

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, August 7, 2013

Committee Members Present: Ron Biss, Kjensmo Walker, Margot Imdieke Cross, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Nichole Villavicencio and Patty Thorsen.

Committee Members Absent: James Williams, Jerolyn Pofahl and Kim Kang.

Committee Members Excused: John Schatzlein and Wayne Wittman.

Council Staff Present: Andy Streasick, Andrew Krueger, David Russell, Alison Coleman, Pam Steffen and Christina Morrison from Metro Transit.

Public Present: Claudia Fugile and Charleen Zimmer.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Biss called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:34 p.m. on Wednesday, August 7, 2013.

Andrew Krueger, the new Senior Manager of Metro Mobility introduced himself to the TAAC committee.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Paulsen, seconded by McGuire to approve the minutes of the June 5, 2013 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

INFORMATION & BUSINESS

a. Nicollet-Central Transit Alternative Analysis

Charleen Zimmer spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Acting Project Manager for the City of Minneapolis. This is a federally funded study that started about a year ago. In February a large number of alternatives were narrowed down to two alternatives: an enhanced bus alternative and a streetcar alternative. The corridor runs from 46th Street South (where the 35W BRT station is) to 41st Street North (where the transit center is in Columbia Heights). This is a federally funded project. It is an alternatives analysis that allows the City and the region to be engaged in the process in moving toward the possibility of competing for federal funding for transit improvements in this corridor.

They have just completed with the consultant team a detailed technical evaluation of those two alternatives: enhanced bus and streetcar as well as looking at a shorter starter line for the streetcar. It would run between Lake Street on the South and 5th Street NE just on the northeast side of the river from downtown. They are currently in the process of doing three public meetings: Tuesday, August 6, Wednesday, August 7 and Wednesday, August 14. They are also in a 30 day comment period. All of the technical information as well as the newsletter describing the project is available on the city's website (www.minneapolismn.gov/nicollet-central).

They are moving toward the city council making a selection of a locally preferred alternative sometime in September. TAAC members should provide any comments they might have on the study before September 6 to be included in that comment period.

The purpose of the study is to provide better transit connections, increase the attractiveness of transit in the corridor and to encourage economic development along the corridor.

The streetcar tends to generate higher ridership. It will serve more people who are transit reliant and it does a better job of catalyzing and encouraging and supporting economic development in the corridor.

Enhanced bus is less expensive to build and operate.

The City Council has three important decisions to make as part of the locally preferred alternative decision:

1. Which mode is the preferred mode – that is enhanced bus improvements or streetcar
2. How the transit improvement crosses the Mississippi River between downtown and the Northeast side of the river. Two alternatives are still being evaluated: Hennepin Avenue and Central Avenue, 3rd Avenue. For various factors, the staff recommendation is to use the Hennepin Avenue alignment.
3. The shorter streetcar corridor. The shorter line runs from Lake Street on the South to 5th Street NE on the north side of the river. Given the experience in other cities, and the lack of experience that the federal government has in funding streetcar projects, in order to be able to be competitive for federal funds, they will need to have a project that is \$200 million or less in cost to implement. In order to do that they need to start smaller then grow the system from that.

In looking at shorter starter segments it is important to start downtown. That creates the spine for a longer term broader streetcar system in the city. This particular alignment gets them across I-94 on the south and across the river on the north. They think that is important for connecting those near downtown neighborhoods to downtown. Looking at the population served and the cost, the economic development, that segment is about 3.4 miles compared to the 9.2 miles longer segment and serves over half of the transit ridership. It serves over 2/3 of the population and of the jobs in the longer corridor. It serves over 2/3 of the people who are reliant on transit. People who live below poverty, non white residents live in the shorter segment. Economic development capacity is greater in that segment. Five of the nine opportunity development sites in the long corridor are located in that short corridor. They believe that for a starter segment, they get a very big share of the benefits at about half the cost.

With the short segment they expect to have about 9,000 riders per day. The capital cost will be between \$180 million and \$200 million. Looking at similar projects across the country and FTA cost effectiveness criteria they expect they should have a medium rating, which means they will be competitive for funding in the federal funding process with that short starter segment.

The next steps are the City Council does need to make a decision on the locally preferred alternative. That will position them to do the environmental review work and to begin working with the Metropolitan Council to amend the Transportation Policy Plan to include the locally preferred alternative in the regional policy plan. Those steps are important to being able to move forward on the process to seeking federal funding.

In June the City Council approved the establishment of the value captured district. The City Council has not yet approved the collection of funds or allocation of funds. Basically by approving the value captured district in June it set the base value of property for January 2012. It then allows the city to use any increase in revenues from five construction projects in that area. To use that increase in tax dollars that comes from redevelopment of those five properties to allow the city to bond for implementation of the streetcar. That action did not actually approve streetcar implementation and it did not include collection of funds. It allowed the Council to set that base value at 2012 rather than at some future year. Those five parcels were identified initially because they are projects that are either currently under construction or they are in the city approval process to move to development. The legislature authorized the city to establish that and collect those funds. It is a city program.

For both streetcar and enhanced bus level boarding is assumed. People will be able to board through both doors. There would be off board ticket vending like the LRT. How the seating will be designed and if there is companion seating will be specific to the vehicle selection process. They will be considerations.

Indie Cross invited Zimmer and her staff to visit the TAAC committee in regards to the design issues.

b. Orange Line BRT Planning Project

Christina Morrison spoke to the TAAC committee. She is a senior planner at Metro Transit's BRT Small Starts Project Office. Small Starts refers to the funding program similar to the streetcar. It is the same basic federal funding program. This office was created in January 2013. The Orange Line is a planned bus rapid transit line along I-35W between Minneapolis, Richfield, Bloomington and Burnsville.

They are moving from line names like Hiawatha, which has become the blue line, Central Corridor will be the green line. Southwest will be the green line extension out to Eden Prairie. The metro red line opened in June 2013. It is a Bus Rapid Transit line that goes from the Mall of America to the Apple Valley Transit Station. Once you are in this metro system there is a certain level of frequency, preferably 15 minutes or better. It also includes all day service as well as night and weekend service.

When they talk about Bus Rapid Transit service there are different components that are used in different systems throughout the US and throughout the world. In this region is a combination of a lot of different tools to improve the experience of riding the bus and to make the service more reliable. Some of those things include real time information. This is both visual like a LCD sign, which tells you when the next bus is coming, as well as push buttons that have the audible information about when the next bus is coming. If you have a smart phone or on the website you can use that to find out when the bus is coming.

The stations will be fully accessible. There will be off board fare collection like the light rail stations. On I-35W they are using a congestion free lane. The MNPass lane. The BRT will be at least 16 hours of service a day plus weekend service. Right now they don't have weekend service on I-35W. I-35W builds on years of transit investment. There are about 14,000 riders on the 27 buses on I-35W. Of those 27 routes, 26 of them go in in the morning and out in the afternoon. There is not a lot of limited stop or bidirectional service. This would improve on the Route 535, which is a limited stop route that runs all day on I-35W. It would expand the access to get out to the different destinations and to get into the city throughout the day as well as on the weekend.

In downtown Minneapolis they are looking at about four stations (around 5th, 7th, 9th and 11th) they would be looking at implementing Orange Line stations. Those would be integrated into the Marquette and Second express bus areas. South of downtown they would connect a new Lake Street station. They would be creating a fully accessible two story station that would allow buses to stop in the median instead of coming to the shoulder. It would be a community landmark. Forty-Sixth Street is out and operating today. That was built as part of the Crosstown Commons project in 2010. The 66th Street station in Richfield would be on the exit ramps right at the 66th Street intersection, north and south. Those are existing stops that are served by the Route 535. They would look at a larger level of investment there. Something more like a sidewalk adjacent platform. That would include heat, light, some real time information and a ticket vending machine.

They are looking at a couple of options for American Boulevard as far as routing and location of the station. There would be a 500 space park-and-ride. It is the only new park-and-ride plan for this corridor. The Route 535 bus comes off the interstate there and winds through Southtown and Best Buy and through the I-494 area.

The 98th Street station is adjacent to the existing South Bloomington transit center. The Orange Line platform would be integrated into that existing transit center and park-and-ride.

The line will proceed south of the river to the Burnsville Transit Station. Metro Transit doesn't serve the Burnsville Transit Station. It is only served by MVTA service today. By connecting

they are connecting to a new audience in the south metro and giving them a new option for getting back and forth during the day.

The new Lake Street station would be on top of I-35W. There would be a glass atrium down to a new pedestrian plaza area as well as a connection down to the Midtown Greenway Trail. There will be vertical access on both sides of Lake Street.

c. Metro Mobility 101

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. He is the Metro Mobility Customer Service Manager. This is a basic broad view presentation for folks who could use more information about Metro Mobility and how it works. What they are and why they are that way. Metro Mobility is a version of the city bus. They are public transportation. All of the policies and procedures and operating parameters only make sense if they are looked at as public transportation

Title II of the ADA says that every service that the government provides has to be accessible to folks with disabilities. One service that the government provides locally is the Metro Transit bus service. That is where Metro Mobility comes in. They are the accessible version of that bus service. So they are designed to complement Metro Transit. There is a certain portion of the disability community that can't take Metro Transit. So it becomes crucial that they have a reliable and accessible service. Their hours of operation are loosely based on when the city bus is running by community. From a federal standpoint they have to go where the city bus goes, and run when the city bus runs. That is all day local service that is going in both directions.

The Hiawatha line runs all day. So it establishes a paratransit obligation. The Northstar line is a commuter line. It only runs during the peak hours. So it does not create an ADA paratransit obligation. Metro Mobility is not required to follow the corridor of the Northstar.

Metro Mobility in some form predates the ADA. So they had to retrofit the paratransit service after 1991 to this massive piece of civil rights legislation. Because they always saw the need to provide reliable transportation for folks with disabilities, they view the federal service criteria as a basement. They have the ADA that says they have to run where the city bus runs. They also have the state that has passed some legislation that impacts their service. In 2005 one of the things that was considered was the possibility of cutting Metro Mobility back closer to the federally required service area. They have always served a broader service area than that. The senior community and the disability community did a good job of expressing why that would be a serious problem. It would limit independence and accessibility to places where they need to get to. In response to that the state legislature passed a law that service needed to be provided to the 2006 transit taxing district. So they serve the federally mandated ADA area but they also have a broader service area that is defined by the 2006 taxing district.

Metro Mobility runs when the city bus runs in a given community or they have established a basement for those communities that have very little to no bus service but fall within that 2006 taxing district. That is Monday through Friday they run from 5:15 a.m. to 6:45 p.m. Saturday, Sunday and holidays they run from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. If someone lives within a community in the 2006 taxing district they will get Metro Mobility service at those hours at least. If the Metro Transit service in your community is such that you get more service than that then you would get those hours. The Metro Mobility service hours depend on where you live and where you are going. If you are traveling within St. Paul and Minneapolis proper they run 24/7 because the city bus runs 24/7.

Within the twin cities, Metro Mobility serves 92 communities. They have roughly 35,000 certified riders. That includes some people who never ride. In 2012 they had about 22,000 people who used the service on a somewhat regular basis. They provided over 1.7 million rides last year. They did that through six contractors. Canvas Health is no longer a provider this year. Now they have five providers.

The ADA says to provide curb to curb service unless requested. But the state law says to provide door through door service.

In order to be eligible for ADA paratransit, which is the federal name for programs like Metro Mobility, a person has to be incapable of taking the regular fixed route city bus at least some times for one of three reasons: 1. Because of their disability they are incapable of navigating the system.. Because of a

developmental or psychiatric disability they have symptoms that prevent them from grasping the nuances of independent travel on mass transit so they wouldn't be able to navigate. 2. A person because of their disability cannot get on or off the bus using the steps or the lift. If somebody has Parkinson's and they are ambulatory. They don't have a mobility device. Maybe they need somebody to help them like a PCA or an aide. 3. People because of their disability cannot self propel well enough to get back and forth from a bus stop in an area that has city bus service. An area that has city bus service is defined in the federal guidelines as ¼ of a mile. In order to be eligible for Metro Mobility a person's disability must sometimes prevent one of those things from happening.

It depends on each person's level of functioning with regards to travel on Metro Transit. There are three categories of eligibilities that are spelled out in the federal guidelines. 1. Full eligibility. For people who, because of their disability, are never currently capable of independent fixed route travel. 2. Conditional eligibility. That is for folks who can sometimes take the bus but sometimes because of the symptoms of their disability, they can't. 3. Temporary eligibility. That is for someone who may have fallen and broke their leg. They can't self propel enough to get to the bus stop. They would be temporarily eligible for Metro Mobility for as long as that is the case.

It can take up to 21 days to get someone certified. That is the longest they can take under federal law. Typically for Metro Mobility depending on the individual's schedule, they can get them certified within a week. The certification process is they get the certification questionnaire then a professional verification form from a medical professional listing a diagnosis and going into some detail on limitations that individual has. Once they receive the two part application it is reviewed by a customer service specialist. If an applicant is clearly eligible they will get certified for Metro Mobility at that point. Anybody in a wheelchair is eligible for Metro Mobility.

If there is some question about whether a person might be eligible for Metro Mobility then it goes to the paratransit evaluator. After the paratransit evaluator's review that the person may not be eligible they may get denied just based on the paper application. Or they may come in for an assessment and from there they can say if they are eligible. Metro Mobility provides free transportation for the assessment. Anybody who is certified for Metro Mobility can ride with a PCA or an aide if they want to. The passenger has a right to one PCA or helper who does not pay and one guest who pays. If the passenger is riding a regular route bus he/she can bring more than one guest who pays. If someone has a Metro Mobility card or a limited mobility card they have the right to bring someone with them who doesn't pay. If someone is riding Metro Mobility with a PCA he/she must say so at the time the ride is booked.

If someone has an "L" on their GoTo card they can ride the city bus for 75 cents regardless of the time of day. They can also bring a PCA with them on the bus for free. With Metro Mobility certification it is not an "L" it is an "A" that stands for ADA certified. But it accomplishes the same thing.

MEMBER COMMENT

Margot Imdieke Cross informed the TAAC committee that she filed a formal complaint on behalf of the Minnesota State Council on Disabilities, with the Metropolitan Council. She will have an in depth discussion at the next TAAC meeting. Based on the design criteria of the second generation of the LRT vehicle, the elimination of the dedicated wheelchair space and the elimination of the companion seating. They are looking at some possible options. She asked them to bring whatever they come up with back to the TAAC committee for further discussion. She wants the TAAC committee to be part of the decision as to how they can resolve this issue.

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. The state fair starts August 21. If you buy your ticket online you can get a discounted express bus ticket. That is electronically. You can print the ticket or bring your smart phone with you and show the ticket when you get there and then board the bus. If you want a discount on the express fare it has to be purchased before August 21. You can purchase the ticket at full fare online as well if you purchase it after August 21.

A rider from St. Cloud (along the Northstar corridor) can purchase a family pass. The price is the same for the family pass as they normally charge for this pass. On weekends someone could ride the Northstar Link and transfer to the Northstar train and ride the train to the Fridley station and then transfer at Fridley to the new express state fair site and go to the fair. They are not changing the schedule on Northstar. Once you get to the Fridley station, the express buses will take you to and from the Fridley station every half an hour.

PCA's can ride for free on the express buses. Veterans do not ride the express buses for free.

There are service changes coming up on August 24. There are a lot of changes and increased service. There are restructuring of routes in the Minnetonka area. With the Minneapolis Public Schools they have South and Southwest starting with them before Labor Day. Go on metrotransit.org for state fair information and service change information.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None

ADJOURNMENT

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:34 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary