

# Minutes of the REGULAR MEETING OF THE TAAC COMMITTEE

Wednesday, June 5, 2013

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

**Committee Members Absent:** John Schatzlein, Margot Imdieke Cross, James Williams and Jerolyn Pofahl.

**Committee Members Excused:** Wayne Wittman

**Council Staff Present:** David Russell, Mike Kuehn, Andy Streasick, Paul Colton, Pam Steffen from Metro Transit and John Spurgetis from Metro Transit.

**Public Present:** Claudia Fugile and Kristin Jorenby from MnDOT.

## 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, June 5, 2013.

## APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND MINUTES

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

It was moved by Paulsen, seconded by Lund to approve the minutes of the May 1, 2013 regular meeting of the TAAC Committee. **Motion carried.**

## INFORMATION & BUSINESS

### A. Legislative Update

Mike Kuehn spoke to the TAAC committee. In the Transportation Finance Bill they provided the funding level at the same base as the last biennium though that is more dollars than was actually received, which is \$130 million for the biennium. With that dollar amount there still was an operating deficiency of \$18 million because we continued to have other needs like the Central Corridor. They provided as well an additional appropriation of \$18 million, which took care of our operating needs. So we should be fully funded to operate the system as it currently exists. In addition to that they gave us a one time general fund appropriation of \$37 million, which is the minimum we need for this year in state money to keep the Southwest LRT line on its schedule so that we remain in the current funding cycle with the Federal Transit Administration. In addition to that in that bill is the \$35.8 million that we request with an increase of one percent annually for regional transit bonding authorization, which is paid for by the property taxes from the region. It is largely used for transit capital for the bus services, which includes mostly fleet replacement. Not only regular mainline but for Metro Mobility buses, park and ride lots, etc. It is all identified in the Transit Capital Plan, which is updated every couple of years.

They changed the base budget of the bill as far as the next biennium. In the 2016 – 2017 biennium when they put together the budget the Department of Finance instructs them what to start as our base budget. They increased that base from \$130 million to \$153.3 million in the next biennial cycle. This should keep our operating at a fully funded level. The last thing in the Transportation Finance Bill is one section entitled "Transitway Community Engagement." That allows the Council to partner in contract for services with local community based organizations to promote community engagement activities along project corridors. That is focused on the LRT corridors.

For the tax bill we did have the language for the \$35.8 million for our capital expenses. It allows the City of Minneapolis to create a value capture tax district one block both sides of a streetcar line. Minneapolis is looking at the option of streetcars. They sought this legislation. It allows them to capture property tax value along those lines to be used to pay debt service to develop streetcar lines in Minneapolis. It defines the area as Nicollet Avenue and the streets adjacent to that particular line. The other thing in the tax bill allows for the City of Bloomington associated with the Mall of America

expansion, which is almost a doubling of that, to capture fiscal disparities, which is the regional commercial industrial tax pool. It allows Bloomington to keep 10 percent of that amount that they pay into the fiscal disparity pool for about a 20 year period to help with Mall of America expansion issues. That comes out to about \$9 million a year. The Mall of America continues to be a major transit hub. With the expansion there the number of visitors and jobs based there, the number of transit users will grow dramatically. It could lead to future transit updates and improvements for the transit delivery system there.

The first policy bill increases the penalties of assaulting transit operators. That includes Metro Mobility, dial-a-ride programs, Opt Out programs and Metro Transit. There could be a charge of a gross misdemeanor if the person assaults a transit operator or intentionally transfers bodily fluids onto a transit operator. There are approximately 70 to 75 reported transit operator assaults a year. This makes the assaults on the operators a specialized category. There are other laws on the books that protect the drivers.

The next policy bill is the Data Privacy Bill. There are three areas that happened this year. One was regarding certain Council information collected on transit users. Particularly those who buy passes that are subsidized by companies, etc. That information collected is protected as private data. The companies have the opportunity to look at that for their specific company to justify payment for their subsidy.

There is another area that specifically relates to Metro Mobility called "Transportation Service Data". This would change the classification of Metro Mobility applicant and user names from public data to private data for the individuals. That is now covered by Data Practices.

The last area is more general where people call the Metropolitan Council or any other government office and request to be on a mailing list. The information is not being shared but until the law was passed this year someone could request that information. This law is already in effect.

The Metropolitan Council redistricting bill did pass. They used Map 1A. It is the map that was preferred by the Governor. It does include one Council district that will have two incumbents in and one district that will have no incumbents. All the other 14 Council districts and incumbent will be in one of those. That doesn't mean that they will be reappointed. They have to go through the open appointment process. They are currently taking applications. The deadline will be June 10.

The Transportation Policy Bill has two areas that affect the Metropolitan Council and regional transit issues. One is the skyway access at the St. Paul Central Station about a block from the Metropolitan Council. There is enough money in the contingency. It is about \$1.4 million. It should be completed by the time the Central Corridor starts operating next year. The other part of the bill was bus rapid transit. The counties all have regional rail authorities and they levy a property tax. Because it is a regional rail authority the money they collect for planning purposes and operations could only be used for rail operations. Now they have included in those dollars to develop bus rapid transit. We haven't experienced bus rapid transit but we will this summer when the Cedar Avenue BRT starts. That is a viable option for several of the transportation corridors. This legislation will allow the counties to utilize some of the tax dollars they collect as the Regional Rail Authority to also place some of those dollars towards Bus Rapid Transit.

The final 10 Council members were finally confirmed by the Senate this session. Last year they confirmed six. This year early in the session they confirmed the Chair and a couple of weeks before the end of the session they confirmed the final 10. Within a month they have to reapply for their positions.

One of the things that didn't happen was the dedicated increased funding for regional transit. All parties have said that next year they want to continue to work on that. That includes businesses, labor organizations, transportation advocates and transit advocates. They could not get the governor to feel comfortable about a gas tax increase. There is an effort that will be made to look at some kind of a dedicated funding source that could include an additional quarter or half percent increase in the sales tax in the metro area for transit purposes. It would help with an acceleration of the development of the transit corridors and allow us to grow the current system. To do an expansion of that. Not only transit but roads.

The bonding for regional needs. We did get the \$37 million for the Southwest Corridor, which means the state has now committed \$44 million to the Southwest Corridor. The commitment that we need from the state, of which the feds require 10 percent, that means an additional \$81 million is going to be needed next year to stay on this funding cycle. That means we probably would be trying to push the legislature to include that in the state bonding bill. We expect to see about an \$800 million bonding bill next year.

There was language that became part of the Transportation Policy Bill in the House. It added language to require the Council to create a Metro Mobility Ombudsman position as a contact point for resolving rider complaints and concerns. We discussed that with the conferees when that bill went to conference and provided them with information that we feel that there is substantial customer complaint process currently in place. The conferees did decide not to include that language in the final bill.

The last item is the Dan Patch Corridor. That is a corridor development between St. Paul or Minneapolis to Northfield through a portion of Scott County. The legislation says that there are prohibitions that say they can't do anything like planning or studying the corridor.

## **B. Metro Transit State Fair Busing**

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. There are three changes. Metro Transit runs the express service and the regular route service to and from the fair. Any of the service that is provided that is closer in to the state fair from church and school parking lots and the free service is contracted through the state fair. She listed the express park and ride sites and the 15 minute and 30 minute locations. New this year is the Fridley Northstar station. They are going to run buses from the Fridley Northstar station park and ride lot to the state fair this year. There will be a new park and ride facility open by the time the state fair starts. She listed the regular routes that serve the state fair (960, 84, 61 and 3). The 960 is bus service from Hennepin Avenue. That is new routing.

People can buy tickets online and print the tickets or show the ticket purchase on their cell phone at the express sites. There will be a barcode on the ticket. They will scan the bar code. If the ticket is purchased before the state fair starts, a single ride ticket is still \$5.00. A group of two pass is \$9.00. A group of four pass is \$15.00. After the state fair starts the tickets can still be purchased online but there is no discount for the tickets. Tickets can also be purchased at the Metro Transit stores. Only Metro Transit accepts the online tickets. The other providers accept cash only. A PCA still rides for free.

John Spurgetis, from Metro Transit spoke to the TAAC committee. The Route 960 should have about a 10 minute frequency. The 84 will have supplemental buses up and down Snelling.

