

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting date: February 07, 2024

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

- Chair, David Fenley, at large
- Vice Chair, Darrell Paulsen, Precinct F
- Sam Jasmine, Precinct A
- Christopher Bates, Precinct B
- Patsy Murphy, Precinct C
- Ken Rodgers, Precinct D
- Jeffrey Dains, Precinct E
- Kari Sheldon, Precinct G

- Michele Severson, MCD
- Erik Henricksen, MCD
- Diane Graham-Raff, MAAA
- Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- Heidi Myhre, MCCD
- Claudia Fuglie, MCCD
- Richard Rowen, AARP MN
- Anjuli Cameron, Metropolitan Council

Ex-officio:

- Andy Streasick, Metro Mobility
- Douglas Cook, Metro Transit Customer Advocate
- Guthrie Byard, ADA & Title VI Administrator

= present, E = excused

Attending from Home:

Diane Graham-Raff, Jeffrey Dains, Sam Jasmine, Kimberly Malone

Excused

Christopher Bates, Ken Rodgers, Doug Cook

Public

Call to order

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:35 p.m.

Agenda approved

It was moved by Richard Rowen, seconded by Erik Henricksen to approve the agenda. Committee members noted the removal of the Metro Mobility update from the agenda. **Motion carried.**

Approval of minutes

It was moved by Patsy Murphy, seconded by Patty Thoreson to approve the minutes of the January 3, 2024, regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Approval of 2024 Work Plan

Discussion: Member Erik Henricksen asked when we can give feedback. Chair Fenley responded that he would like input and can reach out to he or Darrell at any time. Henricksen asked if it will be resent after changes, and Fenley confirmed. It was moved by Sam Jasmine, seconded by Jeff Dains to approve the 2024 Work Plan. **Motion carried.**

Business and information items

1. Pre-Session Legislative Update (1:10-1:40), Hannah Pallmeyer, Government Affairs Liaison,

Update on legislative session: Starts on Monday Feb 12th. First year budget is set, second year is for policy and supplemental budgets. This year both deadlines for policy are on March 12th, so it's a very accelerated process. The third committee deadline is April 19th, when committees need to act on all supplemental budgets. The adjournment is May 20th. Budget forecast happens in November and February. Nov 2023 showed surplus of \$2.4 billion, but also a structural deficit of \$2.3 billion. This is a bonding year so Governor Walz is recommending \$37 million to go towards bus rapid transit project improvements, which would include going towards advancing the H line in Como/Maryland corridor. Additional available funds could go towards J, K, and L lines which are yet to be determined. B & E lines are under construction this year. B is Lake/Marshall/Selby and E is Hennepin/France corridor, and both will be under construction in 2024. In 2023 the legislature fully funded the F line (Central Avenue) and G line (Rice/Roberts corridor) via bonding.

Vice Chair Paulsen posed a question: He excited to hear about BRT projects and that Governor Walz is prioritizing this. But asked about the Safety and Securities plan, and asked if there are any additional funds. Someone from Dakota County is in the audience. He took the train here and it feels a lot different than it used to - feels unsafe. Are there any policies or funding proposals surrounding safety?

Pallmeyer responded, as this is not a budget year she does not know of any budgetary proposals. But there are 2023 proposals that are still being implemented now. \$2 million was allocated to the Metropolitan Council for the Transition Service Intervention Project to provide interventions on the light rail for enhanced social services and law enforcement. She will share the most recent version of the report from January following the meeting. Another big change was that the Transportation Bill authorized a ¾ cent sales tax. 17% of that revenue is being distributed now to counties in the 7-county area. 83% is distributed to the Metropolitan Council. Of that 83%, 5% is allocated to active transportation projects developed by Transportation Advisory Board. Remaining 95% is for capital projects, including a public safety improvement initiative. \$300 million is expected in 2024. In summary, of the \$300 million (83% that the Metropolitan Council receives), 95% will go towards transit operations, safety, and security.

