

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, August 03, 2016

Committee Members Present: Chair Kjensmo Walker, Julianne Bina, Christopher Bates, Adora Sage, Ken Rodgers, Robert Platz, Heidi Myhre, Nichole Villavicencio, Pamela Zimmerman, Bob Anderson, Margot Imdieke Cross, David Fenley and Patty Thorsen.

Committee Members Absent: None.

Committee Members Excused: Dona Shackelford and Kari Sheldon.

Council Staff Present: Karyssa Jackson, Alicia Vap, Erika Shepard, Shelley Miller, Nick Ollrich, Sam O'Connell and Pam Steffen from Metro Transit; Dana Rude, Andrew Krueger, Andy Streasick Mai Thor and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Rick Cardenas

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, August 03, 2016.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Thorsen and seconded by Bates to approve the minutes of the July 6, 2016 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. Villavicencio, Imdieke Cross and Rodgers abstained. **The motion carried.**

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Building the Practice – Metro Transit Community Outreach & Engagement

Karyssa Jackson spoke to the TAAC committee. She is a Community Outreach Coordinator for Metro Transit. She works with a group of four Community Outreach Coordinators. They are housed under Customer Service and Marketing. She talked about the team members and what they are working on. Terrence Anderson is working in Brooklyn Park, Brooklyn Center and North Minneapolis on the C-Line project. Max Holdhusen is working in South Minneapolis area. His current project is the Orange Line. Caitlin Schwartz is working on the East and West sides of Saint Paul. She has been working primarily as the lead on the Better Bus Stops program. Karyssa Jackson works in Saint Paul. She serves the front town and the Green Line corridor.

Metro Transit and the Metropolitan Council already have a great foundation on outreach and engagement. They see outreach as a foundation for the work they are doing. Project delivery and agency availability are a part of the folds of Metro Transit. Project delivery being their operations. Agency availability is having a respected presence in the community.

Outreach and engagement have an interconnected relationship with the community. There are some differences on how they engage with the community. They see this as a continuing process. She played a short video about how they view working with the community. The community members are involved in the decision making. Their work is to build the capacity of community members to influence in a meaningful way. There are decisions that are happening that affect them. They have a lot of insight on these because they utilize the Metro Transit service on a regular basis.

One of the first things they did was come together and create a team statement about how the outreach team works to support all of the departments within Metro Transit. The Metro Transit Community Engagement Team

is building a community centered practice that co creates a transparent process that leads to equitable outcomes. To accomplish this they developed relationships with transit riders, people of color, low income communities, people with disabilities and other historically marginalized groups to grow the capacity to participate in decision making to reach their fullest potential.

In some of the ways they think about that work is through transparent process and looking for equitable outcomes. Essentially their work is to support more equitable outcomes in their decisions and also how they serve the communities. One of the first things they think about is identifying opportunities and projects for meaningful engagement. One of the things they participated in is supporting looking at projects that the community can participate in. It could be decisions that the community can influence in a meaningful way and questions the community can answer.

That engagement lens has been adapted into what is called an equity tool that is being utilized regularly. They want to talk about how projects can be about equity and engagement. They document the process and report back to the community.

Inviting community members to help influence the decision making process and make them accountable to uphold them. Engaging community members from the front end of the process and make sure the community has access to what they do to make the decisions.

The Better Bus Stop project is looking at how you have community members look at how they decide where a shelter goes. Those things allow them to be accountable to those decisions in the future because the community was a part of creating them. They can't know if they are doing a good job if they don't talk to the community.

Jackson was a part of the trusted advocate's process as part of the district council's collaborative. Metro Transit utilizes a lot of the same principles that she talked about thus far. The Better Bus Stops program is currently underway. Many community organizations are working with Metro Transit to do some deeper engagement around how they make decisions about shelter replacement. How they make decisions around bus stops and what amenities go on the bus stops and how those decisions are made.

Last year, they as a team arrived, they worked on some BRT projects. They started to work on other projects and have been working more closely with other departments. As they move into 2016 a lot of their work has just been introducing themselves and letting people get to know them.

There are questions they ask themselves when looking at projects. Not only projects they have been assigned to but looking at the work that Metro Transit is doing. How can community influence policies, programs and decisions? What communities are impacted by those decisions that need to be in contact with projects and project managers?

Ken Rodgers suggested they have materials regarding the meeting be in alternative formats (Braille or CD) for the disability community to be engaged in the meeting.

Adora Sage suggested they place some focus on seniors and mobility disabled folks. That should be reflected in their outreach plan.

2. Blue Line Extension Project Update

Sam O'Connell spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Manager of Public Involvement for Metro Transit with the Blue Line and the Green Line. Alicia Vap is the Assistant Director of Land Use, Stations and Operations and Maintenance Facility. She is in charge of station design. Shelley Miller is a Senior Project Coordinator for the Blue Line Extension Project. She is the lead for all of the stations. Nick Ollrich is an Associate Engineer for Metro Transit.

They will do an overview of the Blue Line Extension Project. The Blue Line Extension will ultimately be the fourth LRT line that they open up. The first line opened up in 2004. They had to learn to do some of the good things that they have done over time.

She showed a map of the metro system which showed the Green Line Extension (Southwest LRT), Blue Line Extension (Bottineau LRT), Orange Line (i-35W South Bus Rapid Transit) and Red Line Extension (Cedar Avenue BRT).

Talking about the Blue Line. There will be 11 new LRT stations, 13 miles of double track, 27,000 estimated rides by 2040. It serves Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Robbinsdale, Golden Valley and Minneapolis. It provides one seat Blue Line ride to MSP Airport and the Mall of America. It will have connections to Metro Green Line, Northstar and bus services.

The timeline is 2014 – 2016 project development. That was the publication of the final environmental impact statement. That is out for public review right now. That basically says that is what they are going to do here. The environmental and social impacts of the project. It also says what are the mitigation impacts of the project? Design and engineering continues to move forward. They also had a milestone by receiving municipal consent from each of the communities that the line operates in as well as Hennepin County. That helps them to move forward with the hope of being at 30 percent. Looking ahead to 2018 is the full funding grant agreement that they hope to receive from the federal government. It says they agree with the project's scope, the project budget and that they in this case will be paying 49 percent of the capital costs of the project. That is where they sign their commitment to the project and continue to fund it. The heavy construction will be from 2018 – 2020. They hope to have passenger operations by 2021.

She talked about outreach to date. They confirmed the LRT alignment and the station locations. They had potentially other station locations under consideration on the Golden Valley and Minneapolis boarder. They wanted to confirm park and ride facilities. Make sure they are adequately resourced in that area and what is the network that supports those park and ride facilities for pedestrians and bikes. Trail facilities goes along there. The Golden Valley Road Station is in a park. What does that mean for access for the park and the community?

In the environmental documentation it talks about how they are addressing noise, visual screening, historic impacts and environmental justice. Prior to the document being produced they were out in the communities having conversations on those topics. The Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) is the culmination of a lot of that outreach.

In order to be transparent and get the feedback from the community it does take a team. The team includes Alicia Vap, Dan Pfeiffer, who is the Assistant Outreach Manager and there are folks who have specific geographic areas across the community. He takes phone calls and communicates with the community. Juan Rangel is the northern most outreach coordinator. He covers Brooklyn Park. David Davies covers Crystal, Robbinsdale and Golden Valley. Sophia Ginis is responsible for Minneapolis. She is also the outreach coordinator on the Blue Line.

Lessons learned from some past projects. There are several staff who worked on the Central Corridor in the design group. They heard a lot of these things when they were working on the Green Line. Consistency in the station layout is important in designing these stations. The architects spend some time at the stations watching what the passengers do, where they go. Plenty of space to make circulation easy on the platform is needed. Adequate shelter space for waiting passengers on the platform is important in this climate. More benches versus leaning rails is desired. LRV door indicators on the platform so folks know where the train doors will actually open. Guide barrier is needed at the end of the platform access. Good sight lines and adequate lighting at track crossings are important. Design track crossings as perpendicular to the track as possible. Use design to direct passengers to view oncoming trains prior to crossing. Use barrier-free best practices for designing walkways/circulation spaces.

Shelly Miller will discuss how the station design is moving forward. She is working on pedestrian access, bike facilities, wayfinding, landscaping, storm water, bus facilities, passenger drop-off and park and rides. Bus facilities will have bus stops at all of the stations so they can make the connections. They also intersect at Robbinsdale at an existing transit center that will move into the park and ride facility. They are looking into passenger drop off where possible at all of the stations, which will be ADA accessible. There are five park and rides on the Blue Line Extension. There are two surface lots and three structured lots.

The station design will have ticket vending/validation machines, transit information, passenger amenities and will focus on passenger safety. They will have transit information that lists when the next train is coming, and how to connect the buses. They will have benches, heat, lighting, security cameras, emergency telephones and waste receptacles, car indicators and between the car barriers.

As they progress in station design they are working with stakeholders to establish context and character of station areas. They came up with some context and terms that go with the Robbinsdale station: historic, main

street, connected, pedestrian oriented and destinations. Designers will use this information to inform the design process.

They are looking at a TAAC workshop to receive feedback and influence the design. They could bring in other stakeholders. They want to know what works best for the committee. In the fall of 2016 they will have community open houses with the proposed station designs and receive feedback. After the receipt and consideration of the community comments they will seek to advance the station design.

Nick Ollrich spoke about the Green Line field visit. They had accessibility experts from MnDOT ADA, Hennepin County, BPO (Blue Line Extension Project Office) and SPO (Southwest Light Rail Project Office) staff to conduct a Green Line field visit to review accessibility. They discussed a variety of design elements. They looked at surfaces, routes, vertical features and devices. The surfaces being grades, the type of materials and the cross slopes. The routes being consistency on how they access the stations. The vertical features the pedestrian deterrents that guide everyone to the light rail stations. The placement of the devices and messages.

On the field visit they walked through two crossings and noted all of the design features. They are looking at their 30 percent designs and the designers have made some changes and through the design process they made some changes as well. These will be ongoing topics to discuss. The field visit discussion included: positive guidance for crossings; tactile or audible description of crossing geometry; device volume is important; APS audible message; landing areas, pushbutton placement, curb ramps; Pedestrian Access Route (PAR); corner radii at intersections; crossing spacing; consistency is key; sightlines – walls, deterrents and vegetation; future coordination. Coordination includes working with MnDOT ADA on the curb ramp design details as they get those more developed. Coordinating with MnDOT rail safety for the rail grade crossing design. They are also considering developing an educational program with Minnesota State Services for the Blind on using light rail and some of the locations that may be a little more challenging in terms of geometry as they move through some of these environments.

Ken Rodgers said to him wayfinding is how a person gets from point A to point B. He needs another system besides signage to help him find his way. More emphasis needs to be placed in the design phase. They don't currently have a safe way of crossing the tracks to get to the platform from a corner. Where there are accessible signals, if you are starting on the corner you can have some tool to help you get across those tracks safely. But if you are starting from the platform and leaving the platform and having to cross tracks there is nothing to help you identify when it is safe to cross those tracks other than hearing the train. Getting on and off of the platform has to be a focus. Something needs to be looked at in terms of that. If I have an accessible pedestrian signal on a corner and I want to get on the platform, and press that button to allow me to hear the light changes, I still have to determine for myself when it is safe to cross the street and safe to cross those tracks.

The light rail subsidy is lower than the bus system.

Margot Imdieke-Cross asked if they could come back in the future to talk about the surface. The first slide shows pavers that look like they are laid. In Minnesota that means heaving. Pavers will be heaved in a matter of two winters. Someone coming out of a LRT vehicle and hits a paver that is heaved a quarter of an inch will go flying. It is one thing to imprint. It is another thing to lay those pavers down individually and allow for heaving. It is really important that details are provided. They need to know what the surface looks like, what it is made out of, where the benches are going to go, what they are going to look like and where the pay stations are. What is the reach range? Are they looking at a 48 inch max? That impacts us as riders with disabilities. I cannot provide adequate feedback until I know what the details are.

Julianne Bina suggested a phone at the station that is directly linked to customer service.

Chair Walker said that she wants to move forward with the Blue Line workshop. It looks like everyone is in agreement with that. Moving forward she will help design that.

3. Metro Mobility Eligibility Overview

This item was not presented.

4. Rethinking I-94

Mai Thor spoke to the TAAC committee. She is an Outreach Coordinator with the Metropolitan Council. One of her biggest projects is working with the I-94 Corridor Study. This is a MnDOT project. The Metropolitan Council is partnering with MnDOT on this project. The Council is advising them and helping them with this project in any way needed. The purpose of this presentation is to get input from the TAAC committee and to inform the TAAC what this project is about. She wanted to know how people with disabilities could be involved in this project. She showed a map of the study area of the project.

The scope of the study starts in Saint Paul at the Highway 61, I-94 Interchange, which is the Battlecreek area. It ends where Broadway and I-94 intersect. MnDOT initially mapped it out to end where I-394 and I-94 met. Because of the community desire to be included in that.

What is I-94? It was constructed in the 1960's by original Federal Highway Act funds. It runs east-west through Minnesota entering at Moorhead and ending in Lakeland by the Wisconsin boarder. There are 150,000 to 170,000 vehicles per day between the two downtowns of Minneapolis and Saint Paul. There is more than 80 lane miles of pavement. It is home to approximately 750,000 people along that corridor. There are two tunnels and 145 bridges. There are over four hours of congestion each day. There are over two million transit riders every year.

The neighborhoods in the corridor consist of starting at Minneapolis: Hawthorne, Harrison, Jordan, North Loop, Central Minneapolis, Downtown West, Stevens Square, Elliot Park, Lowry Hill, Lowry Hill East, Loring Park, Whittier, Phillips Ventura Village, Cedar Riverside, Seward and U of MN. Starting in Saint Paul: Dayton's Bluff, Prospect Park, Saint Anthony Park, Union Park, Summit University, Hamline Midway, Thomas/Dale/Frogtown, Downtown Capitol River and Sun Ray/Battlecreek/Highwood.

The goals of this study are to determine the needs and conditions of the assets along the corridor; How to best address mobility needs along I-94; Better understand who uses the corridor, how they use it and what works; Develop comprehensive, long-term community based approach to address corridor needs. This is the Council's focus.

What MnDOT hopes to gain from this project: Initially, the study was about what goes over, on and through the freeway. Community engagement is key for the study. What is the impact of I-94 in your community? What would you change? They are asking values based questions instead of things like "Do you want a MnPAS lane?"

She asked the TAAC committee what is I-94 to you?

Some of the answers were:

It is a barrier to get North to South

Location for panhandlers at the exits

The Basilica in Minneapolis has layers of traffic.

Congestion of people coming in and out of the state from Wisconsin in the afternoon. Then when it intersects with I-694 from North to South and I-494 from South to North has heavy congestion.

I just want the congestion taken care of. The only real fix is additional roadway.

Thor said there are a lot of politically charged issues around this project because of decisions of the past. She mentioned the Rondo neighborhood. MnDOT and the Metropolitan Council want to move ahead in partnership with the community.

More TAAC comments:

Do we need a funded developed study to find out that the needs of the community members that butt up against I-94 are different than the needs of the users of I-94 that use that for transportation every day? The needs are going to be different. So is the project about how do we blend the needs together as we move forward? We would pit community verses commuter all day long and we will have different values and different interests.

There is not the land to expand I-94. There could be a bridge overpass or tunnel below it. We can't create land that is not there.

Cap the freeway at Rondo and build a neighborhood over the freeway.

Thor said it is tricky to find that balance. MnDOT has never done anything like this before. One of the main goals that they are trying to evolve into is to find the balance to make this freeway as functional as possible. But also enhance the community and make it more livable.

Adding more road space doesn't help. Caps connect one side of the freeway to another like what a bridge does. On top of that would be an apartment building or a park or a shopping area. Seattle, Dallas and Columbus already have structures like that. The people there love them. There are plans in Seattle to have more built. Rondo is one of the areas that is being considered for that. The other place is Prospect Park where I-35W and I-94 meet. The area by Broadway is also being considered for a cap. There is a cap on I-35 in Duluth.

They did a workshop with the Urban Land Institute where they looked at capping the freeway.

It is not just about congestion. Capping the freeway may not solve that. It would solve a lot of other issues in the corridor. For Rondo it means something that could be a commemorative bridge symbolizing the connection that was lost when I-94 was actually built.

Chair Walker said triple convergence is if you add more lanes people are going to adjust their time and their route and mode to converge on the most direct route that would usually be the expressway. So the expressway is moving at such a slow speed that they again take an alternate route. Triple convergence says that then the freeway is crowded, no matter how many lanes there are, because of the time, mode and route the people choose.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. Blue Line

Ken Rodgers spoke to the TAAC committee. They are almost at 30 percent completion. The environmental statement is out. The Community Advisory Committee is meeting with the Business Advisory Committee next week on Monday. It will be the first joint meeting to get the latest update. The new Blue Line stations are not all at intersections. Some are at mid blocks. That presents a problem. How does one get from the sidewalk to the station without a signal? These are things they are trying to deal with.

2. Green Line

This item was not presented.

3. Orange Line

This item was not presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MEMBER COMMENT

Nikki Villavicencio had a comment about the light rail. The button when you go onto the light rail, sometimes they make an announcement, sometimes you have to go and push the button and it is not accessible. Someone else has to push the button for her.

Pam Steffen said the route changes are coming August 27. The State Fair is August 25.

Ken Rodgers said that the drivers of the Metro Transit buses especially on Hennepin Avenue at 5th Street, where the buses have to pause and wait for the light rail crossings. He stands at the shelter at the front of the line. The buses line up and load behind another bus. Sometimes even a third bus will load. If they have a green light they keep on going. They are not supposed to do this. An alert should be sent to the drivers not to do this. Also, the announcement on the Warehouse station needs to be made louder. He can't hear the announcement.

Pam Steffen spoke about a previous TAAC member was getting off of the train and there was a significant drop from the train to the platform. Steffen looked into it and found that there is a mechanism on each train that levels out the transition from the train to the platform. In this case the train was taken into the repair shop and the leveling part was replaced.

The GoTo reader (football) is being replaced by a different version that is smaller and looks like a box.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary