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TRANSPORTATION **A**CCESSIBILITY **A**DVISORY **C**OMMITTEE **M**EETING
Wednesday, February 1, 2012

1. Call to Order

At 12:32 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Ron Biss. **Public present:** Brent Rusco from Hennepin County. **Council staff present:** Charles Carlson, Jan Dietrich and Pam Steffen, from Metro Transit, David Russell, Paul Colton, Mike Kuehn and Alison Coleman.

Members Present: Ron Biss, James Williams, Wayne Wittman, Bruce Lattu, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, Jerolyn Pofahl, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Nichole Villavicencio, and Willie Daniels

Members Absent: Christian Knights. **Members excused:** John Schatzlein, Kim Kang, Margot Imdieke Cross and Diogo Reiss.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Paulsen moved to approve the agenda. Wittman seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Approval of December 7, 2011 Minutes

Lattu moved to approve the minutes. Williams seconded the motion. The motion carried.

4. Bottineau Transitway Project Overview

Brent Rusco is with Engineering and Transit Planning for Hennepin County. He is part of a large team on this corridor, which involves all of the key agencies: Metropolitan Council, Metro Transit, MnDOT and all of the cities along the corridor. They are currently in the scoping process for the Draft Environmental Impact Statement. They just completed public meetings in the corridor. He gave a video presentation of the Bottineau Transitway.

The Federal Transit Administration, the Hennepin County Regional Rail Authority and the Metropolitan Council have initiated both a state and federal environmental review process for the project. In accordance with state rules and anticipation of federal funding they are currently in the scoping phase of the environmental review.

The Bottineau Transitway provides for transit improvements in the highly traveled northwest areas of the Twin Cities. It is located in Hennepin County Minnesota extending approximately 13 miles from downtown Minneapolis to the northwest. The transitway would serve corridor residents, students and employees traveling to and from North Minneapolis and the suburbs of Golden Valley, Robbinsdale, Crystal, New Hope, Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove and Osseo. The transitway would also serve a broader area to the northwest including the communities of Dayton and Rogers.

Two types of high-frequency transit service are being studied for the Bottineau Transitway: bus rapid transit (BRT) and light rail transit (LRT). Both of these types of transit service would provide fast, frequent and reliable transit service. Trains and buses would run every 7½ minutes at peak periods, 10

to 15 minutes during day time and evening, and every 30 minutes during late night and early morning hours. To support these services a dedicated guideway would be constructed consisting of a road or track serving buses or trains only.

Bus or train stations would include shelters, passenger boarding platforms and ticket vending machines. The Bottineau Transitway would be a part of a much wider network of other regional transitways. Connections would be provided to the Northstar Commuter Rail line, the existing Hiawatha Light Rail Transit (LRT) on the Blue Line, Central Corridor and the planned Southwest LRT on the Green Line, the Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) on the Red Line, Cedar Avenue on the Orange Line, I-35W South and express bus routes. The transitway investments under study would also maintain or enhance local bus service in North Minneapolis and the northwest suburbs.

The presentation talked about the purpose and need for the Bottineau Transitway project. Projected residential and economic growth in the northwest sector will add to transportation needs in area roadways. Nearly 60 percent of all residential growth in Hennepin County over the next 20 years will happen in communities along the Bottineau Transitway corridor. Significant job growth is anticipated in Downtown Minneapolis at the south end of the corridor. Large employment centers outside of downtown are located at North Memorial Medical Center in Robbinsdale, the Target North Campus in Brooklyn Park and the developing area surrounding the Arbor Lakes retail complex in Maple Grove.

The need for high frequency transit access is accentuated by a high proportion of people without access to vehicles. According to the US census data, 14 percent of households in the Bottineau Transitway corridor do not own a vehicle. In some areas of the corridor zero car households exceed 50 percent. Moreover, the senior population is expected to grow by 125 percent in the next 20 years in the Bottineau Transitway community, further increasing transit needs. Current bus service focuses on the dominant work commute pattern toward downtown Minneapolis in the morning, returning in the evening. A reverse commute pattern also exists in the Bottineau Transitway project area, towards Brooklyn Park, Maple Grove, and beyond into Rogers and surrounding communities to the north.

Under the build alternatives, both LRT and BRT are being considered for further study in the draft EIS.

There are two alignment variations under consideration for the transitway south from Robbinsdale at 36th Avenue into downtown Minneapolis.

A complete list of issues proposed for study can be found in the scoping booklet available at the open houses and corridor libraries and city halls and on the project website.

A comment form has been developed to assist you in providing written comments. All comments must be received by February 17, 2012. All comments received by February 17, 2012 will be considered by the HCRRA and the Federal Transit Administration and their decisions about the alternatives and topics to be studied in the Draft EIS. We will then proceed on the Draft EIS which is scheduled for publication the end of this year or early 2013. More open houses will take place later in 2012 to update you on the Draft EIS. Further information about the open houses as well as the additional information about the project can be found on the project website.

Rusco asked the committee for questions and comments.

- The BRT alternative does not appear to provide direct service to neighborhoods in North Minneapolis
- Carefully consider the inclusion of park-and-rides at stations, they may not be needed in neighborhoods with high numbers of zero car households

- Carefully consider economic development potential in the selection of the locally preferred alternative.
- The TAAC requests that a TAAC member be named to one of the project advisory committees to advise on accessibility for people with disabilities, if the Bottineau project proceeds into preliminary engineering.
- If the BRT alternative advances, carefully consider whether wheelchairs need to be secured on a BRT vehicle, and if so, how to secure wheelchairs effectively and very efficiently to minimize transit travel time.
- If commuter bus service is assumed in the Baseline alternative (e.g., similar to Northstar Link), consider how to provide paratransit service that complements the commuter bus service so this kind of connecting transit service is available to people of all ages and abilities.
- The TAAC requests a meeting with Hennepin County Public Works ADA Title II specialist, if one exists and the Bottineau project moves forward into preliminary engineering.

5. Arterial Transitway Corridors Study

Charles Carlson presented to the TAAC committee about the Arterial Transitway Corridors Study Overview. He presented to the TAAC in September as they were finishing up some steps that they were developing. Since then they have developed some of the recommendations. That is what he shared today.

The study is looking at 11 different transit corridors that are currently very high frequency, high ridership corridors. There is about 95 miles altogether when you total up the corridors. On those the routes serving them serve about 86,000 rides a day today. That is about half of our urban local ridership and about half of the urban local service. The corridors have about half a million people and about half a million jobs within half of a mile. This is a very significant portion of the region that we are serving with the routes we are studying for this concept and along these corridors.

In terms of the study there are a few main points. The key question is what are the transit operational issues that they are experiencing today along these corridors? They have developed a rapid bus service concept. They also evaluated and are recommending some corridors for implementation. In terms of the challenges that are faced on this corridor they have boiled it down to three key issues:

1. Slow transit speed caused by significant signal and boarding delay along these routes. The biggest reasons are waiting at red lights and being stopped for boarding delay.
2. There is a lack of attractive facilities and identity to the transit system.
3. Traditional space allocation, how roadways are assigned to different modes like bikes, autos, trucks or buses leads to slower transit speed. Step one is to get the bus out of the way by putting a pull off to get the bus out of the flow of traffic. Merging out then merging back into traffic is a slow process verses stopping in a traffic lane. Buses may be one or two percent of the motor vehicles on a road but they are carrying 20 times that. So one out of every four people may be on a bus.

They have developed this mode that they are calling Rapid Bus as a working title for the time being. They have identified a number of improvements that fall basically into two categories.

1. Faster service and less waiting. This is looking at off board fare payment like you see on the light rail system. Boarding through all the doors instead of just the front door. Improved service frequency. Limited stop service. Better snow removal at stations. Moving towards more far side stops because we are doing more snow removal.
2. Improving the experience for customers. They have had some early success with real time signs in parts of the region. Security cameras, heaters in the shelters, trash receptacles, bike racks and

way finding signage and more of a consistent set up at the stations that they have is a goal. The current travel time is time spent moving, time spent waiting for customers to board and pay and time spent at red lights. Each of those is reduced, most significantly reducing the boarding delay and our time spent at red lights.

They have come up with a station configuration. One prototype station would have all the different features and customer interaction that would be present at every single station. The ticket vending machine, a real time sign, station signage would be the same at every location along every single corridor. They will end up with a few different sizes.

They have incorporated a feature in Seattle in their Rapid Ride system. That is a wheelchair position that is rear facing. It requires no straps. Between a stanchion on the side and that padded back that is how they can accommodate wheelchair customers who choose to use that device. There is also traditional forward facing with straps available to customers as well.

What we see along these corridors today is high ridership. They are expecting ridership to grow roughly 45 percent. If they do the improvement, there is much more growth along the lines of 86 percent or growing to about 143,000 in the future. That is almost double what they have today by making these types of investments.

In terms of the costs it looks like the average corridor would be \$31 million. Half of that would be developing stations. The remainder being mostly on vehicles but also on engineering and other components. In addition to that capital cost there would be an increased operating cost because they are adding quite a bit more service. Particularly at night and on weekends but also the cost of maintaining fare collection equipment for that off board fare enforcement. There is also the cost of additional police to do fare enforcement on these buses and then maintenance at stations.

Some corridors depend on unfunded investments like Southwest light rail or I-35W Bus Rapid Transit to make sense to be able to move forward with the concept plan that has been developed. So those two corridors, American Boulevard or Hennepin Avenue may not be ready at this time to go into engineering. Some corridors have some questions that are more corridor specific that need to be worked through before they can move ahead. Chicago Avenue and West Broadway have some questions about how they would go through downtown Minneapolis. Right now they are on 7th and 8th Street. That has been proposed to move to a different street by some members of the downtown community. That leaves Snelling Avenue and West Seventh Street as the corridors having the biggest promise for implementation. It is going well both on the evaluation score as well as this readiness criteria. West Broadway and Chicago Avenue round out the list of what the best corridors to move ahead with right now.

East Seventh Street could be an extension of the West Seventh Street corridor. But they will need additional study. It has also been in study through other large transitway projects, both Gateway and Rush Line. Four corridors are about to begin more advanced study and then two corridors need more work and other projects to move forward for them to make sense.

The next phase of our study is to share the results and to seek inputs on the recommendations that have been made by building on the success from 2011. Sharing with this committee, a series of open houses as well as individual efforts with communities. There will be 17 presentations in 16 days, starting January 31, through the end of February. There will also be a policy stakeholder discussion on February 8, and a public meeting on February 28 and 29 and March 1. Through all of these outreach efforts the goal is to seek input on the preliminary results and recommendations that have been developed.

One of the components of the increased operating costs along these corridors is enhanced maintenance of stations. Enhanced snow removal is also planned. It is something we are specifically budgeting for.

Any stop with connecting service would become a station. High ridership locations were identified. A minimum spacing of a greatest distance between stations is half of a mile. For these concepts between 2½ and 3½ stops per mile. The current standard is six to eight stops per mile. Seventy percent of the people are at that set of stops (2½ to 3½ stops per mile). There is still local service available.

6. Legislative Update

Mike Kuehn spoke to the TAAC committee about four things: 1. The timing of the session. 2. Three or four critical dates coming up in February. 3. Our issues. 4. What is happening in Washington with federal funding with reauthorization for transit and transportation funding out at the nation's capitol.

We expect the session to go at least until Easter/Passover time. Easter is April 8. There is some talk they may be done before that. Part of it will depend on redistricting plans and how substantial some of the districts will be changing. Part of it will depend on how quick a bonding bill will come. The House has indicated they want to be out by April 30. They can go constitutionally until May 20.

The House and Senate will be out until noon on February 8. They have now set committee deadlines for getting bills out of committees. The first deadline is April 16. The second deadline is April 23. The third deadline is March 30. This is when they have to have all bills out of all committees, policy and finance in both bodies.

There are some dates in February that are critical to the process. The precinct caucuses are February 7. This will give an opportunity to see what kind of interest there is. The second date is February 15, which is the governor's State of the State address. It will be delivered at 7:00 p.m. in the House Chambers. February 21 is the date the court will release their redistricting plan. So on that date all the legislators will know the new boundaries of their districts. They will know how many incumbents may be paired against each other, how many districts might be open with no incumbents, they will find out the details of some of the shifting population from the 2010 census. The last date is February 29, the last day of the month. This is historically the day the February budget forecasts will be released.

On that date we will then know whether the legislature will have to deal with a deficit in the state budget for the next 15 months of the two year biennial budget cycle. Or whether it will be in balance and there will not be a deficit and then they will not have to do a supplemental budget plan. That is what the November forecast indicated. In January they had some data that showed revenue collections up slightly. The forecasts also still indicate substantial deficit however, in the next two year budget cycle of somewhere in that \$2 billion range. That will be another key date as we look at this session in February. Those dates are important.

This is a bonding bill year. Normally there is a large bonding bill, however, last year the legislature approved in the final agreement in a special session a \$497 million bonding bill to act as a stimulus for the economy. So the bonding bill this year will probably be smaller. In the last few years the big bonding bill was close to \$1 billion. This year the governor has proposed his recommendations, which is for a bonding bill of \$775 million. The Senate has said that they are thinking more in the terms of \$400 million when they put their bill together. The House has not indicated a monetary amount but has indicated that they feel the governor's numbers are a bit high. The House and Senate will both have to do their own bills. They will have to conference those and then they will have to negotiate that difference with the governor.

We are in that bill for about \$30 million. Five million is for the Regional Parks systems and then \$25 million is an appropriation for preliminary engineering and design for the Southwest LRT corridor.

Other issues that we have are policy bases issues. We are seeking regionally \$35 million for regional bonding authorization to sell regional bonds for bus purchases and other capital needs for transit identified in our Regional Transit Capital Plan. That is an annual request that we make. Some of that money is matched with federal money.

The only other bill that we were pursuing this year but have not gotten approval on because it appears that the Department of Finance or the MMB (as it is called now) feels that there are some financial strings. It was to increase the penalties for people who assault transit vehicle operators. We ran into opposition last year with the Department of Corrections who feels that there could be substantial increases in costs for housing convicted felons in the prison system. However, the statistics show specifically for bodily assault that number is 12 to 15 assaults per year. Our original bill that we proposed did include the spreading of bodily fluids particularly people who spit on bus drivers. In our original bill the person could be sentenced at a felony level.

The last thing that I wanted to report on was the federal reauthorization of the Surface Transportation Act. Monday of this week the House majority unveiled their Transportation Bill which recommended about \$260 million over a five year span that would continue to fund the transportation programs at basically the current levels. That would provide about \$40.6 million for highways and \$10.1 million for transit annually or about \$50.7 million a year. The Senate has already released their proposal from the Senate majority sometime earlier. Their bill calls for a two-year bill, not a five year reauthorization. That would annually spend about \$54 million, which is about \$3.3 million a year more than what the House bill is. That has a long ways to go.

There is a lot of controversy in things that will be added to the bill. But already the House bill, besides the money, calls for shifting more decision making authority to state governments, dramatically reducing the time spent on environmental reviews for various transportation plans and also encourage private companies to expand the highway system by building toll roads and toll lanes from the private sector. They have continued to fund it at current level and it looks like that is the case. A big part of it is a penny of the federal gas tax that goes for transit. A big part of it is funded from the highway trust fund that is funded through gas tax revenues. That has not been increased since 1993. As a result, inflation has caught up to that. To meet the current levels about \$60 million for that five year proposal in the House plan is actually more general fund dollars at the federal level. It has to be brought to the deficit. It appears that they have a lot of negotiations to do on the federal level before we will see a bill emerge. The feds operate a lot differently from the state. They would continue on largely at current levels of funding and continue to do continuing budget resolutions.

We do anticipate other legislation that would restructure the Council and the Council governance structure. There will be some restructuring bills offered that will focus strictly on transportation and transit structure at the Council particularly relating to the roll of TAB and the roll of the Council being involved in operations and whether that should be separated out or not.

The Governor just last week created a project called the Governor's Transportation Study Group. They are looking at identifying transportation investment opportunities to support our economy in the region and the quality of life over the next 20 years. They have been asked to identify and analyze the potential of various revenue sources and non traditional approaches to pay for transit because transit is dependent on the general fund and the general fund continues to run into budget problems. As they look at the budget the next budget cycle they have to make sure transit gets a level of funding that makes it possible to run a good system.

7. TAAC By-Laws

Chair Biss spoke to the TAAC committee. A few months ago the committee did approve the By-Laws to be moved on to the next level of viewing, which meant they had to go to the upper management level at the Council. They took a look at it and gave some suggestions, which everyone should have received. There were a couple of common sense changes. It didn't change the objective of the changes we wanted to make in the By-Laws. It made it more workable for the years to come down the road. Chair Biss read the changes. It allows if they are unable to fill a vacancy in one of the districts they may be able to appoint someone outside of the district to fill that precinct position. This avoids having to revise the By-Laws every other year. The last change would be that it would be approved by the committee in February of this year.

Villavicencio moved to accept the changes. Daniels seconded the motion. The motion carried.

8. Agency Contact List

David Russell spoke to the TAAC committee. As part of his professional development plan he identified reaching out and accessing agencies that have a higher number of referrals for applicants to Metro Mobility. He tried to get more level referrals throughout the year. Students who submit applications must wait until graduation because there is an age limit. They try to increase the amount of appropriate applications and foster a collaboration between agencies and Metro Mobility. That would create awareness of what Metro Mobility is and what services it provides. The presentation that would be provided to the agencies would be in regards to eligibility criteria, how to manage the application and eliminate a lot of the administrative burdens.

He made a list of agencies that he has identified to approach to see if they are interested in awareness training as far as eligibility and how to manage the paperwork. He is requesting input from the TAAC committee on which agencies he should approach. He has a short list at this time. He will email the list to the TAAC members.

Paul Colton spoke to the TAAC committee. he talked to the Communications Department about taking the Service Guide and breaking it down to one to two minute pieces and doing some type of video that talks about the different rules, about Metro Mobility, how it works, what safety things does the customer need to know in a very simple video presentation. He has some staff looking into that already. How they would like to move forward with is a voice recording of the Service Guide based on chunks. If you want to hear how fares work, you can click on the website and you can hear the audio for how fares are. If you want to hear about a standing order works, you can click on that.

They will start with that and then give Communications time to find out the cost of video links to the webpage on how the service works.

9. Member Comment

Chair Biss spoke to the TAAC committee about an issue that is out on the western side of the metro area about some transportation challenges for a senior citizens' center. That is out of the Metropolitan Council region but a collaborative effort between communities that are part in the region and part out of the region. There is progress moving forward to accommodate these people without having to have a couple of hour transfers to get to and from the senior centers.

Chair Biss brought up the issue of the Central Corridor light rail wheelchair locations on the train cars. Those that have the wheelchair locations the seats will default to an upright position. It is not any added

cost and it will be ordered on the new cars coming in. Through the TAAC advocacy they have worked it out that the new buses that came in without the arm rest on the front row seats in the center isle, they will be installing those and have them retrofitted.

Paulsen spoke to the TAAC committee. He noticed that on the Metro Mobility buses the bus numbers are in a place where they were difficult to see.

Colton said the standard location should be on the bulkhead above the driver, either centered or to the right. They will work with the contractors and see what vehicles need those and order them and get them installed.

10. Public Comment

None.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.