

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

Wednesday, November 1, 2017

**Committee Members Present:** Chair Kjensmo Walker, Lisa Childs, Kari Sheldon, John Clark, Heidi Myhre, Lukus Zuker, Margot Imdieke Cross and David Fenley.

**Committee Members Absent:** Dona Harris

**Committee Members Excused:** Sam Jasmine, Christopher Bates, Ken Rodgers, Robert Platz, Bre Royer and Vice Chair Patty Thorsen,

**Council Staff Present:** Doug Cook, Pam Steffen, Nick Eull and Dennis Dworshak from Metro Transit, Wanda Kirkpatrick, C Terrence Anderson, Christine Kuennen, Dana Rude, Claudia Fuentes and Alison Coleman.

**Public Present:** Joe Russell and Claudia Fuglie.

## **CALL TO ORDER**

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Walker called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:35 p.m. on Wednesday, November 1, 2017.

## **APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES**

It was moved by Fenley, seconded by Imdieke Cross to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Childs, seconded by Fenley to approve the minutes of the October 4, 2017 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

## **BUSINESS & INFORMATION**

### **1. Equity**

C Terrence Anderson, Manager of Equity and Wanda Kirkpatrick, Director of Equal Opportunity, spoke to the TAAC committee. Kirkpatrick said the Office of Equal Opportunity is still doing the work of equal opportunity, affirmative action, and equity in the Office of Equal Opportunity.

C Terrence said what we are going to accomplish today is to talk about where did the equity work at the Council originate? What are we doing now? Who is working on it? The effort is to build the relationship with this committee and create a vision and build it together.

Where did equity at the Council begin? First there is federal and state law. The Civil Rights Act, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the National Environmental Protection Act. I think it is good context for government that points us toward and viewed as a just society or a society in which there is civil rights. There is a lot of work we have to do there. Wanda and Luis Morales from our office came to this group to talk about compliance with the ADA transition plan. One thing that we recognize at the Council is that even if we are fully compliant with all of the law there is still a gap between there and what would be an inclusive society. A society that recognizes the diversity and ultimately what is the structural difference of equity. That is really what the realm is that we are in. The terms of my role that differs from the compliance work that Luis Morales and others are doing around the Council. Trying to go above and beyond law in order to build that inclusive society that benefits us all.

Another thing that was in the context of this work is the Central Corridor. As the Green Line was getting built there was a lot of community outreach. There was Central Corridors' Collaborative that some of my colleagues at the Council worked on. What does it look like to partner with communities to create a vision? There was give and take along the way. That gave birth to the community outreach team at Metro Transit in and around the Council so that we really partnered with the community. A big part of equity is that this is something we are

developing together. It shouldn't be the sort of thing that government is saying that this is what equity means for your community. But we are better if we are listening and building together. Most recently the Thrive MSP 2040 had five outcomes that were desired as part of that plan. One of which was equity. Equity in that context has driven the creation of this position. The creation of the unit that I am in. The creation of equity change teams that I will talk about so that we can mobilize and accomplish that goal in the context of Thrive MSP 2040.

How does Thrive define equity? There is this long definition: "Thrive defines equity as connecting all residents to opportunity. It creates viable housing, transportation, recreation options for people of all races, ethnicities, incomes and abilities so that all communities share the opportunities and challenges of change for our region to reach its full economic potential. All residents must be able to access opportunity."

What does it look like when we get there? About two years ago I went to Panama. My mother is Puerto Rican and my father is African American. Then you have a child that looks like me. That is what the typical Panamanian looks like. When I took a trip to Panama. That was the first time I felt normal. The society in which those characteristics that I had no part in developing for myself weren't being looked at. It wasn't until I started speaking Spanish, they said "You're not from here are you?" I felt like in that moment that I was there in that country that everything that that country had to offer could be mine. If I had the skillset. I felt that I had the opportunities to get there. I think that was what I felt liberated in the sense that the color of my skin didn't matter. It wasn't consequential to reaching the fullness of that society. When we talk about what equity at the Council would look like. That is what I want folks to feel. It shouldn't matter your ability or the income group that you come from. It shouldn't matter. All those protected class things that we talk about. That you are realizing the fullness of what you are and beyond those things. That is a very difficult task. It is something that is real and is possible in the context of society and the world.

Achieving racial equity means that race can no longer predict life. Or achieving equity and ability means that ability no longer predicts life outcomes in a way that you are not treated differently because of those things.

I wanted to talk about internal structure and management. There is the Office of Equal Opportunity, which does compliance work and the office where I am housed. We are led by Wanda Kirkpatrick. Then there is me, the Equity Manager. There are two folks on my team, Yolanda Burckhardt and Roderic Southall. We are part of the Equity Implementation Unit (EIU) that is part of OEO. Our core focus is on advancing equity. In this room on compliance at the Met Council, working on all five divisions in that effort. There is also the Equity Change Teams. Each division has a makeup of employees from across their divisions that focus on the question specifically in the context of division. At Regional Administration, it is led by Leslie Kandaras. At Metro Transit it is led by Karyssa Jackson. At ES there is Jennifer Zuchowski. At CD is Angela Torres. At MTS there is Heidi Schallberg. They are all working on this specifically in the context of their jobs. Also, there is the equity integration teams which has each of the five change team leads of folks that I just mentioned as well as myself as the staff liaison to the Equity Advisory Committee (EAC). I would like to talk about a staff liaison from this committee. That would probably be Pam Steffen. Then there would be five at large members from the different divisions.

Our core focus is on standardizing all this work across the Council to bring up issues and make recommendations so that the Executive Implementation Team which are the division heads and the Deputy Regional Administrator. The core focus on that team is to bring together all of those ideas, work through them, go directly to the decision makers who have the power to implement the things that need to be implemented so it doesn't get lost. We go directly to the division heads because they have the real authority to implement things at the Council.

There are also four different subcommittees to help us on our HR issues. There is data development and the Operation Analysis Committee. There is a lot of different things that we don't have. For a data driven organization to really define where we are going to advance equity in the region. There is equity communications that focus on the things we communicate and how we communicate. Then equity training and awareness as part of how we train our organization to better understand these concepts so that they can bring those things to their work.

The EAC is one of two equity focused advisory committees. TAAC is the other. They were established in 2015. There are 17 residents from around the region as well as four Council members. The real focus is on advising the Council on equity related to our internal and external outcomes. They have done everything from the regional fare change. They look at the way we allocate subsidies for our HRA (Housing Redevelopment

Authority) program or our housing resource. They focus on the policy of our administration systems and programs of what we administer here at the Council. Looking through a lens of equity on how to do that. That is something that this group should also feel a part of.

What equity work are we doing? The biggest one is the racial equity work plan, which we are in the middle of launching right now. We are focusing on what do we mean by racial equity? Without living in the abstract, we are talking about walking the walk. Doing things that are important to advance racial equity. That same question needs to be asked about other forms of equity. That is something we have to get at in the future. This committee could be a part of that.

We have done a lot of trainings on bias, inter cultural conflict management and privilege to get people up to speed. We are doing those ongoing. We have an Urban Scholars program, which is trying to get folks who are underrepresented in this Council to work in an internship capacity. They would hopefully expand the diversity of our employee base. Lots of internal engagements. We have an equity lens that we are rolling out so that folks can look at all the work they are doing. Ask the question: "Is this really advancing equity?" Then the ADA Transition Plan. Compliance is really important.

Over time we are trying to get to increasing specificity on equity. We are starting with what does an equitable society look like in general? Not here at the Council, but in the region and the world. What is the Council's role? The things that we do. We have a role to play in that. Ultimately what does that mean for my specific job? We will get there in time. We have to build those foundations up. It is not lost. But it is institutionalized. If I left and all of the people here left, would they still be doing this work? We have to get to the level of specificity to make it work. For it to exist beyond us.

What kind of equity work would you like to see the Council do that we are not doing already? We want this committee to be a part of this work.

Imdieke Cross asked him to break down the membership of the 17-person committee based on who they represent. How many individuals do you have representing issues pertaining to disability?

Anderson said that it is the same Council districts. There are two combined into one. They come from all over the region the same way that the Council members do. There are three Council members right now. Council Member Melander, Council Member Munt and Council Member Reynoso. There is one member in particular who is a person with a disability who is particularly passionate about that.

Kirkpatrick said when the people were chosen for the equity committee there were folks from the community who provided us with some guidance on how to do that. One of the guidance they gave us was to have people who had knowledge of all kinds of protected class issues. There are people on there who have knowledge, not just David, who is in a wheelchair. There are people there who work in areas that are what I believe you want to know, who knows the ADA, who knows the history here in the state of Minnesota around the ADA, etc. They were not chosen for a specific area of expertise. They were chosen for many different types of expertise.

Imdieke Cross said in an equity committee, your role is to represent many underrepresented communities. It is important that we have people who understand disability, who understands our issues and are passionate about our issues. At this point in time you are telling me that you have only one person who identifies as a person with a disability.

Kirkpatrick said that is correct but there are other people on the committee who have knowledge of the rules and regulations around what we need to have here at the Council around the ADA, mobility issues, around mental health issues, etc. So, there are others on there. Madam Chair we can get you the names and the places where the people come from and what they do. So that we can provide you with that information.

Imdieke Cross said I think it is critical that we know who is representing us on this committee. As you have said twice now that the regulations are just the beginning point. What I anticipate what you are trying to achieve here is far more than just meeting regulations. I can understand all sorts of regulations but when my life is tied up in those regulations and my quality of life is a result of those regulations, my role is much different and much more active and much more passionate.

Kirkpatrick said that process is similar to other processes here at the Council on how they were chosen. The application process is the same as any of the other committees. I am not sure how your application process was. The application process was very similar to all of the other community and legislative committees that are here at the Council. They really try to have people on it who understand the ADA, etc. I'm not saying that that

is all that they do. Not only understand that. They work in those fields. They work with people who would be part of that process out in the community.

Anderson said that applications for at large members. There are at large members who have applications that are right now. The hope is to make sure that all groups are represented.

Fenley said building on Margot's question. A suggestion would be to query people as to their knowledge and experience. There are invisible disabilities too.

Anderson said the internal group, their charge is to not just focus on race. The Equity Integration Team is pretty diverse. It represents the full spectrum of considerations at the Council. There are other topics including people with disabilities and different orientations. These are all topics of our work plan. There is a time in the future when we will work on persons with disabilities. Our primary focus is on race right now. There is not enough resources and time to work on more than one topic at a time. We will focus on one and do it really well. Then we will move on down the line to other topics.

Kirkpatrick said our office is charged with doing things to be sure that protected classes, no matter who they are, are being treated equally and fairly, etc. around the Council. Both internally and externally. The things that we do internally and the things that we do externally. Consequently, we are not going anywhere. We will still do that kind of work. That is why I have made it special that Jan Dietrick sits on this committee. We do that kind of work every single day. We do the disability work. We do the ADA work. Making sure that both internally and externally that our customers, our constituents, all understand that the Metropolitan Council will not be having opportunities for people to be discriminated against, or people to be not properly taken care of because of who they are. That's not what we do here at the Council. Once we get that information. That is something that we take care of.

For our equity work that we are doing with C Terrence here. I want you to understand that there is focus right now on our equity work around racial equity. That does not mean that we are not going to do other types of work with all class members. I want everyone to understand that now. We do not have unlimited resources. Whether it is people or money or time. However, if you can remember once we do this kind of work on racial equity there are times that all boats will float. That is one of the things that we are going to insure that if there is something that we are doing that will help housing. For example, in the housing field, we are not going to just say it is only about racial equity and housing. We are going to say it is about equity and housing.

We have been working with your Chair and we want to have a team type of process here with equity and the TAAC. That is going to happen.

Clark asked how to get on the equity committee. He wants to develop a Hope Forum. He wants to know how much relative influence does your advisory board have? It is very hard for anybody to influence Metro Mobility.

Anderson said he can send the information on how to get on the equity committee to the TAAC Chair. There is an online application. He can get together with Clark to meet on the Hope Forum.

Kirkpatrick said that Jan sits on a committee that is talking about Metro Mobility right now. I would suggest that maybe Jan could ask them to come and give you a briefing on that process. Ken and David are also on that committee. Anderson will call Clark and have that informational interview to find out about the EAC and then get those applications.

## **2. BRT Ticket Vending Machines Accessibility**

Nick Eull, Senior Manager of Revenue Collection at Metro Transit, and Dennis Dvorshak, Manager of Revenue Processing at Metro Transit, spoke to the TAAC committee. The focus of our presentation is going to be around the A-Line BRT.

Our purpose today is to review all of the fare collection systems, focusing on the accessibility of our system as well as the A-Line. We will walk through the rail system, the bus system and the bus rapid transit system. When we get to the A-Line we will talk about the procurement process, installation and some specific background. Then we will talk about accessibility with that equipment as well.

Our rail system. As you are all aware, they first incorporated a light rail system in 2004, the Hiawatha Line or the Blue Line as it is called now. Then the Green Line started in 2014. There are ticket vending machines on those lines. You buy your ticket or tag your GoTo card prior to boarding the train. The ticket vending machines accept cash, tokens and coupons. You are also able to load your GoTo cards at the TVM. They also have

smart card validators. They also have the smart card validators on the A-Line. Customers with GoTo cards if they have value, they tap the GoTo card and it either deducts the value from the card or validates that they have paid their fare. These smart card validators on the light rail system are located at the front of the platform.

On the BRT, stations will be a little bit different but they are set up very similar. On the bus side for fixed route there are fareboxes. They have had these fareboxes for about 25 years. We ask very little of them because of the GoTo system. In these fareboxes we accept cash, tokens and coupons. We also issue transfers. We don't have very many magnetic passes out there anymore. Since about 2006, they transitioned to GoTo cards. System wide GoTo cards are 60 percent of our rides and cash is about 20 percent. They issue magnetic transfers for cash payments. Then there are smart card validators. Over the past few years we changed the blue footballs to a device that is much more reliable and much more flexible. We do still accept GoTo cards. They are the most popular way to pay the fare.

Bus Rapid Transit fares are paid before you board the bus. Customers are expected to purchase their fare before they board. Similar to light rail, there are officers that ride the A-Line who do random fare inspections to make sure those folks onboard have paid their fare. We do have ticket vending machines on the A-Line. They are different than the ones we have on the light rail line. They take up much less space. Then on our light rail platforms, we have two per platform. There would be two on the northbound side and two on the southbound side. Each station has four but there are two on each side. They accept exact change only. We do not give change. They issue flash passes. It indicates that you paid your fare. We accept tokens, coupons, cash and credit cards at these stations. So any way that you can pay on the bus or on ticket vending machines.

The same as light rail we have the validators on these lines. The biggest difference in these stations from the light rail stations is there isn't a mechanism on these stations that allow the customers to recharge their GoTo card. From a capability standpoint these machines have a lower capability than the Cubic machines.

From a procurement standpoint, looking at the ticket vending machines on the A-Line, we were looking at something that would take cash and credit, that provides the customers with the same ability and the same ways they can pay for their fare. We were looking for something that had the capability for only accepting exact change because of the operating expense that goes into supporting the operation. It is very expensive to give change. We wanted to have something that would minimize the expense. These stations are a lot smaller than the light rail stations.

We were looking at something that would be about \$15,000 or less. The Cubic ticket vending machines are between \$80,000 and \$90,000 each. We are also thinking about the future lines. The C-Line will be kicking off soon. We are already talking about D-Line. We wanted something that would be long standing. We have the ability to move to future lines. They want something adaptable for future lines. We wanted something that would run reports and integrate some of the other fare collections.

We wanted something that meets or exceeds ADA standards. One of the things we learned is that ADA is the floor in terms of capabilities. The equipment should be addressing some of the needs that those who have a disability would be able to operate this machinery. We wanted something that at least met the ADA standards.

After receiving those requirements from the project office, we went to the procurement phase of our plan here. We started out with information gathering. There we started off with a RFI (Request for Information). We put it all out to the public and determined what is out there. We received a response from one of the vendors (Parkeon) who gave us a solution that they thought would fit what we needed. It was pretty reasonable. But we still wanted to do some more fact gathering. We researched the BRT's that are currently in existence at that time. There was one just north of Seattle (Swift BRT). We went out there and did a site survey. We visited them and they spent a whole day with us. They were demonstrating their system, their small footprint, ticket vending machines and their validation. We were very impressed. They were impressed with their system. They showed us their back office. We went out and talked to the customers. We talked to people who serviced them and maintained them. We were satisfied that these machines could meet our requirements.

We also did some research and we discovered that Houston has similar machines. They are similar to us. They have a rail system with a full-service ticket vending machine that we will see on our rail system. They also have light ticket vending machines that we were looking for. We visited them and they spent the day with us and showed us their system. We talked to the maintainers and servicers and the money counters out there and we learned a lot about that system.

After doing that fact gathering and those site surveys we put together a request for proposal (RFP). We had a selection panel. I was the project manager of the selection panel. We also had a lot of stakeholders involved in that panel. Once we submitted that we got three responses. The responses were from Parkeon (\$11,750 per TVM), Ven Tek (\$8,596 per TVM) and Genfare (\$46,840 per TVM). We asked each one to come and demonstrate their ticket vending machine. Parkeon and Ven Tek accepted our offer and came here and demonstrated their machines for us. Based on the demonstration, we selected the Parkeon machine. The Parkeon machine rose to the top on many levels. Mostly because they had a proven success. We had seen it out there on the line and they were also able to demonstrate the ticket vending machine systems that they had. Ven Tek had a good proposal. But most of their proposals began with "We can do that." Parkeon said "We do that." Whenever we asked a question. Parkeon said "Yes, that is what we do." Genfare did not come out and demonstrate but their price was too high for us.

Cubic versus Parkeon. The Cubic machines are the big machines that you see on the light rail system. Why did we not go with the sole source from Cubic? Why did we go for a small one? The Cubic machines were too large for our system. We needed a small footprint. We would be servicing up to 400 of these machines. The Cubic machines are too difficult and expensive to service. The servicing and cash collection would be astronomical.

The Parkeon machine that we purchased for the A-Line, was \$11,750 each. The Cubic machine would be about \$86,000 each. The Cubic system would have taken about 70 to 80 percent of the cost of the A-Line.

For the A-Line we are doing about 50 transactions per week on the average per machine. Most of the people that are riding the A-Line are using a GoTo card validator. We get about 9,000 TVM transactions per month. There are about 31,500 validator tags per month. There are about 580 transactions per week on the Blue Line.

We do monitor TVM accessibility issues very closely. We work very closely with Customer Relations. When we get an accessibility issue we take it very seriously. The light rail validator screens were foggy. We had some limited visibility customers who were not able to see the little screen on the validator very well. When we do get those reports we try to respond very quickly and we replace them as quickly as we can. Also, the ticket vending machine screens are difficult to read on occasion. Sometimes the sun will burn into them and you can't see them because of reflections. When we received some of these complaints we replaced all of the screens. We have an upgraded screen on them and then we also have the sacrificial screen. When we do have vandalism and scratches on them we just remove that sacrificial screen and put another one on there quickly. It is less expensive than replacing the normal screen on there.

Eull showed a chart of the customer complaints. They get more complaints about the ticket vending machines on the light rail system (it didn't take my money, it didn't give change or it wouldn't read my credit card). On the A-Line there are very few complaints. It averages once a month for this year. In 2016 there were in the July to November time frame, complaints we were receiving at that time were that the machines were slow. We worked with the vendor at that point to make some modifications to the process. Before you could buy three or four tickets in one transaction. What we found out was customers were not buying that amount of tickets per transaction. Just that feature was adding 40 to 50 percent to the transaction time for customers. We eliminated that almost a year ago.

Specifically, about a year ago an individual named Tom Heintl reached out to us and tried to use this machine and brought up a specific concern about the ticket vending machine. The first time he tried to use this there were barriers that prevented him from using this machine in a fast and efficient manor. We worked with Jan Dietrick and her team. We established that from a letter of the law standpoint that these machines were ADA compliant, the usability factor was very low for somebody who is first coming to this machine. Specifically, the blind impaired being able to buy a ticket.

Once we received that complaint, there was a number of things we did. First, we met with him so we could understand better. At that same time, we invited a group in from a local organization called the School of the Blind, Incorporated to look at this machine. But not just this machine. We looked at all of the machines we use. We had them go through and spend two to three hours in the conference room having them help us understand what the barriers were. That showed us that it shouldn't just be ADA compliant. There were other things we should do not just insure that it was ADA compliant and insure that it had usability as well. That identified areas for improvement. Not just in our equipment but in our processes as we move forward as well.

There has been a number of things that we have done on the A-Line since we opened it. We have decreased the transaction time. We created a smoother process there for a shorter TVM start up time. We added some

raised letters because we know that although there is Braille on the machines, not all blind people read Braille. We have improved the volume. Then we modified the input jack as well. We have learned some things along the way. The I-phone earbuds have the same length plugs but there is a microphone on that plug. If you put the plug into the jack it might not work because the microphone verses just a set of headphones. The machine works with both. We have learned a lot from this process that enables us to make these machines better. We will also have carryover as we do the next procurements.

Some ongoing modifications we have. One of the main things we found out when the blind students came to visit us was that the buttons were extremely sensitive. For a blind person trying to touch these buttons, they were activating those buttons that they did not want to activate. We spent a lot of time with the vendor to try to find a better keypad that would allow our regular customers to make their transactions quickly, but also give us less sensitivity for our blind customers. After several versions of a new keypad, we found one that works much better. We did some pilot testing of our own. Once we were confident that this was right, we invited our panel back and had them do some testing of it. Tom was very impressed with the new keypad.

We accepted that pad as a pilot through the winter. We wanted to make sure that these new keypads worked through our winter months. If they do work, we will retrofit the machines that we currently have. All future machines will also have this new keypad on them.

We are modifying the language on them to make them more clear. We are going to be incorporating that new keyboard. We will do an environmental test. As we move forward on the C-Line, all of the improvements we have incorporated on the A-Line machine will be used for the C-Line. When the C-Line starts in March or April of 2019, from a fare collection standpoint, we are going to be further ahead than we were with the A-Line. Those are being included in the procurement documents and the requirements as well. We are taking what we have learned from this experience and use this on future lines like the Orange Line, Green Line Extension and Blue Line Extension. Working with this group and others to make sure that we make this the most usable for everybody.

Chair Walker said that she was disappointed that they hadn't come to this committee earlier.

They haven't worked with anybody on the accessibility issue. We thought that the ADA requirement was the only requirement. We recognize today that that is the floor. ADA and usability is not synonymous. As we move forward we want to be able to engage this group and get feedback from this group to incorporate and build a more usable fare collection piece for all of our customers. Tom is pleased with the result. The issues that he brought forward, we have addressed, and he indicated that this would be O.K. for the C-Line.

Myhre said she was disappointed that they only considered working with the blind to make this machine accessible.

There are things we can do to modify the machine. We are buying a piece of equipment with some ability to modify it. But we are not building a machine from the ground up. The learning experience here will give us the opportunity to bring in a number of folks who represent multiple disabilities besides those who are blind. It is an opportunity to provide some input to this process as we move forward.

Steffen said that in the C-Line process, which we are just entering, that perhaps before we actually purchase those machines, because they are more likely than not going to be the same as the A-Line. Maybe bring in one of those machines to this group before a meeting or during a meeting. Have a little workshop to see what works and what doesn't. Because these meetings represent all forms of disabilities. This should be done before we consider buying those machines. Sometime in the next few months they should come back with one of those machines.

Eull said the next few months may not be appropriate based on the timeline of the C-Line. We are looking to execute the contract by sometime in December. Because the money just became available. Some of the constraints we have with the schedule indicate that we should order earlier. But if others are interested in this we could certainly set up something separate. There are technical challenges bringing a machine in here and getting it set up. We would be happy to facilitate those that are interested to maybe come over to the workshop at some point and spend some time on the machine to understand it better.

Chair Walker said that Pam will set it up.

Fenley said if enough customers demanded beyond compliance, the industry would change. Were there any accessibility specifics in the RFP that you put out?

Eull said they were not specific. Only that they had to meet the ADA guidelines in whatever section relates to ticket vending machines. It was a very small section that relates to ADA. That was the floor because we didn't know there was a ceiling and a floor when it came to ADA. To your comment that if there was enough interest in the industry in terms of moving this forward that the economics would take care of itself. We thought that too when Dennis was meeting with Houston and Seattle. Once this issue was brought forward by Tom, when we reached out to those groups, they had the same equipment that we do, and they hadn't received any complaints from not just the blind community but anyone else as well.

When we reached out to the vendor to make them aware of it, they hadn't received any information from their transportation agencies either. It took us a year on our own to move this vendor from just saying it meets ADA requirements to come up with a prototype keyboard that met the requirements from an eligibility standpoint that we had set. In fact, the only thing that escalated that was two months ago. We said we are not going to buy your machines for the C-Line unless you come up with a solution. That is what finally lit that fire under them to come up with a solution. There doesn't seem to be an overwhelming interest in the other transportation agencies across the country to push this direction. So, I'm not sure how they are addressing the situation or why they aren't getting complaints.

When we reach out to those agencies, they weren't aware of the sensitivity concern with the machine. I don't know anybody is reaching out besides us.

Fenley asked what is the response time to fix the machines. The average response time is it measured in days or weeks?

Eull said it depends on the issue. We have technicians that are on call usually from 5:00 a.m. until 10:00 p.m. Normally if we have a call that if they are not out working on a machine they can be out there within an hour or two or less. They have vans that have all of the parts with them. Normally when they show up they have all the resources they need to address the problem. Each line has a dedicated technician for them. So the Green Line has one. The Blue Line has one. We are hiring a new technician for the C-Line.

### **3. Metro Mobility Community Conversation**

Christine Kuennen, Metro Mobility Senior Manager, and Claudia Fuentes, Outreach Coordinator at the Metropolitan Council, spoke to the TAAC committee.

Fuentes said I have been working at the Metropolitan Council doing outreach and engagement. I work with all of the units at the Metropolitan Council. I especially like working with Metro Mobility. We do a wide range of outreach and engagement activities. We have a website. I get a lot of Metro Mobility customer interactions on the website because I frequently staff the public info line. Both the mailbox and the telephone voicemail. There is a lot of engagement via public info.

There is also customer education and site visits. Andy Streasick will go to individual sites to do individual engagements. The small group. One type of outreach is customer surveys. We did a survey in 2015. I also conducted four focus groups with different agencies to talk about communication and to get feedback. We have had hundreds of fare related conversations with regards to the fare change. That was done on many different formats and many different venues to discuss the fare change.

We have also done something called Transit Stories where we videoed and interviewed persons who use Metro Mobility. I also have had several one on one conversations via the phone line and email.

Last spring, we had a convening and over 100 people came. We learned quite a few things. The number one subject was driver training and skills. There was some concern for the fare increase. Although the overwhelming opinion was that if the fares were to increase, people didn't want the service to change in any way. They did not want any service cuts of any type.

There was lots of conversation about reservations, online booking and website communications. One thing to note more than Metro Mobility customers were at these convenings. Advocates and PCA's (Personal Care Assistants) came. They will bring to our attention their concerns they have when trying to assist their customers or clients.

Routing and on time performance is something that Metro Mobility users bring up. As well as the service hours. Last month we had the Fall Conversation. We had that in Bloomington. We got to introduce Christine. We also got to talk about a couple of other things as well. Christine will talk to you about what happened at that event.

Christine Kuennen said I felt it was a real privilege for me to get out into the community for the first time in my tenure in this position. It really did connect me to the people story and not just the business process or the technology project or the phone call stats or the performance stats. I had done some ride alongs with the systems over the summer. But I hadn't had the opportunity to engage one-on-one. I was glad to have time to make it around to every table. If it was a larger group, I would have maybe not been able to do that. But when you have about 40 or 50 people attending. That was really wonderful. I want to thank you for doing that and organizing that. Letting me be introduced in that way.

Striking though, when I was looking at the summary from April and the summary from the October Conversation, the really top topics were driver training, Just the overall need for consistency in driver performance and skill sets. Operational issues of routings and on-time performance. Just the demand of the system really being at capacity. The fact that we don't have online bookings restored yet in our system. A little less on the fare increase because the topic had already been discussed well and the implementation had already happened only a week prior.

The takeaways I think from that and they weren't just initiated since October. We do have some projects in place. That was another nice thing to hear. I was able to connect the dots between the customer's experience and some of the projects we had in place for improvement. The driver's wage that we were able to implement with our contracts effective on October 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. We know that a lot of the on-time performance issues and the capacity issues relate to driver shortage. Turnover rates are high in the driver workforce.

I just met with one of our contract service managers, Transit Team today. He has a driver training class of 12 this week. He has to bring in another training class onto his schedule just to accommodate the interest now. We are hoping that we can see some operational performance improvement as well as some stability in the driver rank. This relates to quality of service. When you have a high turnover rate and are constantly training you never get good seasoning with your workforce that is needed for a good customer experience. We are hoping that those kinds of things improve.

We completed a training audit this summer that showed that our contracts were compliant, which was good. But maybe that is the floor and we can look at improving. Claudia has a story about the training video.

Fuentes said our videographer, Carol Critchley, made a video called Welcome to Met Mo and it is a training video. The script was itself written by Metro Mobility users. We took real case scenarios using as actors, Met Mo riders. I distributed this video to all of our vendors who provide the rides. This morning I was called by a representative of the largest company that we use. He really liked that video. His drivers really liked that video. It is a very authentic video because it is actually from the customers. It illustrated the sensitivity of the subject matter which is essential driver/customer relationships. We plan to do more of this. We will work very closely with our Metro Mobility users to create a quality product for the drivers.

Kuennen said as far as communication initiatives, I heard at a couple of tables and again at the task force last week from committee member Rodgers, that sometimes the feedback needs to be improved. Customers will come and give us information at the community conversations and really need that follow up for what are we doing about it? What is the progress? Some of these projects are larger projects. It takes time to implement. What is the status? I think there are some strategies in place to improve that. Next week, Claudia and I have a meeting for the 2018 communications plan. We can talk about some of these issues and maybe make some improvement in that area. So people feel like they are getting a better follow up when they invest their time into the conversations for us.

We are updating our website. This is not a project that was under me. It was discontinued but we will be launching it this fall. It will have the online booking. We did some usability testing in September, accessibility testing is being done concurrently. The committee members here, the next couple of weeks will be participating as well as customers. So that we can observe any barriers with the use of the website. Not only the redesign but also the booking function.

The accessibility testing with screen readers. The product delivers that. We will be testing that with users that use those devices. Members of this committee will be testing this as well as customers. The testing will be mid-month.

I will convey my experiences this morning. You talk about getting out in the system a little bit. I would like to do more of that. I think it is really important for administration staff and management staff to get out and ride the

system. So when we talk about some of these scheduling issues or on-time issues so we can experience some of that in real time and how it impacts people.

This morning I sat with Transit Team Dispatch and observed that function for a couple of hours. I really for the first time saw some of the operational constraints that they are dealing with. With the capacity and the routings for what they have to work with as far as fleet, location and traffic. I think doing more of that for me personally and staff as well. To get out and observe that in real time. That is something we will be working on next year as well.

Chair Walker asked what the wage increase is.

Kuennen said this is something we were able to do effective October 1<sup>st</sup> of this year. To increase the minimum drivers wage. It was \$2.00 an hour for our contracted operators. This sets the floor. The contractors are not able to pay the drivers any less than \$16.00 an hour. That allows a better opportunity to recruit and also retain better operators. It is a more market appropriate wage.

Clark asked how can Metro Mobility passengers collaborate with the Metro Mobility staff to improve service? Why did you take this job?

Kuennen said to answer the first part of your question. I think that is why we are here. That is why I invited Claudia to come present because we are working on the 2018 plan now. After hearing some of the improved communication and collaboration is to do exactly that. To figure out how best to engage the community in the design of the service or the design of the communications plan. I have enjoyed having meetings with Chair Walker in hopes that we will have a liaison relationship to figure out how best to do that. Its imperfect. At some point you have to move on what you see as the direction to take. Do not make the perfect the enemy of the good. To increase the awareness of the various needs the disabilities present. This committee is a core relationship.

The answer to your second question as to why I took this job. The challenge is obvious. There was very high profile discussion as it relates to transportation funding constraints. Demand on the system. There is a tremendous opportunity to provide quality service and increase service. if we look at some proficiencies and discover where they are and put some attention to that. I have been in transportation for 25 years. It was time for me to feel like I am doing something. I wanted to make a move from fixed route into something else that was very fulfilling still and is local. This opportunity came up. The challenge though, is great timing because it allows me to invest in something that I can really care about. I can see the need from inside instead of just reading about it in the papers.

Myhre said that the people who answer the phones and take the reservations and the dispatchers also need training. People don't work as a team.

Kuennen said you are not the first person to bring these topics up with me. I just concentrated on driver training because that was the top topic of the community conversation. That was the agenda item today. But certainly, the review of training materials relates to all contracted staff. It is something that my customer service manager and I have talked about. This is not a finite list of things that we are looking at. I encourage you to keep bringing these things forward. As far as the three providers contracted for the system. It is clear that there are three separate ones. It makes it a challenge for oversight. It is something I am learning.

#### **4. Metro Mobility Stats**

This item was not presented. Dana Rude did say that ridership did not go down because of the fare increase.

### **SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS**

1. **Blue Line** – This item was not presented
2. **Orange Line** – This item was not presented

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Claudia Fuglie spoke to the TAAC committee about a problem she had regarding priority seating on the bus.

## MEMBER COMMENT

Kari Sheldon said that we are not engaging presenters in conversation among the committee. We need to have a group conversation among the committee on every issue.

Lisa Childs said I agree with Kari. This is an advisory committee. I don't see where we are advising on specific things. I don't see a vehicle for that. Do we have a recourse for finding out if the priority seating issue is an ADA issue? So we can advise on the accessibility issue.

Jan Dietrick said that she is right. This committee is just taking in information. If it is the kind of information that should be processed. Maybe follow up questions and follow up actions. You have not done that in the past. I think when you hear things we all want to process what we are hearing and share our thoughts about how it relates to our experience. There are still issues. Should we be asking for more information? Is there another action we can take? I don't know how you would have this kind of dialogue. I agree completely that when we hear people bring information. Much of it, not always but certainly much of it. People need to sit around and talk to one another and see if that fits your experience. Is there more information you want? Or is there further action that we can take to get some different results?

Pam Steffen said that even though this is not the forum for responding to what Claudia brought up regarding access for people with disabilities on a bus. The specifics about that. The fact of the matter is that whoever is occupying those seats first, they don't have to move. What Metro Transit's policy is is to have the operator ask the person to move. If they don't move, they can't make them. Further, we don't know if the person sitting in the disability seats have a disability themselves. Just because they are not in a wheelchair doesn't mean they are not disabled. Their child might be disabled. So we can't force them to move. We ask them once. Then we let it go.

Our operators have a policy to call the Traffic Control Center when a bus cannot take you and you are left behind. They are supposed to pick you up within 15 to 20 minutes at the most. When these issues occur, I need to know about them right away. I will handle them case by case. There is not a systemic issue related to this. The FTA doesn't require non-disabled people to move out of the disability seats. They require that we ask. That is the ruling. That is the law. That is the federal requirement. We can't force them.

The bus drivers that do not ask people to move so they can allow a person with a disability to sit in that area or a wheelchair to occupy that area, we often hear about it. I need to know the bus number, the day and the time.

Jan Dietrick said that this is a legal requirement that the driver ask the person sitting in the priority seating to move. If a driver doesn't ask it could be a disciplined action if this continues. Operators who do not follow the law will be disciplined. The person has to make that complaint.

David Fenley said I would like to see Pam's office address this. What we are having now is drivers making a decision as to what they are going to do and what they are not going to do. If the decision they are doing is illegal, they are choosing to place this burden on to individuals with disabilities. I would like to see this as something the Metropolitan Council or Metro Transit tracks. I would like that every single time that this occurs it should be tracked. I am ready to make a motion to that effect. I would make a motion to bring this to the attention of Wanda Kirkpatrick and C Terrence Anderson. This could be an ADA issue as you were stating.

The first motion would be to recommend that Metro Transit track and collect data on this occurrence every time it happens. Every single time a person with a disability is turned away because of a stroller or someone unwilling to get out of the seat or because the driver was unwilling to actually ask that person to move out of priority seating. Every time a driver leaves somebody on the street. That should be tracked. Sheldon seconded the motion.

Steffen said that is already tracked. The operator has to call the Transit Control Center to let them know that they left somebody behind. The one thing I am not sure about is if in a separate category outside of a bunch of other stuff for tracking purposes. I can ask the manager of the TCC to see if it is separate that it is tracked.

Chair Walker asked if we can have a report on that data.

Steffen said I can let you know if it is tracked separately. If not, ask if it can be. If it is tracked with a bunch of other things, how can we grab that out of the other things? For previous history.

Dana Rude said it depends on how it is reported.

Fenley said I want to see the real numbers here. if it is tracked it is probably under reported. The numbers are way too low compared to what is actually happening. I would be inclined to take away the portion of the motion that tracks whether or not the driver asked the person to move because I want the drivers to report this. To say yes, I left someone behind. They would be not inclined to basically say they broke the law. If that is not being tracked, I want to know how many times a week, a month, a year people with disabilities are being left out in the cold.

Steffen said it is being tracked. Because they have to call. The thing that we can't control is the operator calling or not. We will never know if they called or not unless somebody is actually left behind. Somebody calls us. We review the video. We look at the call records to see that nobody called but somebody was left behind and the video shows that somebody was left behind. It is the only way we can find out that part of it.

Fenley said his first motion is for Metro Transit to track and report on data relating to every time priority seating is not vacated and someone has to be left behind. It was seconded by Sheldon. **The motion carried.**

Fenley said the second motion would be to raised to the Office of Equal Opportunity to investigate the potential discrimination based on the new stroller policy of people with disabilities. Childs seconded the motion. Discussion ensued. **The motion carried.**

Steffen said that buses are returning to Nicollet Mall December 2<sup>nd</sup>. In January those same buses will go back to Hennepin because the Super Bowl is going to start. Obstructing the entire mall for their festivities. This will be for approximately a month. Then they will return to Nicollet Mall.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:51 p.m.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary