

Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, April 01, 2015

Committee Members Present: Chair Kjensmo Walker, Rozanne Severence, Robert Platz, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, John Lund, David Fenley, Nichole Villavicencio and Patty Thorsen.

Committee Members Absent: Margot Imdeke Cross.

Committee Members Excused: Bob Anderson.

Council Staff Present: Pam Steffen and Cyndi Harper from Metro Transit, Andy Streasick, Andrew Krueger, Jeff Syme and Alison Coleman.

Public Present: Kari Sheldon and Carol Swenson.

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum being present, Committee Chair Walker called the regular meeting of the Council's TAAC Committee to order at 12:32 p.m. on Wednesday, April 01, 2015.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Thorsen, seconded by Lund to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2015 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

INFORMATION & BUSINESS

1. New Chair Statement

Kjensmo Walker spoke to the TAAC committee. She explained her passion for transportation and how that connects with her disability.

She would like to set a few ground rules. She would also like to meet one on one with all of the TAAC members. She will be setting those meetings up within the next couple of months. She would like to hear each person's vision for TAAC and what the members think that TAAC would be. This is not her committee. It is everyone's committee. She hopes that everyone can move forward in a positive direction together.

The ground rules are:

Notify Alison or Kjensmo if you need to be absent from the meeting.

Please silence cell phones during the meetings and refrain from using cell phones as much as possible.

Hold all questions and comments for the presenters until after the presentation. Then wait for recognition from the Chair before you speak. This will create a meeting that is respectful to the presenters and the TAAC members.

Chair Walker talked about new things that are happening in the region as it may connect to TAAC's work in the future.

The TAAC needs to amend the ByLaws.

She has not chosen a Vice Chair yet. Nichole Villavicencio is the Vice Chair at this time.

2. Making Strides: DCC 2014 Accessibility Survey

Carol Swenson spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Executive Director for the District Council's Collaborative of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. The District Council's Collaborative or DCC was created by the St. Paul's District Council and Minneapolis neighborhood associations in 2006 to address planning and construction issues related to the Central Corridor light rail transit project now known as the Green Line. Over the years they have been involved in a number of different issues related to securing the missing stations at Western, Victoria and Hamline to community engagement, all levels of decision making and working directly with Metro Transit on their transit service plan with a joint pilot project in community engagement called the Trusted Advocate Project.

In about 2011 they started turning their attention to issues related to walkability. The ridership forecast predicted that 97 percent of the people riding the Green Line were going to get there by walking or by taking transit or by biking. Only three percent were going to be driving in cars. What they were hearing from the community at that point is that they were concerned about the condition of the sidewalks and their safety. How were they going to the light rail stations? That became an area of focus that they began working on and have gone through a series of projects focused on that issue. The project she is going to be talking about today is the Accessibility Survey. It happened because of several very important people that she wants to thank from the very beginning. She listed names of supporters: Rick Cardenas, Kari Sheldon, Jeremy Rogness, Thabisco Rowan, Line Break Media, Tracy Babler and Ruby McKusick.

The funders were the Saint Paul Foundation and the FR Bigelow Foundation, who provided the funding for the bulk of the project with the rest of the support from the McKnight Foundation.

The Accessibility Survey fits into a family of studies that the DCC has been involved in. There is a report called "Steps". That is what they call the summary of their first 2012 survey. It included 16 station areas that had over 4,000 written and on line surveys completed. They asked residents and workers to walk to their closest light rail station and document what they saw on the way. From that they identified three major areas of work that needed to be done:

1. The condition of the sidewalk. There were problems with the sidewalk that it wasn't being maintained and there were missing curb cuts. There were issues around trash and cleanliness. In some areas the sidewalk was missing.
2. Another area was traffic safety and pedestrian safety. There was a lot of concern about speeding cars and drivers not paying attention.
3. Improving the pedestrian route. How can the walk remain greener or prettier? How can there be places along the way to rest? How can it become a pleasant walk for everyone?

As part of the followup to the initial survey they also did a deeper look at the Capitol/Rice Street station area the following summer. Harry Kent was the intern with them this summer and he worked with the Mn/DOT Complete Streets Department, which is right there in the Transportation Building near the Capitol. There were a number of the different organizations that had their offices in that area and did additional work. It was because of MnDOT and the Complete Streets that they began to have more of the tools to make the survey accessible to more people.