## **C. Metro Mobility Door Through Door Escort Waiver**

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. This exception has been available if requested since March of 2009. State law and Metro Mobility policy require that the Metro Mobility drivers escort passengers first door through first door. Drivers come to the first door of your pick up location and then assist the passenger to the vehicle. Then at the destination the driver accompanies the passenger from the door of the vehicle to the first door of the destination. Some people may not want that door through door escort. They have the escort waiver in place for people who don't want an escort. For customers who are not their own guardian, they require that the guardian sign off on the form. Then the form gets stamped by a notary public. By submitting this waiver, the passenger is requesting that their Metro Mobility service becomes a curb to curb service. The driver is no longer going to come to the door and announce his/her arrival. The bus comes to the agreed upon location, the driver gets out of the vehicle at the curb, gets back into the vehicle, waits five minutes and then leaves. It is an all or nothing situation. If people choose to pursue this they will receive curb to curb service. If a passenger decides to cancel the waiver, he/she must contact Metro Mobility Service Center and request the change in writing. A passenger may sign the waiver at the beginning of summer and cancel the waiver at the end of summer.

When Metro Mobility receives a waiver, they place comments in the personnel file of the customer. It is in a field that goes directly into the driver's manifest. On the print out that the driver gets they will see "do not escort". Right now there are only 10 waivers on file. Outdoor drops are different. The driver should be escorting the customer onto the park grounds and then turning around and leaving.

The driver has a legal obligation to see the customer through the first door. They can get terminated for not doing that. The driver needs to get out of the vehicle and accompany at some distance the customer until the customer is through the door. The driver can't go in. The driver can help hold the door for the customer. The purpose of the escort is to help prevent a fall or elopement.

#### **D. Metro Mobility ID Card/GOTO Fare Media Card Update**

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. Sometime in 2014 when Metro Mobility ID's develop GoTo card capacity, the "A" in a circle on the card will be a tactile identifier, similar to the "L" based partly on the feedback of the TAAC. Metro Mobility is not going to do Braille on the cards. They are just going to do the raised tactile indicator for the "A". The cost is about \$1.00 each. They are only going to put those on upon request. Do not put a hole in the card to wear it around your neck. It will clip the wire and the GoTo card won't work. Eventually they will phase out the tickets. If a customer wants, they may put the dollar amount from their tickets onto a GoTo card. This will work on Metro Mobility and the city bus. There may be issues with the 31 day pass. The stored value cards option would work.

Anybody can go to a Metro Transit store and buy another GoTo card. If the customer does not want the driver to see their name or picture when they use the city bus, they can buy a limited mobility GoTo card at any Metro Transit store and use that card separately. There is no rule against having multiple GoTo cards assigned to the same name. Metro Mobility drivers will still have to see a picture ID of the customer when they board a Metro Mobility bus. It can be a Metro Mobility card or a valid state ID.

#### **E. Metro Mobility Stats**

Andy Streasick spoke to the TAAC committee. The stats that David Russell will be presenting will indicate that the on time performance right now, with the spikes in ridership, are not what they want. They have not reached 95 percent this year. The pilot project with the MDT's (Mobile Data Terminals) has started. They have a handful of vehicles with Transit Team that now have that. They are testing that out now. The other thing they are looking at doing, and they are going to approach the Council on this, is to not accommodate same day rides from 5:01 a.m. and 7:59 p.m. They will still do them from 8:00 p.m. to 5:00 a.m. if they can. They will still offer the premium same day service, the subsidized cab rides. If there is an emergency, someone will still be able to get a ride, but they will pay more.

People will be notified ahead of time about the change in service.

David Russell spoke to the TAAC meeting. As the weather improves the ridership is increasing. Today there were about 6,100 trips scheduled for the day. Tomorrow there are 6,095 trips scheduled for the day. They are adding about 1000 more trips per day than last year. On Saturday and Sunday they scheduled about 1,700 trips. There are a lot of no-shows. In May 2013 there were 2,862 no-shows. Last year there were about 1.6 to 1.8 passengers per revenue hour. In May 2013 there were 1.94 passengers per revenue hour.

Paul Colton spoke to the TAAC committee. The average on time performance is over 95 percent. Transit Team was at 97 percent in May.

#### **Member Comment**

None.

#### **Public Comment**

None.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Business completed, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Alison Coleman  
Recording Secretary