Minutes of the

REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, June 06, 2018

Committee Members Present: Chair Patty Thorsen, Sam Jasmine, Ken Rodgers, Robert Platz, Kari Sheldon, John Clark, Diane Graham-Raff, Margot Imdieke Cross and David Fenley.

Committee Members Absent: Heidi Myhre

Committee Members Excused: Christopher Bates, Darrell Paulsen and Tzia.

Council Staff Present: Doug Cook from Metro Transit, Clay Stenback, Greg Schuck, Peter Willenborg, Council Member Marie McCarthy and Alison Coleman

Public Present: Joe Russell, Charlene Doll, Elizabeth True, Claudia Fuglie, Stacie Richter, Mike Richter, Dick VanWagner, Erica Miller and Steve Pint.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Thorsen called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:35 p.m. on Wednesday, June 06, 2018.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Platz, seconded by Graham-Raff to approve the minutes of the May 2, 2018 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

Sam Jasmine asked two questions about what was in the May minutes. She asked if people were allowed to carry guns on paratransit service. Stenback said if they have a permit they can. She asked about drivers calling out stops. Cook said that if someone wants the driver to announce a stop that is not initially announced, they can ask the driver and he will do it.

BUSINESS & INFORMATION

1. Premium On Demand Service

Clay Stenback, Manager of Operations at Metro Mobility spoke to the TAAC committee. This is an optional same day taxi service. It has been in effect since 2004. It was called Premium Same Day Service. The current contract was with Transportation Plus (5 years through 12/31/2020). The contract rate structure matches taxi rates adopted by the city.

The features of the Premium On Demand Service is it offers same-day service.

Also, since February 2018 it offers advanced booking. Service is available throughout the Metro Mobility service area within established service hours by community.

Chair Thorsen suggested that the reason for this presentation should be explained.

Fenley said last month we were looking at statistics and Ken brought up a couple of questions. We got into a conversation about overall policy changes that Metro Mobility was doing on the Premium On Demand Service. So we suggested it be a full presentation at a later meeting.

Rodgers said it is a topic that is worthy of some additional discussion. We didn’t have time last time. With a formal presentation we can ask questions.

Stenback said service is available throughout the Metro Mobility service area within established service hours by community. It is not a shared ride. Customers are brought directly to their destination. The fare is subsidized. The customer pays the first $5.00, Metro Mobility pays the next $15.00. If the total fare exceeds $20.00, the customer pays the remainder of the fare.

Know before you go. Service is available throughout Metro Mobility service area (within established service hours by community). Booking is a two-step process. 1. The trip is pre-authorized by the service provider. 2. The customer calls the taxi company to arrange the ride.

A limited number of Premium on-Demand vehicles are equipped with ramps and tiedowns for customers that use mobility devices. GoTo cards are not accepted. Fares must be paid with cash, debit or credit card. Service is curb-to-curb. Customers needing driver assistance to or from the door, or significant assistance boarding may be better served by using regular Metro Mobility service.

Premium on Demand ridership. In 2017, there were 75,602 rides out of 2.26 million rides in the entire system. That equals 3 percent of rides. This year so far, we had 26,861 rides booked from January to April. That is a 6.6 percent increase over 2017. The average trip length for 80 percent of the trips on POD was 3.7 miles compared to the system average of 9.37 miles. The average cost to Metro Mobility per ride delivered is $8.47. The average rate of No-Show, which is the customer no-showing the ride, is 10 percent.

Metro Mobility Service Center contract oversight responsibility and accounting processes: There is a single Program Administrator assigned to the contract. That is being changed now. Dana Rude was the Project Administrator. He is retiring next month. It is going to be Project Administrator, Greg Schuck. Monthly invoices are reviewed and processed by MMSC staff for payment. Complaints that come through the service center are entered in the MMSC complaint database and forwarded onto the taxi company for resolution.

Some things that we are going to be working on is on-time performance. Data tracking improvements are needed. We will be working on that this summer. Customer complaints: MMSC received 192 system-wide in 2017 involving the Premium on Demand (POD) service. Driver interactions: expectation of excellence.

Our loads are high right now. Ten percent of all rides are no loads. Metro Mobility pays $5.00 for each no load. On a monthly basis we are paying out $3,500 to $4,000. No Loads are not currently tracked as no-show in the Metro Mobility system. In the month of May we had 777 no loads as the taxi company calls them. For a total of $3,885 that we had to absorb because of that. We are not tracking those efficiently enough. We are working on a program. A new intern will help us track the no loads this summer to see if we have habitual offenders.

Next steps. Quality assurance and performance tracking. Metro Mobility summer intern will be assigned to the work plan. Q and A audit for POD and other supplemental service contracts. We started that process already for trips booked since June 1. We are contacting a percentage of riders and asking about their trip on the taxi service. Was the trip on time? Was the driver considerate and performed excellent customer service? What were they charged for the trip? We are trying to hit five percent for a good pool of customers. Verify service performance and service quality / customer experience. Identify current impacts/cost of no loads. We are going to be reviewing that policy to see if we can curb some of the habitual offenders of that program.

Identifying and establish best use of technology for booking / trip tracking. We are looking at Trapeze Trip Broker. We are also investigating some potential app integration with the taxi service. we are hoping this summer to be able to integrate our data a little more efficiently with a healthy customer experience.

Ken Rodgers said there is no process that we as riders, have been taught or told about no loads. From our perspective as the rider, you make your rides. I need a ride at 8:00. Then I find out when I am at my meeting that I don’t need a ride because someone else is going to give me a ride home. There is no instruction to me as a rider that I need to do anything different other than call and cancel the taxi ride. If I don’t call I get a no load. If I never actually made the ride but I am on the will call list, I get charged a no show. There is no instruction to me as a rider that I have any responsibility to do anything different. Other than make my reservation. If I engage the ride, I engage it. Oftentimes, I will arrange a ride and leave it in will call because I am not sure I need it or not. I need some type of insurance that I get a ride if I can’t find one. Most of the time I am able to find one. That will call ride becomes a no show and you get charged $5.00 for it.

A simple solution would be that when I make my reservation, the reservationist informs me if I don’t take the ride, please cancel it with Metro Mobility. And cancel it with the cab company. I am not told that right now. There is no instruction to do anything different than what I have been doing.

The other thing about that process. I have made a ride for late at night after the service center is closed. And I needed to cancel it. So the next morning I have called Metro Mobility, the reservation system, and try to cancel a ride from last night. I can't do it. They do not know how to do that. They do not think it is necessary for me to cancel a ride I did not have to take the night before. I have no way to cancel that ride with Metro Mobility other than going through this service center, which isn't really an appropriate place to cancel a ride. We have some inherent problems in the system that I think is simple to respond to if the reservationist would just indicate to the rider when they are requesting their ride, if they don't need that ride after all and they don't take it, they need to cancel it with Metro Mobility and with Airport Taxi. That would save a lot of money. Right now, we are not given any instruction whatsoever on how to do that.

The second thing, I really strongly urge that some kind of system be put in place with their app. I know if you make a ride using their app on your own, you have the ability to rate the ride. When you call to make a reservation, you don't get that app option. I have no means to do that. If there is a way to do that I haven't been informed of that. I don't know how I can rate the ride. I think that would help quite a bit. Most of my rides are O.K. But every once an awhile there is a ride that is not O.K. They are usually late at night. I can't call the service center to complain.

Up to probably six months ago, if you did call the service center, either to complain about a same day taxi ride, we were informed by the service center, we had to call the Airport Taxi complaint line. That is where you would have to leave your complaint. They didn't take it at the service center. A lot of people got trained right away early on in the system that we had no means to complain about a ride with Metro Mobility. We have to deal with the taxi company. The complaint process at the cab company is a voicemail system. You have to leave a voicemail. You never get to talk to a live person. That is an issue. We never know if the complaint has been received. If it has been accepted. If it has been followed up on. What the result has been. It is a loop that needs to be completed somehow. I would urge that when you look at that contract moving forward, we try to do something to address those issues. We are probably a big enough account for them. We deserve to have a person to be able to complain to that takes our complaint when we call the service center.

Fenley said as a non Metro Mobility user, if I just called the cab company up and send them to an address, and don't show up, do they have any way to collect any money from anybody?

Steve Pint said no. In most contracted transportation it is prearranged. There is some type of a load fee. It is very standard.

To respond to what Ken said, there isn't a no-load charge when it is a will call. Right now, all the jobs that come to us for premium on demand are set up in our system as a will call. There is no fixed pickup time. When it is premium same day it would be a pickup day for that day, but it is a will call status. Now we have introduced the advanced reservations. We are still setting them up with a will call status, which means the rider has to call when they want the ride that day. Once the rider calls and says: "I am ready to go now", if they call at 8:00 in the morning and they want it at noon, we then put a fixed pickup time on it. Once there is a fixed pickup time, and if that ride dispatches, and the vehicle goes to the pickup address, and the rider is not there, that ride constitutes a no load or a no show. Those are the same things. The person wasn't there to be picked up.

But at no time is there ever a no load or no-show fee charged to Metro Mobility for a job that stayed at a will call status because it was never activated by the rider.

Rodgers said what about when a ride gets cancelled?

Pint said if it gets cancelled before it dispatches, meaning if the vehicle arrives, even if it is cancelled when it is dispatching. It is only called a no load if the vehicle is there, waits for five minutes. At that point our system determines it to be a no load. But that is after our drivers reach out to our dispatch center. Our dispatch center tries to reach out to the rider to confirm that they are not there.

We need to have better communications in terms of the process. When the rides come to us, they don't get set up as a will call. It is a fixed pickup time so it isn't necessary to have that same day phone call. It needs to be known that you are committing to that pickup time. If you are not going to take the ride then you have to cancel. That cancel should come directly to the taxi company. It shouldn't have to go through the service center. We are 24/7 so you are able to cancel any time of the day, 365 days a year.