One last development that came out of that first report was two pedestrian demonstration projects that are funded by the Blue Cross Blue Shield Center for Prevention. The first one focuses on Dale from Minnehaha to Selby and they looked at specifically the issues related to safety and accessibility in that area and came out with some recommendations including trying to look for funding sources to replace the Dale Street bridge interchange. There are residential populations that live on either side of that interchange bridge that are trying to move back and forth to get to transit. The bridge is substandard and very dangerous. The sidewalks are about three feet wide and the ramps are at practically a 90 degree angle.

The other site is the Snelling Pedestrian Demonstration Project where they are looking at Charles from Marshall Avenue and actually combining that work with what MnDOT is coordinating with Metro Transit and the City of Saint Paul to make improvements to install the A Line to beautify that area.

The Accessibility Survey started in 2014. The Summit Report has just been released. The first reason why they did the survey in the first place was when they were sharing the draft survey from the 2012 corridor wide effort they got some critical feedback from the disability community that the survey wasn't accessible

to them. They wanted their voices heard and to be a part of the survey itself. It could address the issues of accessibility in finer detail. That leads us to secure more funding and come back to work with the people in the disability community to improve the information that they have related to accessibility.

As part of that process they began to learn a few things. They wanted to know where they got the statistics about people with disabilities. They found that there are over 9,050 people with disabilities who live in the corridor. It is a much higher percentage of the population in downtown (18 percent) compared with the rest of St. Paul. If you look at the city as a whole it is 10 percent. People with disabilities really depend on transit. There is a high degree of use of limited mobility passes in the corridor. The Central Station in the month of September had 2,000 boardings using those passes. The average percentage corridor wide is about three percent. In Fairview, four percent of the people boarding at those stations are using limited mobility passes.

Access to Transit is part of equity for the disability community. It is underscored by the Olmstead Plan, the work that is being done on that right now and coming forward. Also they understood looking at the data, that they don't have as much information as they should. That led them to reach out to Rich Cardenas, who was one of the major consultants working with them and putting together the survey. Then Kari Sheldon was out in the field collecting data. They had several different instruments or tools to collect information that was one thing they learned from the previous survey, they needed to have in addition to paper maps where people were making notations, and they also made a documentary video.

Over the course of the summer they visited 11 station areas. They gathered 97 data points, 75 photos. Fifty-four percent of the comments our surveyors brought back are related to sidewalk conditions. Nineteen percent to curb cuts and ramps being insufficient. Twenty-seven percent was about different issues like gravel on sidewalks and potholes, accessible pedestrian signals couldn't be heard or were unreachable by people using wheelchairs. With that they put together the report and analyzed the data. They looked at the data and looking at what they saw in the previous survey. There were some insightful things that came out of the study.

Kjensmo Walker spoke to the TAAC committee. In her day job she works as an administrative assistant with the District Councils Collaborative. They did find seven conclusions from their report and from their survey:

1. Accessibility must be broadly understood
2. Accessibility does not mean ADA.
3. Programmatic access is critical for people with all disabilities, signage, verbal announcements
4. This survey yielded many new issues that did not come up in the first two surveys, which is why they need to look at accessibility specifically from a lens where people with disabilities are involved in collecting data for the survey.
5. Mobility barriers are widespread and pernicious. A lot of these are because of deferred maintenance and neglect
6. The sidewalk corridors are maintained typically by the property owner. That leads to varying levels of maintenance and things like clearing snow and debris off of sidewalks. There is also poor coordination of people with responsibilities. This includes the cities and the property owners and in some cases the state.
7. There is also a collective ignorance of the problem. A person walking can walk around things on the sidewalk but a person in a mobility device has only one option.

Equity and accessibility need to be prioritized in tandem. There is a big push right now in the Met Council for equity. That needs to continue and include persons with disabilities. People with disabilities in this region are growing. The senior population is growing and people often get disabled in their senior years. So there is going to be more people with disabilities as our population grows and ages. They also need to look at places where there has been historically disinvestment in the pedestrian realm. This includes areas such as Frogtown and the old Rondo neighborhood.

They must use policies to include and prioritize transportation investments. This includes ADA transitions plans, complete streets policies, and make sure they prioritize transit investments in the region where people with disabilities live and use transit frequently. With the transitions plans there are still communities 25 years after ADA where they still don't have adequate transitions plans. Helping communities and enforcing the idea of a transition plan and getting the work done on those plans is critical.

They need to include people with disabilities in all stages and levels of decision making. This TAAC is a good example of doing that. However, sometimes TAAC doesn't get to touch on all of the issues that they would like. Making sure that things are accessible for everyone involves a lot more than just having an advisory committee at some point. People with disabilities need to be involved in gathering the data, interpreting the data, and implementing the policies. It is not too late. There are many things that can be done that are happening in the region that can benefit people with disabilities and all people. They heard a couple of months ago about the new transit signs that are being put in the region. The bus shelter upgrades. There are buses that say which bus and which direction you are going to and the cross streets. The light rail vehicles are getting retrofitted because of their work here. They do need to retrofit the light rail tracks. They also need to increase the frequency and access especially where people with disabilities live and frequent.

There are a lot of things people can do and are being done around policy. The Olmstead Plan is a plan to have people with disabilities be living and working in their communities in the least restricted environment possible. There are pedestrian plans and bike plans of this nature that include people with disabilities in the planning and implementation. And prioritizing what gets implemented first. They need more people with disabilities in the policymaking roles. All of this is spelled out in the report. They need more spending on transportation which is a big discussion at the Capitol right now.

What can they do as a committee and what can they do as individual members of the TAAC? They can continue to advocate for and advise staff on the need for and importance of accessibility beyond ADA. They need to engage with the entire community not just with the Council staff to raise awareness and raise feedback on issues of the disability community. They need to figure out how to report these problems that they find when they do receive feedback from their communities. How do they have open, clear effective lines of communication with the agencies that are providing the services? They need to encourage prioritization of accessibility improvements. That includes ADA and features that go beyond ADA. They need to as individuals promote inclusion everywhere. The TAAC is a transportation advisory committee. Accessibility goes beyond accessing the roadway and the street. It involves accessing our whole lives.

3. Metro Transit Service Improvement Plan

Cyndi Harper spoke to the TAAC committee. She is the Manager of Route Planning at Metro Transit Service Development. Last November, Mary Karlsson came before this group to discuss Metro Transit's Service Improvement Plan. Now they are getting ready to finalize the plan and will be seeking Council approval this month. She will provide another update.

The Service Improvement Plan (SIP) is a prioritized specific list of improvements regarding bus service expansion. This includes express and local service. It builds on the existing network and it identifies potential new routes, frequency and span improvements on existing routes, both in terms of frequency and in terms of span, which is how early in the morning and late in the evening the bus operates. It is a long range plan that will be updated every four to five years. The purpose of the SIP is to establish a framework for bus system expansion. The Met Council has plans for expansion of transitways, light rail, highway bus rapid transit lines. Those are laid out clearly in the Transportation Policy Plan. The SIP does a similar level of future planning work on the bus side. All of the projects in the SIP are above and beyond the existing operating budget. Projects that are identified in the SIP have been included in the Council's legislative package up at the Capitol this year. Helping them to make the case for additional transit funding by showing how those additional dollars would benefit riders on the local and express bus system. Items that are in Metro Transit's SIP will be submitted for review and evaluation in the Regional Service Improvement Plan. All five fixed route providers in the region have their own SIP and they will be taking items from each of those groups and combining them into one regional document.

They are focusing on routing scheduling improvements on the bus and arterial bus rapid transit routes primarily in Metro Transit's service area. They have been refining their plan based on the information they received during the public feedback period last November. Stakeholder workshops and feedback they received from their survey that was done approximately a year ago formed and validated our seven guiding principles:

1. Maximize ridership growth
2. Emphasize high productivity/low subsidy projects
3. Provide faster travel time

4. Enhance connectivity of transit system
5. Support transit-friendly land use and design
6. Expand service for off-peak and non-work trip purposes
7. Improve transit equity.

For those who have an option of choosing to drive or use transit for a trip, the surveys showed the single biggest factor in determining whether to drive or use transit was the travel time difference between those two modes. Metro Transit does a pretty good job of serving work related nine to five trips. They need to put more focus on service during the non-peak time, midday, evenings and weekends and for non work trip purposes. It is important that they improve transit equity. In order to enhance mobility in residents who live in areas within the highest reliance upon transit, they did a Title VI review in order to ensure that protected communities, such as communities of color and low income groups are sharing in the benefits of service expansion.

Three main categories of evaluation measures were determined to help them review and prioritize the specific service improvements. The direction that was laid out by the Council and Thrive MSP 2040, the strategies that are in the Transportation Policy Plan and the results from the survey helped shape these evaluation measures and helped them determine the weighting. They work together as a system in order to emphasize productivity, ensure social equity and provide access to the entire region. One of the social equity criteria was persons with disabilities living within a quarter of a mile of the route. That was one of the factors they took into consideration.

Based on their scoring, criteria projects were sorted into one of three categories (high, medium or low). High projects needed to score at least 75 percent of the total points. Medium projects scored between 55 and 74 percent. Low projects scored less than 55 percent of possible points. The projects that scored either high or medium were prioritized for implementation. These projects combined represented the resources in the ridership figures you will see later. Unfunded arterial bus rapid transit projects are also included in their ridership and their revenue projections. Those projects were not evaluated using these same evaluation criteria because those projects were already evaluated and ranked in the arterial transitway corridor study back in 2012.

Projects that scored low are not ready for implementation yet. They will review them in the future when additional development and population demographic projections are available. SIP projects have been assigned to one of three implementation phases based on factors such as when a related transitway or other project is projected to open. Most of the projects fall within the first two implementation phases.

They wanted to confirm that their draft plan accurately reflected what they were hearing from the community and their partners. So they had a public comment period last November. People could review the plan and the proposed improvements that were on specific routes on Metro Transit's website. Also they had five community meetings and one public hearing. People could comment in person at one of those meetings or send in an email, leave a voicemail message, use one of the postage paid comment cards that were available or by dropping a note in the mail. People could find out information about the plan which was available at libraries around the region. They also used facebook and twitter to help promote the service improvement plan project and they had information on You Tube as well. They also had brochures and comment cards on all of the buses. They had materials available not only English but also Spanish, Somali and Hmong. They received over 500 service suggestions from nearly 200 individuals and community organizations. Most of the comments that were received were in support of the service improvement plan, either supporting or requesting additional improvements to frequency and span of service. This is followed by comments relating to routing changes or restructuring service in a given area.

As a result of the feedback they received, they modified the service improvement plan mostly adding new items or modifying and reevaluating items that were already in the draft plan. They clarified and reviewed their evaluation criteria including changing the weight or the value of high frequency routes, current and future transitways such as LRT and Bus Rapid Transit were given in the system connectivity category. Also they more clearly defined what was considered a key destination and then reviewed the scoring criteria against those used in the regional solicitation. Twenty-four new projects were added as a result of the feedback that was received last fall including six new limited stop services overlaying some of our busiest local routes. Also new routes in Southeast Metro, a route connecting Richfield, South Minneapolis and downtown St. Paul, and also from the I-35E corridor in the Northeast Metro to downtown Minneapolis. Metro Transit opened two park-and-rides in Lino Lakes and Vadnais Heights last fall. So the service was

from those to downtown Minneapolis. As well as updating connecting routes associated with gateway corridor stations and the Blue and Green Line LRT extensions. Then improving frequency and span on 10 local routes in the central cities and several first ring suburbs.

Overall 185 total projects were evaluated. One hundred and forty-eight of those were prioritized for recommendation in the SIP. That is 50 high projects and 87 medium projects and then 11 unfunded arterial BRT projects. The Snelling Avenue "A" line is not included in this list because it had already secured its funds. There are 148 projects total ranked as high or medium on 105 routes. There are four main improvement areas, expanding areas or improving connectivity, improve frequency on existing service, expand span of service and add reverse commute service, which is designed to get people who live primarily in Minneapolis and St. Paul to jobs in the suburban areas. Many of the improvements fell into more than one of the categories, which is why if you add up those numbers they add up to something that is more than 148.

They are looking at 161 additional buses. As a result they are looking at another bus garage. They are expecting that these projects would generate approximately 29 million new boardings a year. That is approximately a 40 percent increase in Metro Transit ridership from 2014. The annual cost to implement these projects is approximately \$98 million. They are anticipating that one third of that would come from passenger fares very similar to what is seen in the system today. So the subsidy is almost \$67 million. Then the net subsidy per passenger is about \$2.35. They are looking at a 30 percent increase in the operating budget and a 40 percent increase in ridership.

The next steps are that they will be seeking approval of the Transportation Committee and the Metropolitan Council in a couple of weeks. They will be updating the plan every four to five years. Another next step is to secure the operating dollars so they can implement these projects.

The completed final report will be posted on the website: www.metrotransit.org/sip. That includes a detailed description of all of the proposed improvements on the specific routes. Metro Transit currently has five garages located around the region. The location of a new garage has not been determined at this time.

4. Metro Mobility Stats: Present and Future

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. He passed out stats that compare January and February 2014 to January and February 2015. They are up 10,700 rides this year. As a result of that there is a bump in revenue hours from 71,168 to 75,551. On time ridership is at 96.1 percent. They contractually have structured things in such a way that appointment times are the low priority. They are correcting that with the contracts that will go live this year, in 2015. Metro Mobility is on time to pick up the customer but not on time to get the customer to their destination on time. The on time performance appointment times are at 73.6 percent in February. The goal there is also at 95 percent.

The complaints per 1,000 rides were at 1.02 percent in February. This is O.K. by federal standards but Metro Mobility has done better in the past. In February 2014 the complaints were at 0.71 percent. Now they are counting all complaints. The average trips per hour were at 2.05. The accidents and incidents were down in 2015. They were at 0.60 percent in February 2015.

Streasick said they would prefer that the complaints go directly to Metro Mobility staff instead of to the vendor.

Metro Mobility is taking steps with the providers to stabilize the driver positions to make that job a career. In this year's contracts they put a mandatory wage basement for all bids and a mandatory movement for every year of the contract regarding wages.

Metro Mobility is planning an eight to 10 percent increase in ridership growth annually.

If a driver receives a complaint or commendation they bring it to the dispatcher or a manager and it goes up the chain until it gets to the Service Center.

The drivers receive training (classroom and behind the wheel) to become familiar with the destinations. They also have maps and GPS.

MEMBER COMMENT

Paulsen suggested that someone come to the TAAC and address the Legislative Update as it was done in the past. This legislative session was deemed the "Transportation Session" and the Governor's legacy that he will carry forward.

Villavicencio suggested that the TAAC members talk to their legislative representative on behalf of the expansion of TAAC's role to see the new train cars and bus shelters as they are being designed.

Fenley said that there is a bill, Senate File 1646, that is being moved on that is important to the Council. It is being brought by Senator Dibble. He wants to include it in his omnibus package as well as stand alone bill 1646 that is acting as a vehicle if it doesn't get included in the omnibus bill. "The Met Council shall consult with the TAAC committee concerning all proposed Met Council procurements of vehicles and shall consider the committee's input before ordering vehicles." This is something that was brought to the State Council on Disabilities' attention by Senator Dibble and his committee administrator.

Fenley said that Judd Schetnan said that they will be amending the bill and significantly reduce the power that TAAC does have. Once a year they want to have someone from TAAC or chosen by TAAC to sit in a review capacity on a public transit procurement panel that would provide input on a selection process for vehicles.

Chair Walker said that it sounds like the Council is not in support of this issue. They are creating an amendment to make it different. It sounds like there are a lot of different players. If people, as an individual, want to get involved in this issue that is alright. But no one can speak on behalf of the committee or say they have a voice for the committee unless there is a vote. This is great information that the TAAC members now know. They can move forward on this issue as individuals working at the capitol if they choose. This will be an issue that will be brought to the TAAC with the Met Council in attendance next month.

PUBLIC COMMENT

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Paulsen moved to adjourn the meeting. Fenley seconded the motion. Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Alison Coleman
Recording Secretary