Member Henricksen questioned how we start as an advisory committee to influence the policies from the state. He is not sure of the relationship, whether we recommend to Metropolitan Council directly or to Pallmeyer. Chair Fenley clarified the role of the TAAC committee is advisory, and most times our advice is acted upon and implemented. That being said, TAAC does get budgetary updates like this one monthly so we can best make those recommendations. As a body, if we take a position, we can write letters of recommendation for the policy or budgetary proposal, and then individual members can speak on behalf of TAAC. Member Henricksen asked when is the best time to initiate those types of discussions and when would have the most impact. Fenley replied that it is usually summertime. If we start in April it is close to May deadlines but we can still get started. Vice Chair Paulsen stated that he is passionate about this and a citizen lobbyist, and the best time is anytime you want to get involved. A lot of these conversations get to Pallmeyer through organizations like Move Minnesota who is able to vetted through the community. We can issue public service announcements so we can help focus on the appropriate messages.

Member Anjuli Cameron of the Metropolitan Council and new TAAC member as of 2023 introduced herself, and she serves District 8. A way we can improve upon services is not only looking at funding but also work with administrative and programmatic leads to make sure that there is a formal feedback process to gather the informal comments and so they can be incorporated into formal proposals as part of the legislative process. Vice Chair Paulsen asked what other committees she serves on. She sits on the Transportation Advisory Board and Environmental Services as well as the Airports Commission for District



8 (Blue and Green line extension projects), as well as a Places Committee that focuses on artwork and the Southwest LRT.

2. Metro Mobility Program Overview (1:10-1:40), Christine Kuennen, Senior Manager, Metro Mobility

a. Presentation Document:

2024 Metro Mobility Program Update for TAAC 2_7_2024 (1)

This is the first quarterly presentation and is more of an update than an overview. Kuennen updated the 2023 ridership number which is 2.1M, which means our metro area is one of the largest service delivery agencies in the country, behind New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. Some contracts are coming due for replacement, East and West have some time left until 2026. We anticipate a lot of customers will transition to Metro Move but we will continue services to them if needed once contract is completed. Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) vs non-ADA service area: They have been suffering constraints amongst rising demand post-COVID. Non-ADA goals are 85-95% vs the ADA goal is 100%. This is because ADA doesn't permit any capacity constraints, even though system as a whole runs up against operational constraints, thus non-ADA goals were reduced. This occurred in November 2022. 2023 performance measures (KPI/key performance indicators): She will send out performance numbers after the meeting whereas she is sharing percentages during the meeting. Notably, we did not make it close to the appointment times goal at 86.7% so we are examining schedules in order to right-set appointment times to get people to their appointments on time. Non-ADA trips are then sometimes denied, and there was a peak in denials in East zone in 2022 and a peak in West zone in fall 2023. In between, we did not need to deny any trips. Denials were still less than 2%, but we have examined shift capacity and standing orders and it is seeing some benefit - since January 4th 2024, we have not had a trip denial. There has been quite a spike in taxi service demand, and we increased service hours on weekdays and weekends. We increased subsidy from \$15 to \$20 per ride and it is paying off. The free fares pilot will be July 2023 -December 2024. The new technology recognizes that the ride is free within the designated zone, and if it errors, we have set up a reimbursement procedure. This also applies to Fixed Route where a pass is loaded onto a Metro Mobility pass, which helps us measure success. This began in October 2023 and we have seen over 6,000 rides. The Van Subsidy Pilot with Lifeworks provides transportation to and from Lifeworks facilities, and they receive a compensation subsidy based on the number of rides they give per month. This has been successful. Regarding the 2024 Workplan and technology improvements, there is a single Trapeze Driver Mate tablet successfully functioning now and hope to replicate it soon. It needs to communicate through the private network and interface with many systems. Driver training was completed last week and easy instructions are provided. This will replace the Rangers. Metro Mobility Map and Service Hours Analysis: This identified a tiny sliver in Southwest Bloomington and an area of Roseville that should be ADA not non-ADA, and last night that was updated in our service area maps. There have been some reductions in services as well, due to it not meeting ADA standards any longer. This is part of the Network Now project, and changes will not be implemented. Quarter 3 of 2024 will see changes in the red area of the map shown, where it no longer needs ADA standards but Kuennen is working with Sara Maaske to make sure customers receive communications about this. It doesn't mean the service area is changing, just the categorization, and it is the area covered by Metro Valley Transit Authority (MVTA). What they do with their service also reflects our mandate.

Chair Fenley asked for clarification if 2.1M is the denominator includes 75,000 taxi rides, so need to remove 75,000 when looking at On-Time. Kuennen confirmed and will send exact numbers out. Second requested clarification was about 26% agency times and whether that is drawing down overall appointment times, and Kuennen confirmed that it is not since



that contract is small.

Member Henricksen asked about non-ADA trip denials, and whether it is due to an increase or ADA or non-ADA requests. Kuennen replied that it is due to a decrease in capacity. Henricksen asked if there was an event that caused this, and Kuennen said it is mostly operator workforce availability and contractor attrition. West and South zone are the same contractor, and this provider suffered the denials. In 2022, the East zone contractor experienced this. Just shows that we are tight and takes micromanagement of service operations to be able to deliver all of the trips. Henricksen asked if some zones could support others. Kuennen said that the simple answer is no, that it would require an amendment and zones who made their minimums were right on the edge of being able to do so and were being creative in order to achieve that. To try to minimize, we prioritized for work purpose or medical purpose of the denials. We utilized some Transit Link drivers where possible. Thankfully the mitigation strategies we put in place have reduced denials and now we are investing in service quality, especially appointment times. Next quarter she will bring a chart on appointment times reducing from 89% to 70% because they tightened parameters on what is on-time to 30 minutes early, when previously it was 60 minutes early.

Member Myhre asked about Metro Mobility rides versus taxi appointments and she highly recommends the taxis since they have more flexibility on odd time or odd length appointments. Customers who truly need this service should be prioritized. Kuennen acknowledged an excellent point.

Member Sheldon asked again what MVTA stood for: by Metro Valley Transit Authority. Sheldon asked whether a Metro Mobility ID card can be used on a bus route that offers free rides, and Kuennen confirmed a free pass has been loaded in order to get these free route rides.

Vice Chair Paulsen asked about the phone system being down intermittently the last couple weeks, and East zone customer service being horrible. Experience with online booking and then it is cancelled and the customer gets blamed. Morale is down with drivers and customers due to this. Kuennen thanked him for the feedback and requested specific instances so that we can follow up individually. Kuennen clarified that service hours were updated last night on the mapping system, not the phone system.

Member Fuglie stated that she has heard about issues with making an order or re-registering. Kuennen confirmed that they should call the customer service call center at 651-602-1111. Fuglie asked whether routing will be improved - nothing more frustrating than two buses show up at once to an appointment. Kuennen said the short answer is yes, it is a function of Dial-a-Ride but they are looking at all of the batching, pickup times, and all details to remedy. The upgrade we received also allows us to do auto-batching and we are starting to see some improvements. Not everything will go away because it's a function of Dial-a-Ride.

3. Regional Solicitation Survey (1:40-2:10)

Sara Maaske and Jaylen Lyles, Consultant to Metropolitan Council

- a. Presentation Document:
20240207_MCRS Survey_TAAC Presentation_v1

Sara Maaske started the presentation. The Regional Solicitation is the way Metropolitan Council determines how to distribute funding. She introduced co-presenter Jaylen Lyles who is from Zan Associates who is helping the Met Council on this projects. Maaske noted that the preliminary numbers have been updated since the slides were printed and distributed, and Chair Fenley confirmed and clarified to the committee that the numbers in the slides are not the same as the numbers they will be verbally reporting. Methods of data collection include intercept surveys at random events. Focus groups will happen later this



month. Many winter festivals have been cancelled due to the survey. Lyles will conduct intercept surveys with the TAAC committee following the meeting today. Lyles spoke on the results of the survey, updated through February 5th. Regarding the budget exercise, there were more survey respondents from Hennepin and Anoka than the actual population, whereas Dakota, Scott, and Washington have lower representation. Plans are in place to gather increased input from these counties in person. Fenley noted again that the numbers on the slides are not as updated as the numbers being presented. Lyles indicated that the Ability numbers have not changed. The highest categories of Budget allocations were Transit Expansion, Increased Roadway Capacity and lowest is Travel Choice Promotion. The Increase Roadway Capacity received the least contributions despite being ranked highly. Will continue to collect data through the end of February.

Chair Fenley asked about slide 11 why Increased Road Capacity is so different. Lyles confirmed it is because only 47% of respondents allocated at least one dollar.

Vice Chair Paulsen asked about Anoka county and that they want to go back and revisit those results. The services rendered and allocated can vary widely between counties. If he has clients with mental health issues, certain counties have more capacity to serve these needs. The further you go to the edge of our systems, the survey responses will be very different since they are not as compacted as in the central area. Maaske confirmed this is a great point, and it is one of the items that the Transportation Advisory Board is wrestling with constantly; the tension between the different priorities. Need more input in this process so we asked city officials to identify themselves so we are getting a balanced perspective. Vice Chair Paulsen identified that the survey timing is different if done during the weekend versus the week.

Member Severson asked about the deadlines or goals for the survey. Maaske confirmed we are keeping the survey open through the end of February so as to maximize participation. Severson asked about the number of respondents and Lyles confirmed we have 639 and Maaske indicated we are trying to exceed last year.

Member Henricksen asked who determined the priority buckets. Maaske confirmed they come from the Transportation Advisory Board, who does an evaluation and are the decision-making body on this. Henricksen thinks that some buckets are missing, like Safety Improvements or existing accessible barriers. Henricksen asked if TAB consulted TAAC. Maaske confirmed that these elements are part of the evaluation process, and safety is one categories, and that she will email further information after the meeting. Once 127 are reviewed, they use a set of criteria to determine the final buckets. Maaske will send the evaluation criteria. Lastly, Henricksen asked about the ability question and whether the respondents only had three options: Disability, no Disability, or no answer, and thought that it doesn't capture the full range. Maybe they don not have a full disability but do have some related needs.

Chair Fenley also asked about disability definition. He personally likes that it is a broad Yes or No, but also agrees with Henricksen's perspective, especially since disability is seen negatively as a social construct.

Member Myhre commented to be sure that surveys are distributed as widely as possible. ADA does not always consider the physical side but also the mental processing side of disability, and whether that is looked at when asking survey questions. Maaske replied that they are doing outreach to cities and counties to share on our behalf, and acknowledged the second point was important and that next time they could work with this TAAC committee to better design the questions.

Member Sheldon asked where the survey is located and Lyles confirmed it is on the Metropolitan Council website as well as on social media.

Reports

Subcommittee

1. Blue Line – Ken Rodgers
No report.
2. Green Line – Christopher Bates
No report.
3. Gold Line – Darrell Paulsen
You will see a lot of work has been done on the I94 corridor.
4. Purple Line – Darrell Paulsen
Vice Chair Paulsen is involved in a community group called the Purple Group who have been doing community engagement and organizing. Staff have presented the Purple Line project to the group, and it is a huge opportunity for the committee to be involved. Commissioner Reinhart was instrumental in designating this priority.

Bus Priority Seating TAAC Work Group

No report.

Chair

Government Relations will be here in February and again in March and then subsequently each month during session. Hannah will be presenting again. Vice Chair Paulsen pointed out that Hannah is a transit rider.

Public invitation

None.

Member comment

Member Raff commented that she is a new member of a group called Rethinking I94 which is looking at the I94 rebuild. Members reached out to her because there was little representation from older adults and people with disabilities on the committee. Paulsen invited her to provide updates at future meetings.

Vice Chair Paulsen commented that one goal in the 2024 Workplan is a day at the capitol and that we would discuss in March. Given Pallmeyer said this session will be accelerated, Chair Fenley and Vice Chair Paulsen could put together a small subgroup to discuss and then vote on it at the beginning of the March meeting. Chair Fenley said that we can proceed with that plan.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:31 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of February 7, 2024.

Approved this 06 day of March 2024.

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