

Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE

February 22, 2021

LOCATION: Due to COVID-19 this meeting was held electronically.

Committee Members Present: Chair Deb Barber, Reva Chamblis, Molly Cummings, Christopher Ferguson, Kris Fredson, Francisco Gonzalez

Committee Members Absent: Phillip Sterner, Raymond Zeran

TAB Liaison Present: Peter Dugan

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was present when Chair Barber called the regular meeting of the Council's Transportation Committee to order at 4:02 p.m. on Monday, February 22, 2021.

AGENDA

There were no changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion by Fredson, seconded by Gonzalez to approve the minutes of the February 8, 2021 regular meeting of the Transportation Committee. Motion carried.

Aye: 6 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 2 Sterner, Zeran

TAB REPORT

Dugan reported that the Climate Change Subcabinet is hosting a series of monthly climate forum events, called the Our Minnesota Climate Forum Series, that provide an opportunity to discuss key issues around climate change and opportunities to reduce emissions and improve resiliency. COVID testing is not currently required on domestic flights.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR AND METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORTS

Metropolitan Transportation Services Director Nick Thompson reported:

MN Transportation Conference

2021 Minnesota Transportation Conference is coming up on March 9th to 11th. At this annual conference, there will be speakers and sessions on a variety of transportation topics for all modes of transportation and emerging transportation issues. MTS and Metro Transit will have presentations on studies and projects that you have seen at this committee. It is of course a virtual conference this year, and there are opportunities for single day registration. Registration and program information can be found at the Univ. of Minnesota conference registration site.

COVID Update

Only one new COVID positive among our contracted transit workforce since last report to this committee. Our contractors and suburban providers have been provided agreements for getting their staffs into the process for vaccine that the Council is coordinating for Public Transit Workers. Last week we had over 10,000 health care worker trips on Metro Mobility, more than 10% growth over the prior report



to this committee. We have started notification of the fact that we will implement fares on March 1st, including direct notice to the travelers, notice to the employers, and media communications starting today.

Metro Transit General Manager Wes Kooistra reported:

COVID Update

We've had a total of 369 employees diagnosed with COVID from March 2020 through yesterday. This figure includes 8 new cases since the committee last met on February 8. Metro Transit bus and rail services are not experiencing service impacts due to COVID leave.

Vaccines

Since the last Transportation Committee meeting, Metro Transit and Council leadership have met with Vaccine Planners from MDH about the 1B phase of allocations which includes "public transit workers". As shared previously, our initial vaccine plan was submitted to MMB in January. The State has not announced the timing of Phase 1B, but we do have a contractor and site secured for distribution so we will be able to quickly respond. Metro Transit has continued to search for and promote other opportunities to employees, including through the Department of Veterans Affairs and Native American tribal communities. Finally, Metro Transit is also promoting to employees the new online state "Vaccine Connector" for pre-registration and scheduling information.

Update on COVID testing

Since December 1, Metro Transit has made free on-site and take-home COVID test kits available to on-site essential employees in their worksites. To date, about 1,500 tests have been completed through this opportunity. And leadership continues to recommend that on-site essential employees complete weekly COVID tests to help minimize spread. These tests have identified 6 asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic cases that may have led to unnecessary spread had they gone undetected. The partnership started with Health Partners for free employee testing at drive-up and the Heywood Well@Work Clinic is also ongoing.

Metro Transit is preparing to hire new bus operators for the first time in a year.

Metro Transit has started recruiting for new bus operators for the first time since COVID began. By the end of August, approximately 40 new operators will be needed to maintain service levels. Last year, we had numerous operators retire, transfer, or receive promotions. (Over 200 operators separated.) Next month, Adam Harrington will provide the committee with a service update. As part of this update, Brian Funk will provide an operator staffing update but I wanted to mention today so you aren't surprised when you see us promoting the job posting.

Network Next BRT Outcomes Presentation on Wednesday, February 24

As you likely noticed on the Council agenda for this Wednesday's Metropolitan Council meeting, BRT staff will present an information item on Network Next BRT Plan outcomes at this week's meeting. The presentation includes recommendations for the next three arterial bus rapid transit lines. This is in advance of Council action in March, starting with a business item you will see at the March 8 Transportation Committee meeting. I wanted to mention it here today because it's an important milestone in the Network Next project. And staff look forward to discussing the recommendations with the Council at this week's meeting.

Chambliss brought up the importance of the BRT proposals for NetworkNext.

BUSINESS

Consent Items:

There were no items on the consent agenda.

Non-Consent Items:

1. **2021-53:** Procurement of 143 Biodiesel Sixty-Foot Transit Buses, Contract 19P321
Metro Transit Deputy Chief Operating Officer – Bus Brian Funk presented this item.

Fredson asked if the buses will be made in Minnesota. Funk said he could not say for sure but experience shows that it is likely they will be built in St. Cloud. Chamblis asked about who was eligible to apply. Funk said in the market for the specific bus there are two primary players. Cummings asked for more information about the pricing. Funk said price certainty is negotiated into the contract.

Motion by Fredson, seconded by Chamblis:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute contract 19P321 with New Flyer of America Inc., to provide 143 base order biodiesel sixty-foot transit buses (including optional equipment) with options to purchase up to 29 additional replacement and expansion buses in an amount not to exceed \$121,997,561.

Motion carried.

Aye: 6 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 2 Sterner, Zeran

2. **2021-54 SW:** 2021 Safety Performance Measure Targets, Resolution No. 2021-06

Metropolitan Transportation Services Senior Planner Heidi Schallberg and Planning Intern Jed Hanson presented this item.

Fredson asked about the metro fatalities compared to the state and compared to like regions. Schallberg said preliminary numbers for the 7-county region numbers are down but historically pedestrians and bicyclists have a higher share in the metro region once the modes are broken out.

Motion by Chamblis, seconded by Gonzalez:

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the 2021 annual targets for the safety performance measures for the metropolitan planning area and the attached resolution.

Motion carried.

Aye: 6 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Barber

Nay: 0

Absent: 2 Sterner, Zeran

INFORMATION

1. B Line Draft Corridor Plan

Metro Transit Senior Planner Adam Smith and BRT Assistant Director Katie Roth presented this item.

Chamblis asked about the advantage to having Route 21. Smith said between Minnehaha and Lake Street is the most intensive ridership segment. Barber mentioned the importance of communities having a local route.

2. Metro Transit's Role in Emergency Response

Metro Transit Deputy General Manager Vince Pellegrin, Deputy Chief Operating Officer – Bus Brian Funk, and Metro Transit Police Chief Frizell presented this item.

Cummings asked if MTPD received reimbursement for expenses incurred last year for actions that went above and beyond normal operations. Frizell said he was not aware of additional money being paid. Chamblis asked how long the reinforcements will be present. Frizell said they will be present through March and based on history civil unrest does not take place until the verdict phase. Fredson asked about policies for rubber bullets, etc. Frizell said MTPD does not deliver rubber bullets.

3. 2020 Year End Ridership Report

Metro Transit Analytics and Research Manager Eric Lind and Metropolitan Transportation Services Contracted Transit Services Manager John Harper presented this item.

Chamblis asked if Express riders have been surveyed. Lind said multiple surveys have been conducted.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Jenna Ernst
Recording Secretary