Jasmine said just to be clear, if I get that call that says the cab is 10 minutes away, they give you the cab number, they tell you it is almost there, you have the option of hitting one to cancel. That still would not justify as a no load. Correct?

Pint said that is correct. The rules for the no load is when the vehicle is at the pickup address, waits for a period of time, tries to find the passenger and they are not able to find the passenger.

Jasmine said I take on demand a lot. The other thing I have seen in regards to no loads. The cab thing has gotten better about not discriminating against service animals. But it still happens. There is a new interesting trick that they use. One of the ways is you got your call. It says cab 1025 is on its way and will be arriving soon. You are standing there waiting. You are outside a business or wherever it might be. Somebody says I see a cab, it is sitting down the way. You know it is yours. Then they say he left. You call back and is says cab 2735 is on its way and arriving soon. In my response a couple of things have happened. A. somebody did not put that you had a service animal in. It astounds me that you have to do that because they shouldn't be allowed to drive if that is a problem. B. They didn't read their notes saying that you have a service animal and decide they did not want to take it. They ask somebody else to get the ride. I have asked about this. Why is a different cab coming to get me when the cab was just here and they left? They said you were no loaded and they are sending another one. I can't prove this. It is pretty obvious to me. Are you aware that anything like this is happening? How are you looking at those no loads because I have been standing out there at the time they have happened. This has also happened often to some people I have known. I know somebody who went to a different cab company. They are using them instead of this because every time the cab would leave them and they were standing out there. How can you identify this and figure this out?

Pint said there is no doubt that there are times where we have drivers that avoid rides with service animals. We deal with those on a case by case basis. Ken and I have had several discussions when it has happened to him. We have zero patience with a driver who is trying to play games. There are ways for them to play games in trying to get a no load. Lying to the dispatcher. Doing stuff that is system-based decisions do that so they can avoid a ride. We don't mess around. If we find out that that is what happened, we terminate the driver. We do a lot of rides. There are a lot of rides with people with service animals. You are going to have one or two bad apples every once and awhile. You have to deal with them on a case-by-case basis. It is impossible to have a 100 percent control on what a driver's actions are 100 percent of the time.

Jasmine said when you discuss handling this on a case-by-case basis, less than six months ago we were told to call the cab company if we had a problem. Now we are told to call the service center, but they are not open all of the time. Whenever I did call the cab company, in all the times I did complain, one entire time I got a response back. We had no knowledge on how the complaints were handled. If they are being handled. We don't know what we could do differently. We really need follow up from the feedback that we give.

Pint said I think we can do a better job of relaying the process to the riders. There are three parties involved. Four, including the rider. It is Metro Mobility, the service providers, the taxi company and the rider. This program was put in place in 2004. Ken and I were on the committee that came up with it. Maybe we haven't done a good enough job since then in terms of as it has evolved, and changes, whether it is at the provider level. Technology has changed drastically since then. So that we are doing the best job in terms of what the rider should expect. Different things they can do in the process to avoid what might be deemed a no load. Especially if no loads are going to be some type of a penalty for those that are doing it often. Because it is a high rate. Ten percent is a high rate for no loads. The takeaway for us would be that we could work closely with the riders and Metro Mobility to come up with some better communication in terms of the process. The program itself, the service and what the expectations are for all.

We do have what we call our customer care line. By choice we have it be. It is a recording. We do 1.5 million rides a year. We have a 24/7 call center with 35 folks employed. What tends to happen when there are complaints is the complaints can be long phone calls. It is taking away a person on the phone that is dealing with a real time issue. We made a decision as a company that it was best to get it documented by being a voicemail. It still can be an email. It also is a form now on our new website. That has not been communicated to the Metro Mobility community. That we need to do better on. We could look at it being a live person, but it wouldn't be a live person 24/7. It is just not possible. We have found that it works better because it takes away the erroneous complaints. When there is a little bit of commitment in terms of them having to document. Whether it is a recording or an email. The incident that happened. It allows us to then deal with it in a more organized way verses it being an irate person on the phone. That never ends well. It is more productive to be able to step back and research what happened. We put everything in a database. We don't follow up with the person who complained unless we think it is necessary. Maybe as part of the process, we could add whether or not you want to get a call back. Not everybody does.

We get 30 calls a day from people who are saying the driver cut them off. Should we call those people back? We want to know about it. We database it so we are making sure our drivers are driving safely. The volume of calls we potentially get that maybe are not as important as calls that might be like if you had an issue that your ride was refused by a driver. The only way for us to organize it is part of the system we have set up, which maybe we can make that even better with different means for you to communicate with us.

Jasmine said we are left wondering if this was the same driver that did that to us last time. Were there any repercussions that happened? I would like to know.

Pint said I will look into why you have not been getting a call back. We need to do a better job in terms of following back up or making that as an available option that this needs a follow up. I personally followed up with Ken several times because it made its way to me based on the severity of the complaint. We will look into making sure that we improve that process.

Fenley said I know that the paratransit vehicles have GPS on them to minimize the he said/she said that exists. I know there is another party involved. Is there a similar process or technology to insure that no shows or no loads are actually no shows or no loads in premium on demand service?

Pint said absolutely. Within our system it knows if the vehicle is at the pickup address. There is an auto no load feature that will allow the vehicle to no load the ride after a certain amount of time from the arrival time. It is based on the GPS coordinates between where the vehicle is at and what the pickup is. The example is the vehicle may be parking really close by and waits for that five minutes that allows for the no load to happen. But it is based on GPS. If a dispatcher gets involved, the dispatcher is trained to look at where the vehicle is located. Because many times we will have no loads at HCMC for example. There are five or six different entrances. The driver could be at the wrong entrance. To answer your question. Yes, technology is involved to help enforce that the vehicle is there. But they are still ways for people to work around that.

Fenley said I would like to do everything possible to keep the burden from shifting to the person with the disability.

Chair Thorsen said I am wondering if we might bring this back again if there would be interest in the committee to address this further or get feedback from you Clay and Steve the idea of implementation of some training.

Ken Rodgers said I move that we establish a small task force to help work with Transportation Plus and Metro Mobility to work through some of these details. Fenley seconded the motion. **The motion carried**.

Some of the TAAC members volunteered to be on the task force.

Chair Thorsen said if someone wants to join the task force they could contact her. If there is feedback from members, they could email their concerns as well.

2. Agency Transition Plan

Clay Stenback, Manager of Operations at Metro Mobility spoke to the TAAC committee. Mike Richter, the owner and president of Transit Team, also spoke to the TAAC committee. He will be running the new service starting in October. They will talk about the transition this summer to move from the current provider to Transit Team.

Stenback said Metro Mobility's service structure, as you know, is a multiple demand contract. Three of them to be exact. The East Zone, South Zone and West Zone as well as the agency contracts. The agency contract differs from the demand. It is 100 percent standing orders. There are trips to and from the largest day care, day training and habilitation centers. Everybody has to be ADA certified.

What is changing? Per the FTA, Metro Mobility must prioritize ADA trips first. So there has been a change in our structure of the agency contract. Clients from 15 small volume or non-ADA locations will be moved to demand contracts (57 percent of current agency riders). All current standing orders will be honored when they get moved to demand service. We are trying to minimize any disruption in service at all.

Riders will pay at the time of the ride rather than through the current process, which is agency billing.

We are adding four locations with a large number of ADA rides. This is the agency contract that is being transitioned in October, over from the current provider to Transit Team. The demand contracts, which are the other three (East Zone, West Zone and South Zone) stay the same. They are under contract for multiple use.

Why make the changes? Current contract with First Transit expires in September 2018. It was initiated back in 2012. Federal compliance is another reason. Per the FTA we must prioritize ADA rides. Transparent and defensible justification for agencies served. Equitable treatment of our customers. Improve customer experience on-board time. We are trying to narrow that down. Improve productivity and reduce program costs.

The procurement process in the first quarter of 2018. We looked at the quality of the proposal, the qualifications of the proposer, the experience of the proposer and the price. The panel members that were included were the MN Council on Disabilities, MnDOT, Metro Transit, Metro Mobility and Dakota County. Transit Team ended with the highest ranking in the summery evaluation rating and had the lowest price proposal and was selected in the upcoming agency contract provider.

Contract award. The panel reached a unanimous recommendation to award the contract to Transit Team. On April 25, 2018 the Metropolitan Council passed a motion to authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute a contract with Transit Team to provide the Metro Mobility Agency Service from October 1, 2018 to June 30, 2023 with an option for one additional year.

Our transition plan. What we have provided here with four categories. Personnel, equipment, agency support and customer service. The first is to initiate a transition of qualified incumbent drivers (Transit Team estimates will meet 50 percent or more of need and will offer the same rate of pay and honor seniority of drivers have from existing employer). Provide recruitment and hiring incentives to broaden the driver pool as needed. Begin training of new-hire staff.

Richter said to focus on the driver transition. Our goal and part of what we submitted as our RFP. Our proposal information was to hire and transition 50 percent or more of the incumbent drivers from First Transit. That is something that we are working through with the current drivers. It is something that we feel is achievable. We do need to hire a significant amount of drivers for the start of the contract. Transitioning drivers who are experienced and understand the services in the interest of the customers and Transit Team as well. We are in the process of working through that right now as well as exploring other hiring channels to meet the full demand for the drivers that will be needed starting October 1st. That will be an ongoing issue and an ongoing topic. Up until the month of September. It will take us about 30 days from the time we hire to the time we train and put a new driver into service. We will be exploring the transition of those First Transit drivers over to Transit Team as well as continuing to hire through our new hiring channels as well as current hiring channels until September 1st. We are always hiring drivers. We always have been.

Stenback said the second category is equipment. Currently the contractor has procured lifts already. Contractor procurement and installation. Two portable vehicle lifts. New fleet delivery, equipment installation and inspections. New equipment is coming in for the agency contract in July. We will have everything here on the ground by mid-September. We can have our equipment installed and ready to go by October 1st. Current fleet transfer and inspections (prior to first pullout). We are transferring a small number of roughly 35 vehicles from the current provider to Transit Team. That will take place on Friday night through Sunday. So we are ready to roll out the agency contract on October 1st. Procurement and installation of additional reservations and dispatch system. That procurement process is underway right now with no anticipated problems there.

Agency support. Metro Mobility and contractor staff meet with agencies and stakeholders to define the transition plan. Implement transition plan later this summer. It is important to know that we have been out talking to agencies as well as senior staff here at Metro Mobility. We are meeting weekly with Transit Team for updates on hiring, transition of drivers and customer's standing orders.

Richter said we have met with about half of the agencies that will be on the new agency contract. That is where we wanted to start. So we could understand the full scope of the clients that will be served in those contracts. The response has been positive. People who understand the change like the change. They think it is going to make the agency service more efficient. The benefit of the agency service is a lot of the same rides taken every day, Monday through Friday, going from home to the same location. Over the last 15 years, rides that were better suited to be on demand made their way to agency. I think the shift overall is being received well by the agencies. There is a little concern for the unknown and the change part of it. I think with MMSC staff are working through some of those concerns with the agencies. We have proposed holding open houses for clients and for family members and for staff at the agencies. We are targeting September timeframe for those because there is a lot of work over the next few months to create all the standing orders, the ride times. We want to provide that new information to the agencies. So the clients have at least 30 days to understand when their ride times are going to be. If they have changed.

Then that September period as we are fine tuning things gives us the opportunity to meet with those agencies and impacted clients to answer any questions and ease the transition a little bit more into late September and early October.

Stenback said the last piece of the transition plan is Customer Service. System processing of current standing orders and routing optimizations. We are looking at all standing orders to make sure that we are efficiently routing those. Our goal is to keep our onboard times down as low as possible for the agency riders just like everyone else. Customer and stakeholder communication will start in August through September. Customer and stakeholder training, onboard payments and travel training will be through September. There are some changes in the customers, of course. The agencies were paying the trips for them. Now they are going to be responsible for using a GoTo card, etc. So we will be providing training on that also.

Customer Outreach and Agency Support. Moving to demand service and moving to agency service. There are a couple of items in the customers from agencies completely removed. Non-ADA riders of current agencies who will continue to be part of the Agency contract but the customer will be moved to Demand. Customers from new agencies, customers currently riding Demand are going to Agencies served with new Agency contract.

Back in November and December 2017 we had informational meeting held. All agencies were invited, and a letter was sent. For them to come and discuss this. In June and July, Metro Mobility will visit agencies affected. June through September Transit Team will be meeting with Agencies on detail of operations and transition planning. Transit Team currently provides service to some of the agencies under Demand contract.

Metro Mobility is going to publish a webinar session hosted by Leading Age Minnesota. Planned June 14. Other support and informational materials are currently in production.

Rodgers said from the DT and H (Day Training and Habilitation) side, I cannot imagine that you are not getting some pushback. In terms of the change in the reimbursement rate that agencies now have to use. As background, they used to charge on half hour increments of time. So an agency like DT and H gets paid for reimbursement by the state for the time that a client is at the DT and H. The changes are that now they are being billed in 15-minute increments. I can’t believe you are not getting some pushback in terms of late arrivals, because that late arrival is now going to cost the agency in 15-minute increments. That has to be a huge concern for agencies. Have you gotten any of this feedback?

Richter said we were just talking about that at our weekly meeting today. This is a new service. The one thing I do want to continue to emphasize. Basically, the standing orders. We are going to do our best to accommodate the people who are on agency service now, currently. We are meeting with all of the agencies to understand what time clients need to be there. What time they need to be picked up for those funding purposes. Our goal is to make the appointment times acceptable so that we are meeting those standards and that all the clients served under the agency contract are at the DT and H centers for the appropriate amount of time because of some of these funding changes. A big part of this contract is more damages associated with how pickup times and appointment times are scheduled. It really gives us an opportunity to create a new service that is successful for not only the clients but for the agencies.

Rodgers said just as a follow up, I appreciate this is a new service and you are looking to start fresh. Statistically, the late arrival percentage, always is higher for agency rides than it is for the rest of Metro Mobility. I get it, this will be a new service. So we don’t necessarily have that to indicate that is the way it is going to continue to be. It does concern me that ADA rides are going to have precedence. So when there is pressure on the system, those DT and H customers are going to come second. That is going to affect the income of the DT and H’s in a much more significant way than it ever has in the past.

Platz said what I was proposing to Christine. Ken, you are 100 percent right. DT and H’s will be reimbursed on 15-minute unit increments. What I was proposing is when a person swipes on with their card in the morning. Then they get to the DT and H. Then instead of swiping on with their card in the afternoon to go home, they swipe when they get off the bus. That captures the entire day of the entire time that person was on the bus and at the DT and H. Then they swipe the card when they get off of the bus. I haven’t heard back on how we are going to handle that yet.

Stenback said what we think will work the best is our on board mobile computer. When we arrive at the destination in the morning to pick somebody up, we push an arrive button that is loaded into our Trapeze system. Likewise, when the customer gets off at the end of the day. Back at that location, we hit arrive for that return. So we have all that data that is in our system that we can download into reports. That is going to be much more efficient for us is to get that information that is much more reliable for that Cubic card reader.

Platz said for side notes, what we do if DT and H is going to be concerned about not having folks providing service long enough is we will do a minimum of a quarterly audit and look for patterns of people who aren't there long enough and just adjust their ride times accordingly. You don't want to have folks there longer than necessary.

We have been working with Transit Team on the transition. I believe it will go really well. We think there is an opportunity with the outgoing vendor as far as the message coming from their drivers. It comes in little segments. Then rumors start to fly. There is not going to be a Metro, or you are not going to have a ride anymore. I don't know how outgoing vendors are trained to communicate that if at all.

Stenback said it's a challenge whenever you change a contract for anything. When you have one vendor going out and another coming in there is a lot of misinformation, either intentionally or not intentionally. We are working with First Transit to try to have them work with their drivers on trying to make as smooth a transition as possible. We will deal with them directly. We have done that already. It will continue to be a challenge up through the summer. We are trying to get ahead of it. And get in touch with the agencies as soon as possible. They will try to get the information out to the customers on the front end.

Fenley said I have a question relating to the changing in payment styles. Now it is not going from agency to Metro Mobility. It is happening on the bus with the clients and the people who are actually riding. Given at least with the DT and H community, you are dealing with a more specific portion of the disability community, mainly intellectual disabilities and developmental disabilities. Are the agencies themselves providing information to their clients as to the change in payment? Are drivers doing that? How is that information getting conveyed to the actual users of the transportation?

Richter said I think part of it is the outreach between us and the Council. A webinar is going to be helpful for that. It will explain the changes in the new process. Most of it is going to be something we have used in the past. We are still kicking around what kind of information we will provide to the agencies. But almost like a Metro Mobility cheat sheet. Here is what you need to know. Here are the changes. Here are the important things that you need to know. Then having the agencies making sure they are getting in touch with the families or group homes or whatever the situation might be. That is what we think is going to be the biggest change is the payment. Every agency is a little bit different. Lifeworks is a good example. A lot of their clients are managing their own GoTo cards.

A few other agencies are that way. Some other agencies, the clients are not able to manage those GoTo cards. Between the provider and the agency, with the blessing of the Metro Mobility Service Center, we are coming up with solutions that work so that the clients still pay with the GoTo cards and it manages the process. So we are not losing the GoTo cards. The clients are not going to be responsible. It is definitely a two-way street to make sure we are coming up with a solution that meets the criteria of the service.

Facilities Monitoring

Doug Cook, Customer Advocate at Metro Transit spoke to the TAAC committee. I talked with someone at our Transit Control Center. They monitor all of the calls that come in from our bus operators and from Customer Relations. They are really in charge of all the cameras and communications with our drivers. I asked them how are things monitored as far as cameras at the stations and elevators specifically? They said it was a passive approach they have. They don't have the manpower to have to be constantly watching. There are a ton of cameras out there and it is not practical. We would have to hire 100 people to monitor all of the cameras all of the time. What they do is if there is a trouble spot, where a lot of complaints are coming from, customers complain about certain locations, they will actively monitor those more. If there is a request by police to do so, they will do that. Otherwise they do a passive system that they use for monitoring.

One of the main proponents for moving towards more active monitoring, is customer complaints, if something is going on at a station or elevators. We are already aware of quite a few of them that have issues. They are actively looking at those. But if people are not calling our customer relations line and reporting that then the information doesn't get anywhere, and we can't do anything about it because we assume everything is fine.

Rodgers said just for the record, you mentioned calling the customer relations line, there is always a very long wait time to talk to a customer service rep. Some days it is worse than others. Many times I have attempted to call them and it takes so long I give up. I am on hold for 10 to 15 minutes. I have no idea how much longer I am going to be on hold. I encourage, moving forward, looking at a different hold system. One that lets you know how much longer it is going to take. Where you are in the que. Something that tells you that you are not going to be on indefinitely. I never know if it is broken or it is actually working, and I am in the que someplace. Its an unreasonable amount of time that one has to wait just to make a complaint or comment.

Cook said that is a reasonable complaint. We are always a little short-staffed. Lately we got approval for more full-time employees. We are getting more staff. I will talk to someone about the long waiting time on hold.

Imdieke Cross said there are only three elevators in the system. Central, West Bank and one more.

Cook said there are elevators at the Lake Street Station. We know that there are certain ones that are problem areas. They are aware of that too.

Imdieke Cross said how do they know the ones that are impacting us? The problem ones. How many complaints will generate some attention?

Cook said that I don't know. We will take Lake Street Station. We have been looking at that station for quite awhile because of the complaints. It is now a targeted station that is called CX360 is the project. We did it at the Warehouse Station. This year we are targeting Lake Street Station to improve the facilities there. To improve the customer experience in general. We are talking a lot with police and their involvement in that. There are actually quite a few departments involved in the CX360 project. This year is Lake Street and we have already seen an improvement there.

Now are there times where the police are there and they take care of the problem? They walk away, and the troublemakers return. Yes. That is a big issue that we are dealing with now. There are a number of them out there. It is a staffing issue on how many can be watching the cameras at one time.

Rodgers said Metro Transit has an app that you can text to if something is not right, vandalism, some kind of problem. All you have to do is send a quick text message and they jump on it right away. I have had two instances where I texted from the car I was in. Within one or two stops the police got on. If they don't know what is going on they can't help. I encourage people to download that app metrotransit.org.

Cook said we had Text for Safety here from TCC last time. They did a good job presenting that. That is a very useful tool. Because you don't have to get involved. You could always email that department. It is a slower process. You don't get that instant feedback. With email people don't always give all of the information needed. It makes the process slower.

Rodgers said if you look at the ceiling on the LRT vehicle, there is a car number. If you give that car number early in the text, they know exactly where you are. I told them what station I was at. The direction I was going.

Cook said that the car number is on the side of the car and in the front and back as well as the ceiling. Give them more information. What the person looks like.

Jasmine and Rodgers said in the accessible seating there should be information like the car number in Braille or raised numbers there and throughout the car.

Imdieke Cross said coming back to my issue. It generally happens during the wee hours in the morning. It happens when there probably isn't a lot of activity in the light rail vehicles. They have to be monitored. Be it four or five elevators in the system. They should be constantly up on the screen. If you see somebody going in there at 3:00 in the morning. I have found clothing and urine. I am waiting to find other things. You go in there to take the LRT. What am I going to find there and am I going to have to roll through it? It is intolerable. We are understaffed, and we aren't watching the monitors doesn't do it for me.

Cook said there is only a limited amount of elevators in the system. We could assign someone to that.

3. Not Able to Board

Doug Cook, Customer Advocate at Metro Transit spoke to the TAAC committee. We use the terms "Leave Behind" and "Pass UP" for transit people. But when you say that to someone outside of our agency they think you are leaving someone behind, you can't be doing that. You are correct, we can't be doing that.

Margot brought this up that she had a friend that was not able to board the bus and was left behind.

Imdieke Cross said the person approached the driver to get on the bus. The driver refused to ask the individuals who were occupying the accessible space to move. Therefore, she had to wait for the next bus.

Fenley said this is coinciding with the new stroller policy. To not engage folks in the disability seating. It has been going on for a few months now.

Imdieke Cross said this happened multiple times. I brought it up before. I was told this was an isolated incident. That this never happens. Clearly it happens. The disability community says this is happening and something needs to be done.

Cook said our drivers are required in their training that they have to ask: "Can you please move so I can board this person with a mobility device?" That they must do. If they are not doing that they are outside of our policy. That is a manager issue and that needs to go to them. That is where the customer complaints come in. They have to go through retraining or whatever it is. They are not following our policy. They are mandated to ask. They cannot make somebody move. Someone might have a disability like PTSD where they have to sit in a certain seat or they will freak out. Even if it is a person with a stroller. They have a right to use that area as well. They can refuse to move.

Imdieke Cross invited Claudia Fuglie to come up to the microphone and explain what happened to her. She is the one who spoke with Imdieke Cross about the times she was turned away.

Fuglie spoke to the TAAC committee about the times she could not board a city bus.

Cook said we provide the area, but we can't make people move. Drivers are required to ask. If they don't ask, that is a problem. That needs to be addressed.

Jasmine said I do remember when people had to fold up their strollers and put the kids on their laps. I can understand a stroller but there are carts sitting there in that spot. I wonder why that is acceptable. It was my understanding before that said in inclement weather that another bus would be sent out to assist with this if this was called in. It seems like that went by the wayside. Why are we still hearing about this?

Cook said the procedures that the drivers are trained in. There are various reasons why.

Fenley said this is ongoing for over a year where we were not happy with the new stroller policy that was coming down. It is in effect. It is out of our hands. You don't have to fold your stroller up anymore. What that does is that it puts the person with a stroller in accessible seating. People with disabilities have been shoved off to the side because of the new stroller policy. That is out of our control at this point. It has already been decided. The Met Council came to us. We weren't thrilled with it, but we are an advisory committee. So unfortunately, this issue is at rest at this point.

What we are talking about now is how often is this happening? We are asking Metro Transit to begin looking at data to see how often people are being left behind. They didn't have a good answer for us. We are really trying to dig into that and say is this increasing now that this new stroller policy has been implemented? How often are people left out in the cold? We have multiple examples right here in front of us with Claudia's testimony. That is where we are now. Just to focus us in on something. Rehashing issues where we have no say at this point. I am disappointed. I'm sure we all don't like that fact.

Imdieke Cross said if there is a solution. I think we have to collect the data. Find out if there is an alternative. I don't think we are ever at rest here. This is an issue for us. The Met Council isn't ready to reconsider. Metro Transit isn't ready to reconsider an adjustment to their policy. I wouldn't waste a second going to the media with Claudia. This woman has been left behind multiple times because of the bus driver no longer has to ask people to move.

Cook said they do have to ask. They don't have to move. June is a major month for people moving around. Especially people with disabilities. June of last year there were 110 leave behinds. Or unable to board people. Seventy of those were overloads. Thirty-seven were reported as overloads with customers already occupying the wheelchair area. Three of those were strollers. That number is telling us that this is not as big as an issue out there. But overloads are. That means our service development departments needs to put more buses on these routes. That is where the complaints come in. Those complaints go to Service Development. They can inform Procurement to get more buses on that route. We have more people at this time of the year. With more people with disabilities on that route, we need to put more buses out there.

How we train our drivers. They are all trained that if they are not able to board somebody, regardless of why, they are to inform the person they are unable to board them. If the bus is full, then they are to report that to Transit Control. They will remain at that stop. Be able to relay transit control's information to that customer. So that they are informed. The driver doesn't want to leave people stranded. We cannot leave someone sitting there if we are not able to board them if it is going to be half an hour or more. Then we have to do something. So TCC is now involved. They know when the next bus is coming. Our bus drivers cannot say: "Another bus is coming." They don't know if that bus has broken down or caught in traffic. When TCC clears the bus to leave, they know that that person is there. If they see that the bus did break down and they have to do something about that. The bus is not able to show up. That is the standard operating procedure for our drivers. If our drivers aren't following that policy, that is when a complaint should be generated.

Our drivers do their best to convince people when they should be able to move. Some drivers will help fold up the stroller. If the person is obstinate and will not allow the stroller to be folded, there is nothing the driver can do about it.

The numbers are showing that the wheelchair thing is not as large of a thing that we are talking about. It is more the overload issue than the strollers. That is what the data is showing.

Imdieke Cross said do we have anything more updated than June of last year? I want to see if there is an uptick in left behinds.

Audience member Dick VanWagner said is there a written policy? Where would I find it? Who would I ask if there is a policy?

Cook said I can request that. I can do a follow up. I was given the standard operating procedure that they train the drivers with. I do not know if there is a written policy.

Rodgers said written policies need to be available to the public. In absence of the easy availability of the written policy, I would request Data Practices that you are requesting that written policy be sent to you specifically. Agencies have a responsibility to follow up on data requests. Those policies should be somewhere that the public can access.

VanWagner said what other types of problem solving have you engaged in? Other than the driver saying something to people who are sitting in that area. Have you looked at hardware changes in the vehicles? Expansion of space or other possibilities.

Cook said I was part of a procurement team for the bus riders. There are changes that we have made as far as configuration of the area. We are looking at having them ride backwards. As far as expanding the spaces, last year I was out in Vegas. They have four priority seating areas on a bus. I would like to see that here. I know that I am going to be part of our next procurement of buses. I will bring that up. I think that would solve some problems that we have.

Having two spaces is great but the population grows and people with disabilities grows. That might be the option. We need to go to more spaces. They had some pretty nice designs out there. They already had a model there to go forward with. It just has to be brought up to the right people.

SUBCOMMITTEE REPORTS

1. **Blue Line**

   This item was not presented.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

MEMBER COMMENT

Kari Sheldon spoke to the TAAC committee. I understand we just passed having a small committee for what Ken was addressing. But I thought that maybe there could be a task force for this issue of keeping track of the numbers of complaints about not being able to board because of the stroller issue. Not just the stroller issue. I also had a problem with the bikes being too big on the train. There is no way to try and get to a different train to board because there is a bike in the way. There may be a bike on one side where I cannot easily get through the other door. But there might be two bikes on either side. Where I cannot move period. I'm not sure what we can do about that. But that is an issue where wheelchairs aren't able to board.

Rodgers said it is my understanding that there are no cars that have bike racks on both sides of the isle that face each other. So there is one on one side but not on the other side. I think that was an effort to try to prevent that kind of thing from happening. I know I experience a lot of bike handles that stick out from the top. That my dog doesn't see. But I find them. It is a challenge when you have bikes. It is something we have to deal with. I would imagine that are there wheelchair emblems on the vehicles that have wheelchair seating? Does every car have them? I know some are elevated. Does every car have accessible seating?

Cook said yes.

Rodgers said I know that some areas in the cars are elevated. You have to walk up steps.

Cook said on both sides of the elevated area is accessible seating. There are always two spots on either side of the car.

Sheldon said there are some bikes that are properly hung but a lot of times these young kids want to get on the train and just sit on the bike itself. They don't find a place to put the bike and sit in a regular seat.

Cook said you could text that in to the Transit Control Center. They are very prompt in getting back to you.

Chair Thorsen said there are several announcements. There is going to be on October 24, at the Wilder Center from 10:00 a.m. to noon. It will be our next Fall Conversation. I don't have any other details about it yet. They just set the date. They try to rotate the Conversation by time of day and location. In recognition that not every location or time of day works for everybody. Some of it is where they can get space.

Jasmine said that they used to have two meetings. One in the day and one in the evening.

Chair Thorsen said she would talk to Claudia Fuentes about that.

The other announcement is that we will discuss the ByLaws in August.

Left off at 1:51:48

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary