

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

(Wednesday, April 3, 2013)

Committee Members Present: Ron Biss, Kjensmo Walker, Wayne Wittman, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, Chad McGuire, Kim Kang and Nichole Villavicencio.

Committee Members Absent: James Williams and Jerolyn Pofahl.

Committee Members Excused: John Schatzlein, Margot Imdieke Cross and John Lund.

Council Staff Present: Pam Steffen from Metro Transit, Dave Russell, Mary Karlsson, Paul Colton, Andy Streasick, Mike Kuehn and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Claudia Fuglie.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Biss called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:33 p.m. on Wednesday, April 3, 2013.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

It was moved by McGuire, seconded by Walker to approve the agenda. **Motion carried.**

It was moved by Wittman, seconded by Villavicencio to approve the minutes of the March 6, 2013 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

INFORMATION & BUSINESS

a. Legislative Update

Mike Kuehn spoke to the TAAC committee. There has been a lot of discussion, a lot of bills that have been introduced that would help transit significantly. They are dealing with mostly a metro sales tax increase above the $\frac{1}{4}$ percent that is now in place. One bill would raise it up to one percent by $\frac{3}{4}$ of a percent sales tax. This is House File 1044, which also provides \$95 million in additional capital bonding as well. Another bill increases it by $\frac{1}{2}$ percent, which raises it to $\frac{3}{4}$ percent, but it takes $\frac{1}{3}$ of that money and gives it to the counties for county road improvements. So they would see a $\frac{1}{4}$ percent increase and keep that money for transit. One quarter percent increase in sales tax equals about \$112 million. That is also an issue of whether all counties have to participate in the metro sales tax or it is a choice by them as the current $\frac{1}{4}$ where Scott and Carver counties don't participate. The difference is Scott and Carver being smaller counties. The difference of whether they participate is about a five percent difference. If they participate the numbers would go up five percent. If they choose not to participate the numbers would be a decrease of five percent.

The governor has dropped his proposal to tax services and expand the sales tax, which would have had significant increases in the numbers. These numbers do not include the \$112 million for each quarter. It does not include an expansion of the sales tax. Because of dropping that idea, when the governor did his revised budget based on the February budget forecast he changed his proposal for transit to increase the regional sales tax for transit. He originally proposed to be $\frac{1}{4}$ percent increase. He proposes now to increase it by $\frac{1}{2}$ a percent.

This is the time where the finance bills are being pulled together in the legislature. They don't anticipate seeing the House version of the Transportation Finance Bill until next Monday. There are a lot of issues they are still dealing with. One of those issues is there is a disagreement between who

would receive that additional sales tax money and at what amount. How much would go to additional operations of transit and how much of that would go for capital? How much would go to the Met Council and how much would go to CTIB (County Transit Improvement Board)? Those issues are still not resolved.

There is a meeting being held at the capitol with the Chairs of the House and Senate Transportation Committees, with the Metropolitan Council Chair, the Chairs of the County Rail Authorities, County Commissioners, from Hennepin and Ramsey counties and others to try to reach conclusions on the final details of this. Then the bill would be developed over the weekend and then introduced on Monday. The Senate plans on going through the bill on Monday, taking amendments on it on Wednesday of next week and then moving it on to the Senate Finance Committee. The House will also be bringing their bill forward on Monday.

A big issue of the Transportation Finance Bill is if there should be money and the amount of money for roads in the bill. The governor did not propose any increase in the gas tax. Most of the legislative finance bills that have been proposed and introduced does look at an increase in the gas tax. Representative Erhardt's proposal over a three year period raises the gas tax by 9.5 cents. If there is money for transit there probably has to be money for roads.

This issue will be debated in committees and on the floor and conference committees. In the House the bills will go through the Ways and Means Committee and the Tax Committee and debated on the House floor. The Senate will be going through the same process. Then they will have to bring it to the Conference Committee.

There is an omnibus Transportation Policy Bill. The skyway access to the Central Station will have an elevator included. It is included in both the House and Senate bills. There is other language in that bill that deals with Washington County Regional Rail Authority. They are seeking legislation that would allow the county to use their Regional Rail levy authority for Bus Rapid Transit as well potential rail projects.

There are hearings next week in the House Tax Committee and the Senate Transportation Committee on a regional bonding authority, which is \$35.8 million. This is the pool of money that the Council seeks every year that largely keeps our bus fleet replacement program on schedule so that they can buy replacement buses. This also includes Metro Mobility vehicles. This is all identified in the Regional Transportation Capital Plan.

The Driver Assault Bill is on the floor of both the House and the Senate. That would increase some of the penalties to gross misdemeanors. It is for assaulting transit vehicle operators.

The Metropolitan Council districts by law have to be redistricted every 10 years in the year ending in 3. So this is one of them. A bill was just introduced Monday by Representative Nelson who chairs the Government Op Committee in the House. Senator Pappas will introduce the companion bill in the Senate. She chairs the State and Local Government Committee, which are the policy committees that those bills would go through. The bill does not define districts. It establishes a date, which is blank and says the legislature is approving this map that will be posted by this date on the Legislative Coordinating Commissions website. The legislature has Geographic Information System persons that are working with census data. All of the Council members will have to reapply through the open appointment process at the Secretary of State. The new Council districts will change the precincts. It will probably be most of the summer and into the fall before the Governor appoints new Council members. Most will probably be incumbents that will be reappointed. The advisory committees will also have to be reappointed.

b. Update of the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP)

Mary Karlsson spoke to the TAAC committee. She will just focus on how they are going to do this update and what the schedule is for it. She will not get into any details of the plan. The Transportation Policy Plan is the long range transportation plan for the Twin Cities metropolitan area. It is required

under both state and federal law. They do prepare it in coordination with the Transportation Advisory Board, the Minnesota Department of Transportation and the Metropolitan Airports Commission. The Transportation Advisory Board along with the Metropolitan Council is what makes up our federally required Metropolitan Planning Organization. Then MnDOT and the MAC are two of the major owners of significant parts of the transportation system as well.

The Transportation Plan covers multiple modes. It covers highways, transit, bicycles and pedestrian, freight and aviation. One of the big updates of this plan is that there has to be at least a 20 year plan. For the first time they are going out to 2040. Right now the plan goes out to 2030. They are updating the plan now because federal law requires them to update it every four years. It takes about 18 months to develop a plan. It is about six months of public review and comment and revision of the final plan. It takes about a year to develop what that plan should be for public review and comment. In addition to the four year requirement, there are a number of other initiatives going on that they want to make sure they capture. One is Thrive MSP 2040. It is the Metropolitan Development Guide. It will replace the Regional Development Framework right now. Thrive MSP 2040 is building new socioeconomics and new population, household and job forecasts based on the 2010 census information and looking out to that 2040 timeframe.

In addition to the things going on in the region, they have also had federal changes. Including what is called Map 21, which is the Federal Transportation Bill moving ahead for progress in the 21st century. There have been some significant changes with the Federal Transportation Bill. It is only a two year bill so it expires in 2014. It is requiring that they produce, for the first time, a performance based transportation plan and also that they do a performance based programming of the federal funds. So they want to make sure that they are incorporating those federal law changes into the Transportation Policy Plan.

Other changes, based on the 2010 census, include expanded urban area. The urban area has been expanding. There was some big growth in the 2000's and that was captured in the 2010 census. For the first time, for the purposes of transportation planning only, they will extend outside of the seven county metropolitan area. Parts of Wright and Sherburne counties (Elk River, Big Lake Township, Albertville, Saint Michael, Otsego and Hanover.) have both been identified as contiguous urban areas to our seven county metro area. For the purposes of transportation planning only, they have to coordinate their transportation planning with those areas. There is also a half acre in Wisconsin that is now contiguous to the metropolitan area. There is a question if that will continue to be recognized and required that they do coordinated planning. It is in Saint Joseph Township just on the other side of the existing Stillwater Bridge.

In addition to the policy changes and the law changes there are also a number of studies that are identified in the current Transportation Policy Plan. In Chapter 12, the work plan, they said they would complete those results and incorporate them into this update. Then they want to incorporate any legislative changes that might happen. If there is a change in the revenue forecast then the Transportation Plan would also have to change.

The Thrive MSP 2040 will state the regional mission, the regional goals and broad policy direction for all of the region. They will bring out some major policy questions to the public in April and May 2013. In the Transportation Policy Plan they will take that information and develop more details specific to the transportation system. Thrive MSP 2040 are developing the population, household and job forecasts out to 2040. They do include some incremental years between now and 2040. Transportation and transit were some of the most frequent topics that were identified in the initial Thrive MSP 2040 outreach.

The studies they want to include are the results of the Minnesota Statewide Multimodal Transportation Planning effort that concluded a year ago. Then also what MnDOT is calling the Minnesota Statewide Highway Investment Plan is looking at how MnDOT is going to invest in the trunk highway system for the next 30 years. They also want to include the A Minor Arterial Study, Performance Based Planning, the Bike System Master Study, the Highway Transitway Corridor Study and the Regional Solicitation

Evaluation. They will be coordinating with our MPO partners, the TAB and the TAC. They will be bringing quarterly updates to them. They are also going to ask them to participate in more focused and more active ways. One of those is through a Policy Maker Task Force. It will include members of the Metropolitan Council, TAB, Counties Transit Improvement Board and MnDOT to give policy directions of this plan.

Then they are also creating a group called the Partner Agency Work Group. In the past they have worked with the planning subcommittee of the Technical Advisory Committee. They are looking at including more city representatives, bicycle and pedestrian representatives and freight representatives. They will give these updates to the Metropolitan Council and also to the TAAC.

They will be using Twitter and Facebook to reach out to people who maybe are not available to attend meetings. They will be making use of websites to collect comments.

They are kicking off their schedule right now. They are going to be working with the task force and work group and doing public involvement from April 2013 through March 2014. They will bring a draft of the plan for public comments from May through July 2014. Then they will have public comments and revisions from July through September, with an adoption of a final plan in December 2014.

C. New Bus Purchase Plans

Paul Colton spoke to the TAAC committee. The Metropolitan Transportation Services Fleet Plan this year called for 60 replacement vehicles to replace current existing fleet that are five years old or older. They have also budgeted for 10 expansion fleet to take into account the growth they are experiencing in the system. They should have the vehicles by fall. They are going to the Transportation Committee on April 8 so they can get started with the approval. They will go to the Council on April 10. After that they can enter into contracts with the three different vendors they have selected for the bus purchase.

There are a variety of different low floor small buses that have been available for the last five years. They are ready to pilot their own low floor buses. With the savings from this purchase, they will be able to purchase six or seven low floor buses that they can try that have a variety of different features that they don't have on their standard buses now. But there is a higher price that comes with it.

The biggest change with this particular bus order that staff is looking at the standard configuration that they have gone with over the last five years has been on the E-450 Ford Chassis. It is about a 24 foot bus. They went with an eight seat, three wheelchair configuration. They ran some numbers from the last year to see how often they needed the three wheelchair spaces on the whole fleet. It turned out that they had three wheelchairs loaded on a vehicle about 0.2 percent of the time. Given the size of the current bus fleet, they could go back to the E-350, which is a smaller chassis. They can get better fuel economy. For a portion of the fleet they could manage with a two wheelchair configuration and a six passenger configuration. That is what they are going to move forward with on the 70 fleet purchase. When they run the analysis looking at that incorporated in the fleet with the remaining fleet which is still much larger, several hundred vehicles out there with the three wheelchair configuration. It doesn't cause any issues in terms of trying to meet the needs if they need three wheelchair spaces. With the smaller vehicle there will be approximately 10 percent savings on fuel.

He showed pictures of the floor plans of the new vehicles. They will place orders with three vendors: Høglund Bus, North Central and five buses from El Dorado.

The TAAC committee members gave suggestions and concerns to Colton regarding wheelchair placements and seating.

Member Comment

None

Public Comment

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. About a year ago, Steffen, Chair Haigh, Brian Lamb, Ken Rodgers and others met to discuss if Metro Transit could put Braille on GoTo cards. They created a few cards to see if the embossing of the Braille would be O.K. with the technology. The antenna that runs inside the GoTo card and the micro chip that carries the value and the content is in the corner. She asked the committee what they thought about that.

One suggestion was to just have the raised letters on the card. Not everyone who is visually impaired reads Braille. Another suggestion was to punch a hole in the card.

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:37 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary