

## Minutes of the

### MEETING OF THE EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, July 17, 2018

**Committee Members Present:** Nelima Sitati Munene, Samantha Pree-Stinson, Mohamed Sheikh, Miah Ulysse, Sonya Lewis, Shirley Cain, Tommearun Sar, David Ketroser, Jennifer Munt, Harry Melander, Aarica Coleman, Metric Giles

**Committee Members Excused:** Ruthie Johnson, Tie Oei, Edward Reynoso, Anthony Sanneh

**Committee Members Absent:** Leslie Badue, Leon Rodrigues

### CALL TO ORDER

Committee Co-Chair Sitati Munene called the regular meeting of the Council's Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:08 p.m.

### APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

The agenda was moved by Coleman and seconded by Cain.

The meeting minutes from May 15, 2018 were moved by Lewis and seconded by Cain.

The meeting minutes from June 19, 2018 were moved by Lewis and seconded by Coleman.

### TRANSPORTATION POLICY PLAN WORK PROGRAM

Nick Thompson, Director of Metropolitan Transportation Services, and Michelle Fure, Manager of Public Involvement, presented about the Transportation Policy Plan. The presentation provided an overview of regional and local planning and discussed opportunities for influencing policy and investments. Nick and Michelle provided the committee with the following prompts for discussion:

- How can we build equity into the process?
  - Data, criteria in system studies
  - Role of equity criteria in setting priorities
  - People/community engagement
  - EAC member input
- How to measure/score equity criteria?

Throughout the presentation, members of the committee made the following comments and questions:

- In your goals or in any other any place, do you evaluate how additional routes impact neighborhoods, for example, in terms of air quality, noise and congestion?

That would be looked at in a future phase of the project. Preliminarily, staff would examine impacts of neighborhoods around the station, for example, traffic impacts. When the project enters a more detailed environmental phase, air pollution and noise impacts will be modeled to evaluate direct local and regional impacts. This is something that is required by the National Environmental Protection Act.

- At what stage in the project is there an analysis with a lens of what happens to communities that already exist in neighborhoods where a new transit line is put in? What is the impact on business owners? Housing? Affordability? This is something communities are concerned about regarding the C-Line and the D-Line. Economic development might seem like a positive outcome on paper, but for the communities who already live there, it is gentrification. Does this analysis happen late in the process or is it happening early so it can be discussed with communities and cities?

- Currently, there are three new transit lines planned through North Minneapolis, and that doesn't include the light rail project on Highway 55. People buy up property in the area and sit on it, because once the lines are finished, the property value goes up.
- Can it be a priority to research the potential gentrifying impacts of transit development? The Metropolitan Council is well positioned as a planning agency that is also in charge of other systems—what structures need to be put in place to ensure that communities do not get displaced?

Let me talk a bit about that in terms of a few examples and then around how the region is evolving around these issues. A light rail transit corridor has a different impact than a bus transit corridor in terms of what is going to change in the community. When constructing the Hiawatha Line, they didn't think about that. When constructing the Green Line, the region tried to do a lot more advance planning thinking about how to keep the business there and housing, but after construction was already happening. This is a discussion that needs to happen very early on in the process once a transit corridor is developed. What are the priorities for this corridor? Need to make sure that the transit investment, which is a huge investment which is going to change communities, reflects priorities at the local level. Concerning this project [Gold Line], this project will be constructed in 2023, getting involved in setting priorities for this project would probably have meant getting involved 2-3 years ago at the county level. What are the priorities that are going to rank this? Maintain the existing housing stock or not displacing communities. Influencing those criteria can determine what project is selected, or what mode of transportation is selected. Further, for the Green Line, there are a lot of studies underway now evaluating the outcomes of the transit development. The question will be how do we learn so it doesn't happen again?

- Did they do studies along the Green Line to assess safety and security? I know there have been some concerns around areas not being well lit, people being attacked, how do projects assess safety?

I can't speak specifically to the building and construction; however, we have strategies as a transit operator to implement to make it safe for the customer. That is a bit separate from the construction phase of the project. However, safety could be a criteria that determines where the transit stops are and what the project looks like.

- Depending on where you live, it can be easy to get around neighborhoods on transit but it's not easy to get through them. For example, in the Northeast and North neighborhoods aren't very connected to each other. How do we do a better job at connecting neighborhoods not just connecting neighborhoods to the suburbs?
- In addition, we should utilize existing City programs that engage businesses. We need to make sure that development and legislation can work with businesses before the change is implemented, not retroactively and come back around and ask how it will affect the businesses. This engagement needs to be done in the planning phases.
- Be careful how you use community. When you say community, who is that? Who did you engage? Did you talk to the elderly community? Veteran community? Which neighborhoods did you engage? Who specifically? Which blocks? We need to be specific, so we make sure we are capturing all of the voices, and not just using a blanket term.
- I was in a D-Line coalition meeting, and something I have noticed is often the conversation revolves on how we are selling it. Oftentimes when we are talking to legislators we are talking about who we can attract, but we aren't having a conversation from who we can retain. We aren't talking about how we can keep who we have because they are valuable, and they are an asset in our communities, instead of framing it as deficit based. I think it is a both/and but right now it is either/or. This is something we can address in our government relations teams at the State and City.

- Can you elaborate on the evaluation summary? Specifically could you rephrase at what stage this is completed? And could you delve deeper into Goal 5, I see community quality of life and property acquisitions could you explain what that is?

This would be where local communities are trying to decide where the project is going to be specifically, and type of transit service is going to be there. This would have been 2013 when they came to this conclusion, and it probably started 2 years before that. Then they would have done 3-4 years of study, and now they are in the phase of very detailed design and about ready to start construction. One of the criteria in the property acquisition category refers to how much property we will have to acquire for the project, will people be displaced? Early on they are trying to avoid displacing homes and businesses.

- When in the process would there be a decision about taking away bike lanes or on street parking because of the bus lines going through? Or putting easements on personal property for bus lines?

For easements on personal property, that probably would be evaluated in the property acquisitions category. If it's disrupting a bike lane, that would be under traffic impacts.

- This is a marathon, not a sprint. Disruption of communities is something that is taken really seriously and they try to minimize this. This is BRT project, but when you start to deal with rail, this could take decades, maybe two. The original Green Line took three decades. There are plenty of places for input, but it's a long long journey.
- Most of the community was not involved in the 30-year process. Part of why we are here is to change the application of that process. I am looking at the TPP and Work Program and I am thinking how do I bring this back to my community? I ask that this document has an educational component so that I can bring it back. So I can transfer this back to my community. Everything we get should have an educational lens.
- How would people be following a project for 30 years? Usually its unpaid work, or its nonprofit and priorities change with funding. How can this criteria be used to examine outcomes for community that is clear to people in an outside perspective so community members would not need to ask all the various agencies involved to get the answers, because that is a full time job to track down that information. If its not a goal already, it should be, and it should be a goal in every step of the 30-year development of the project.

One of the reasons why we are here tonight is because we want to make sure that the values that are critical to achieving some of these key points are worked into the process and also that we can continue to advocate for them.

There are always goals and objectives where you are evaluating alternatives. As a committee you could develop a set of criteria that is important for transitways that can be carried forward and advocated for by us for every one of these projects. For example, developing some sort of criteria that evaluates which project is the best at retaining the community that is there.

Sitati Munene suggested transitioning back to the presentation in order to move to the discussion portion. At the conclusion of the presentation, staff asked committee members if anything stuck out to them in the Work Program or if they had any other topics they would like to discuss.

- I would like to see an equity assessment of the Twin Cities region. When you talk about the community engagement, who was part of the engagement? I would like to see that be a part of this.

Are you asking about the Choice, Place, and Opportunity study that was conducted? The Council received funds to do a study regarding transit and corridors. Staff gave an overview of the study.

- Why has the Council invested in Diesel buses for the D-Line project? It goes against city, regional, goals.
- There is a discrepancy in availability of bike lanes between neighborhoods. The Phillips neighborhood has been forgotten for protected bike lanes while Seward neighborhood has many bike lanes. For the Northside we should be making sure when the data is collected and analyzed that they look at access to bike lanes, how many miles, or whatever metric, look at this per ward, or district, or geographic area. I think there will be a huge difference in low income areas and by race.
- I would like to make sure that autonomous driving vehicles will benefit people who don't own cars. For example, in the form of taxi services or Uber services.

There is a lot of work going on regarding autonomous driving and what the Council's role is going to be. Discussions about equity and autonomous vehicles are not being led by anyone. This could be the Council's role. We can bring this forward.

Sheikh asked for follow up on questions that were sent to staff ahead of time. He would have preferred if staff would have made time in the agenda to discuss those questions. Due to the shortage of time, Sitati Munene asked that staff send the responses over email.

There was a suggestion to put time stamps on future committee agendas so committee members can keep track of time allotted per agenda item.

## **REGIONAL PARKS POLICY PLAN UPDATE**

Dan Marckel, Planning Analyst in Community Development, and Emmett Mullin, Manager of Regional Parks and Natural Resources, followed up their presentation from May on the update to the Regional Parks Policy Plan. They will return in August for a more robust discussion. Staff invited committee members to ask questions or submit questions in writing. If committee members can submit questions by August 10, staff can bring back information for the August 21 for the EAC meeting.

Committee members had the following comments and questions:

- Handicap parking in the parks suck. For example, in Lake Harriet there are 6 spots, 2 are legal. And they aren't in the right spots, so you actually have none that are legal. How can you get beyond what is legal to we ought to be doing? Get someone out there who knows the requirements.
- There should be improved accessibility to the beach and to playgrounds. When I go to the beach with my niece I have to watch her from far away when she is on the playground because I can't get up close. Please consider more than just the necessities like bathrooms and parking spaces.
- What conversations are happening in regards to the convergence of urban agriculture and parks? How can the Council support urban agriculture accessibility or community gardening generally?
- In your distribution of funds to different parks boards, really being able to say how they [park boards] are distributing those funds. All parks aren't created equal and they might be all one park system, but they are doing more for parks in certain areas, than they are doing for some of the other parks. Can you speak to this more - what can the Council do?
- Can you elaborate on some questions from the May meeting regarding the equity grant program, and community engagement processes?

Sitati Munene asked committee members to send additional questions to staff.

## **EQUITY ADVISORY COMMITTEE HISTORY**

Ishmael Israel, former committee member, and Michelle Fure, Manager of Public Involvement, provided an overview of the creation of the Equity Advisory Committee.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

- Giles would like committee members to have access to a report for Inclusive Transit; Yolanda will send the link to committee members after the meeting.
  
- Sitati Munene had several updates for the committee:
  - The EAC Retreat is scheduled for Friday, September 7<sup>th</sup>. Please let Yolanda know if you want to volunteer to plan the retreat.
  
  - Committee members can be reimbursed for travel expenses. Staff is still working out the details on the process, information will be sent out to committee members soon.
  
  - Meeting evaluations will occur now after every meeting.
  
  - If committee members would like to be part of the Standing Committee, please let us know. The standing committee typically meets the Thursday after regular EAC meetings from 5:30 to 6:30 pm. If there are comments for the Standing Committee, feel free to send those too.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 8:14 pm.

Yolanda Burckhardt  
Recording Secretary