

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

Wednesday, August 4, 2021

Committee Members Present:

Barber, Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran, Chair Zelle

Committee Members Absent:

Atlas-Ingebretson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Muse

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Vice Committee Chair Cummings called the regular meeting of the Council's Committee of the Whole to order at 4:01 p.m. on Wednesday, August 4, 2021 on the following roll call vote:

Aye: 13 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Muse, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran,

Nay: 0

Absent: 4 Atlas-Ingebretson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Muse

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Council Members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

It was moved by Sterner, seconded by Lee to approve the minutes of the July 7, 2021 regular meeting of the Committee of the Whole. **Motion carried** on the following roll call:

Aye: 13 Chamblis, Cummings, Ferguson, Fredson, Johnson, Lee, Lilligren, Lindstrom, Muse, Sterner, Vento, Wulff, Zeran,

Nay: 0

Absent: 4 Atlas-Ingebretson, Fredson, Gonzalez, Muse

INFORMATION

1. Overview of Findings from Public Engagement on Transit Safety

Amanda Koonjbeharry and Kate Cimino, Citizens League, and Marika Pfefferkorn, Twin Cities Innovation Alliance, gave an overview of preliminary findings from public engagement on transit safety. The goal of the presentation was to share an update on the project as it is almost complete. Outreach and one-on-one interviews are still in progress and are not final. The project scope was two-fold and included both the definition of safety and community impact of interactions on transit. The project team worked with two groups, the stakeholder group and a community group. The stakeholder group helped to design the questions and process for engagement of the community group. The community group included community members who use transit and are reflective of transit ridership in the Twin Cities. Community group members were compensated for their time. The exploratory phase of the project was from

January—February 2021, and included recruitment, orientation, community building, and developing scope. The development phase of the project took place from March to April 2021, and included survey planning, forum planning, and launch. The delivery phase of the project took place from June to August 2021 and included surveys, forums, and one-on-one interviews. The final report will be delivered in September. Engagement strategies included virtual community forums, surveys, and in-person engagement. 66 individuals registered and 25 individuals participated in the virtual community forums.

Participants were asked “How do you define safety on transit?” “Do you feel safe on Metro Transit?” “How is your sense of safety disrupted?” and “What experiences have made you feel unsafe?” Some of the responses included reports of gender-based harassment, the importance of reliability and consistency of transit, accessibility for differently-abled individuals, and pedestrian safety. Responses also referred to the COVID-19 pandemic and health safety. Other responses included that “Metro Transit is the dumping ground for underfunded safety nets and services.” There is also a lack of a clear way to get help. Responses also shared that police presence can be a deterrent for disruptive behavior, but it can also be unsettling, as it often leads to escalation. Pfefferkorn gave an overview of survey outreach data. 782 surveys have been completed as of July 13. 771 surveys were in English, 10 were in Spanish, and one was in Somali. They survey reported that work, social activities, and school lead as reasons for riding transit.

Michelle Fure, Manager, Public Involvement, shared information about the process of engaging frontline transit employees. The process included on-site, in-person engagement with operators and other frontline staff such as maintenance workers, cleaners, and mechanics. There was strong participation, and nearly 40% of participants identified as people of color. Themes from frontline employees included a desire for a more prominent police presence on vehicles, demonstrable consequences for breaking policies, rules, and expectations, recognition of the need to offer help and assistance, and opportunities for better coordination among agencies and local government.

Council Members had questions and comments about the value and role of those who are former and riders and not currently using transit, and about the role of media outreach.

2. Changes in Green Spaces

Ellen Esch, Senior Data Scientist, Community Development, gave an update on changes in green space. “Green space” describes plant-dominated areas, which can exist within any land use. Land use describes human activities and provides an understanding of human activity and development patterns. There have been profound land use and ecosystem changes over the past 100 years. At the turn of the last century the region was primarily dominated by natural ecosystems but is now dominated by agricultural systems and built environment. There have also been changes in ecosystem quality and function. Satellite imagery shows green space change from the last 36 years; the satellite pictures can give information about what the plants are doing and plant growth. Land consumption occurs disproportionately over the greenest areas. Net loss in agricultural and undeveloped land is linked to greenness declines, while net gain in park, recreational, or preserve land could represent an opportunity to offset green space loss. The research has also shown that BIPOC and low-income residents have less green space. Council Member Lindstrom asked about the Greenhouse Gas Inventory, and the intersection of the Green Space data with the inventory.

3. 2020 Land Use Inventory

Paul Hanson, GIS Coordinator, Community Development, shared a summary of the 2020 Land Use Inventory. The land use inventory is conducted every three to seven years and is based on aerial photography, assessor information, building permits, and internet searches. The inventory represents existing use, not tax classification, land use guidance, or land cover. The Land Use Inventory is interpreted and classified using generalized and uniform classifications and is reviewed by

communities. The purpose of the Land Use Inventory is to provide a measure of land consumption trends across the region. It assists in forecasting and land supply analysis, as well as to help with other regional land planning efforts. Initial findings from the 2020 Land Use Inventory are: land consumption has increased for the first time since 2005; single-family detached homes are still the main driver of land use; shifts in non-residential use reflect changing economics and shared values; as the region grows, so do parks; and the region is demanding less land to accommodate the same amount of people and households. In general, there had been a gradual decline in the amount of land being developed annually between 2000 and 2016. Over the last four years the region has been increasing by about 4,500 acres annually. Chair Zelle asked if it can be assumed that more density and low carbon footprint would be a good thing for the region. Hanson replied that likely it is a good sign that we are heading in the right direction. Council Member Barber shared that the data is reflective of what she is seeing in her district.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 6:03 p.m.

Bridget Toskey
Recording Secretary