely and reliable fashion going forward.

Metro Mobility is funded in the General Fund from the legislature.

The Metro Mobility drivers have emergency first aide training.

3. Metro Transit Low-Income Pass Pilot Project

Mary Capistrant spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Supervisor of Revenue Operations at Metro Transit. She is going to explain a program that they have developed. Metro Transit is going to develop and launch a pilot program to give a reduced fare to low income people in the Twin Cities. They are finding as part of equity, being able to get to and from the grocery store or to work or to play should be something everyone can do regardless of their economic situation. They want to reduce barriers to residents of the Twin Cities so they can ride Metro Transit regardless of their age, ability or means. They want to lower the cost. They want to increase the awareness of all reduced options they have available. There are people out there in a lower income community who don't realize they offer a limited mobility fare on all Metro Transit buses where they pay only 75 cents. They realize that there are seniors and youth who don't understand that. That is a key part of their area that they want to make sure happens. They want to allow the card holders to have the choice to ride more often. There are people who use only MnNet to get to medical appointments. They are not aware of what Metro Transit offers. They want to create a way for the future so that they can give people the ability to get around. They already have a program for reduced fares. They have a plan for people the age of five through 13 and age 65 and older. They want to make sure the people get that information. For low income people the ages of 14 to 64 will be given the opportunity to get a GoTo card. This is uniquely different than most programs including the Catholic Charities. They are going to give that card to every person in the household. They are

going to ask participants to take a pre and post survey to get a little more information on who they are and what their patterns are. They are going to charge \$1.00 a ride. It is a significant reduction on all of the fares. This is for the pilot program.

There are about 3 million people in the Twin Cities. There are about 600,000 people living in low income households. This is how it breaks out. Zero to five already ride for free on Metro Transit. Youth ride for 75 cents for non rush hours. College students are given the opportunity to get a reduced fare pass. Seniors get a reduced rate of 75 cents during non rush hours. People with disabilities have the limited mobility program and also the opportunity to ride Metro Mobility.

These are the categories they discussed of possible things they can do: Offer it to everybody in the Twin Cities. One county does that. They launched in March. They have a \$7 million budget. Metro Transit is trying to do this on what money they already have. They don't have funding to do this at this point. They thought that maybe they could go to the counties because most low income people are connected to the counties. But the counties already have a huge caseload.

Madison Wisconsin does a public distribution. On the first of the month they give away 500 passes at half price. All you have to do is go into one of their locations and say you are low income. Metro Transit doesn't want people to self certify they are low income. They looked at the council's HRA program. They give people section 8 housing vouchers. The Metro HRA covers most of Carver County, Anoka County, part of Ramsey County and Hennepin County. They service areas of Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center. They do not do Minneapolis or Saint Paul proper. Those are different service areas. Metro HRA is representative of the population of the Twin Cities. Half of the people live in the suburbs. Half of the people live in the cities. Forty percent of their folks are persons of color that live within their households. When they overlay the transit maps for regular route buses and trains they found that 80 percent of the people that live in their households live within half of a mile of Metro Transit bus stops. There is very good service where they are. They thought that partnering with that group would be extremely helpful for them to gather data to find out if they could scale this forward.

When they launch the pilot there will be about 8,000 people eligible in the Twin Cities for this program. They want to gather data to understand the impact to Metro Transit because they don't have a lot of extra money to hire extra people to do this program. They want to know how it is going to impact individuals post survey. Are they more able to ride more often now because they are only paying one dollar per ride. They also have to determine what the revenue impact would be for Metro Transit. What is it going to cost them? They are estimating that the pilot program would cost \$500,000 in six months. They don't know. They are going to see what happens. The program will start December 1, 2015 and it will run for six months. They need to make sure they have broad measures in place. About 30 percent of Metro Transit riders consider themselves low income.

They are continuing to work with internal stakeholders and external stakeholders to refine the project plan. They have developed a fare tool and a communication plan with Metro HRA. They are going to implement a six month pilot program. Then they are going to track and promote the sale of the card. Metro HRA is going to send a letter to every household with authorization codes that people can use online or in person or by mail. They are very conscious that they can reach out to people who use English as a second language as well by having translation services available when they receive those letters. They can call Metro HRA and have that letter translated for them or they can go online and someone can help them with that as well.

At the end of the six months the pilot program will close. People's values can be transferred to a classic GoTo card while they analyze the data and are able to make recommendations going forward. This \$1.00 fare is available on all Metro Transit buses and trains including Northstar. Northstar would have an upcharge. It is not available on Metro Mobility buses or Transit Link buses because they are door-to-door services with a much higher subsidy than Metro Transit. They are expecting the riders to be current riders. They are not expecting many new riders. All regular route buses will be part of this program.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line Extension Update

Ken Rodgers spoke to the TAAC committee. The Blue Line Extension Project is the light rail system's second project on the table right now. The Blue Line Extension was previously called the Bottineau line. It goes from Target Field through Golden Valley, North Minneapolis, Crystal, Robbinsdale and ending at Brooklyn Park. It is a 13 mile extension. In order to receive federal funding there is a long process that has to take place. This

project is 15 percent complete at this point. They have completed a preliminary environmental impact statement. They have looked at the technical glitches that have to be resolved before it can actually be realized. It is a 35,000 foot level view of what the Blue Line might look like when it is done. Including its impact on the neighborhoods, streets, parks, intersections, etc. The attempt then to figure out how much it is going to cost based on this 15 percent engineering projection. If this gets approved and they move on to the next step then everything is done under the lens of meeting the criteria to be eligible for funding by the federal government. The feds will pay up to 50 percent of the project cost. The state would have to come up with the other 50 percent. That is broken down by the transportation taxing districts, the county and the state. The state pays 10 percent. They are designing this project so that they are asking the feds for 49 percent of the cost as opposed to 50 percent. They have to compete with other states who are also working on projects that are vying for the same dollars. If they are only asking for 49 percent and another state is asking for 50 percent that makes us a little more enticing for the federal government to not pay as much.

At the last meeting they heard the current cost and scope projections for the Blue Line Extension project. It comes in at \$1.488 billion. Construction is projected between the years of 2018 and 2020. There are still years of planning and implementation that have to occur but they are on track. The cost is today dollars. It is on a tight timeline so that if the project were to be extended beyond 2018-2020 the cost would go up. They estimated that the cost would go up \$30 million per year that it gets delayed. The scope and cost of the project has been settled at this point. There are more engineering things that have been done on this corridor so that they know that there is not going to be any surprises down the road. They believe this is a firm cost estimate. Now that the scope and cost analysis has been completed it now goes to Central Corridor management to be approved and then it goes to the Metropolitan Council to be approved.

The Blue Line Citizen Advisory Committee has adopted the scope and projection and all that it implies. They recommend that it goes forward. At the last meeting they were able to add some special features that they want to include in their position statement regarding their recommendation to approve. In interest for the TAAC committee they added a statement that they are going to meet and exceed where possible all ADA regulations and safety efforts related to getting on and off the platforms. The Green Line and the Blue Line that we currently have did not have that kind of input or focus. The extension projects will also have this kind of focus. They are going to exceed ADA when possible.

The press release came out this morning. The cost of the Blue Line is now known and will be moved forward on its path to making this a reality. There is still a possibility that it won't fly. At this point it looks pretty solid. It looks like they have a pretty high level of getting the feds to pick up the 49 percent. It includes all of the stations including Plymouth and whatever is needed in terms of parking in Golden Valley.

2. Green Line Extension Update

Christopher Bates spoke to the TAAC committee. The advisory committee and the CAC met last Tuesday night in Minnetonka. About 60 percent of the planning is completed. They talked about creating low and moderate income housing but not accessible housing. They are going back to Hennepin County to put accessible housing in their plan. Ninety percent of the plan should be done in January. Construction should start in 2017. It should start serving the public in 2020. They will delay the Eden Prairie station until 2040. This is part of the cost saving plan. The project cost is \$1.7 billion.

3. Orange Line

This item was not presented.

MEMBER COMMENT

Chair Walker spoke to the TAAC committee. She read a written statement. In October she had a conversation with Howie Padilla, a public relations manager from Metro Transit about updating training for Metro Transit Police when interacting with people with autism and other disabilities. They had a terrific conversation about including people with disabilities in this training. Mr. Padilla and Police Chief Harrington have been invited to TAAC to provide an update when they are available. She reminded everyone that TAAC will not be addressing this issue any further today. Please remember that TAAC members including the Chair cannot speak on behalf of the committee. As TAAC is a public meeting, TAAC will never be involved in any conversations regarding investigations and look forward to continuing this conversation regarding Metro Transit Police training at a later time.

Chair Walker is beginning to look at perhaps creating a TAAC disability day where they invite planners and engineers to learn about some different ideas about accessibility. She is beginning to form a subcommittee for the disability day planning. If anyone is interested in participating in this subcommittee please send her an email.

Kim Trenary just resigned from this committee.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Lee Ohnseorge spoke to the TAAC committee. He is from the Metro Mobility South zone, operated by First Transit. There are a number of residents that live in his area who are still having problems with drivers being late and being on the bus longer than the allowed time who do not speak up or complain to Metro Mobility. The stats that are being presented to the TAAC are low because people don't call in their complaints.

Streasick said that the max on board time and the late arrival times are based on computer data. They don't rely on complaints for this information. They look at when the bus stops at each pick up location and when the bus stops at the destination location or the appointment times. They use GPS coordinates.

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. Chief Harrington or Howie Padilla will be at the December TAAC meeting. Claire Schleichert has been in touch with someone from the Department of Public Safety who reports to the Commissioner of the Department of Public Safety. She is going to get a written document of what needs to happen in order for us to get the passive restraint units on Metro Transit vehicles. It will outline the exact process that they have to take. Right now, in the state of Minnesota, three tie downs is the law and nothing more than that. There has to be different legislation approved.

The Nicollet Mall buses are being rerouted to Hennepin Avenue. This affects the Routes 10, 11, 18, 25 and 568. All of these routes starting this Saturday will be rerouted to Hennepin Avenue. The reason for that is the amenities that Metro Transit had hoped to provide customers in the core of Third Avenue along Marquette and Second, the sidewalks didn't allow them to build a shelter because they are very narrow. Also, underneath some of the sidewalks is nothing but pipes. So if you were to drill down there is nothing there to drill down to, to secure a shelter. There would also be no lighting or heat. Hennepin Avenue is very active. There are shelters with light and heat there.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:33 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary