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TRANSPORTATION **A**CCESSIBILITY **A**DVISORY **C**OMMITTEE **M**EETING
Wednesday, October 5, 2011

1. Call to Order

At 12:37 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Ron Biss. **Public present:** Karen Hubescher. **Council staff present:** Pam Steffen, Jan Dietrich, from Metro Transit, David Russell, Mary Karlsson, Andy Streasick and Alison Coleman.

Members Present: Ron Biss, Margot Imdieke Cross, James Williams, Bruce Lattu, Darrell Paulsen, Jerolyn Pofahl, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Diogo Reiss, Nichole Villavicencio and Willie Daniels and John Schatzlein on the phone. **Members Absent:** Heidi Myhre. **Members excused:** Kim Kang, Christian Knights and Wayne Wittman.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Indieke Cross moved to approve the agenda. Villavicencio seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Approval of September 7, 2011 Minutes

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

4. Regional Transitway Guidelines

Mary Karlsson spoke to the TAAC committee. We ran through the presentation at the last TAAC meeting. I wanted to give you the opportunity to ask questions. This is the first time that the region has prepared a document like this. Once you propose questions to me I have some questions for you.

Chad McGuire said I am concerned about the tendency for park and rides to be added. If the guidelines don't try and head off park and rides you will have a lot of transit investment in areas that are essentially go to somewhere where you have to have a car at the end of the line. If you can't drive that is not very useful. If the land use around those stations is not a little more higher density but a little more mixed use, these investments are not terribly helpful for someone who can't drive. In what I read in the draft guidelines the land use would be determined in part by the surroundings. So if a station is sited in a low density place it may get a park and ride because it fits in verses higher density development. Can you comment on the position of the Council to emphasize something other than park and rides as these guidelines are concerned?

Karlsson said we started out the process saying that land use was a separate discussion item and that that would be treated separately through the Corridors of Opportunity process. If you review the guidelines now you would see that the advisory committee told us that that was not O.K. The advisory committee said we need to make sure we speak to land use in this document and we need to make sure that we speak to the relationship between the infrastructure planning and the land use planning.

To get to the specific question of park and rides. Our region is diverse and it includes a lot of different ideas and a lot of different land uses. So we want to be inclusive. We address all of our partners and we work to meet all of our partner's needs throughout the region. What we tried to say in the guidelines right now is that parking is probably a function of density. In places where there is more dense land use probably a park and ride is not appropriate. Where there is less dense land uses a park and ride is probably more appropriate because it concentrates that demand.

For example in Lakeville and Apple Valley those land uses tend to be a lot more dispersed. To make it cost effective to provide any transitway service out to those areas we need to concentrate that demand. One tool to do that is through a park and ride. Transitways function best where there is high demand. One of the ways you can achieve that high demand is through a park and ride. Another way you can achieve that is through Transit Oriented Development. We reference the Council's guide for Transit Oriented Development in several places throughout the document. That was at the direction of the advisory committee. Land use is not separate from the infrastructure planning. That it is an integral part. It is our regional partner's choice on how they develop their local land use plans. As the Council is now, over the next couple of years, taking on the Regional Development Framework, now would be a good time to comment on what you would see as a vision for land use throughout the region.

McGuire said if the Council is going to invest a lot of public dollars and the Council has approval over comprehensive plans from each municipality, the Council could more than suggest Transit Oriented Development along transitway investments. If the guidelines could look in that direction that would be something that I would appreciate.

John Lund said when you came up with the Transitway Guidelines did you take into account the 20/30 Transportation Policy Plan as you were developing the guidelines? I have a couple of questions going back between the two that I saw in the TPP that I would have liked to have seen addressed in these guidelines.

Karlsson said we developed these guidelines in response to the workplan item in the TPP. We have frequently said that these guidelines are not the tool for defining which transitways are on the map in the TPP. So once you are on the map then what? As far as the relationship between the two, yes they were developed with the TPP in mind. Another point that I would make is that this is consciously not a policy document. That was at the direction of the advisory committee. They were very clear that these Transitway Guidelines were not to come across as policy. But they should clearly state within the scope of being technical best practices.

Lund said one question I have relates to Metro Mobility. In the TPP they make a comment about expanding that beyond people with ADA disabilities to other people with disabilities. I was wondering how they would define that area.

Karlsson said I will get back to you on that area.

Lund said going through the 20/30 plan they had very little reference to security in the transportation programs. My thought is as these programs grow the guidelines should have included steps that they need to take to guarantee that the security will grow as well. We may have federal funding to expand on certain lines, if there is initial money for security chances are it won't last very long. I would be interested to know what their plan is when the money is no longer available for additional security.

Karlsson said we had funding as one of the 10 technical committees. But we did not come out with guidelines speaking to funding. That was at the request from the advisory committee and concurrence from the funding committee itself. The funding issue is separate from these technical guidelines. Funding issues aside, we do say in the document in two specific areas we speak to security. One area is

in the stations and facilities. We talk to making sure that security features are provided at every station. So things like emergency call buttons and security cameras. We also speak to safety. That is where we talk about making sure there are anti-slip surfaces, that there are no areas of concealment and the whole area is visible. We also talk about security in the fare collection area. I don't know if we talk about security specifically in fare collection. In subsequent conversations related to these guidelines, we have the issue of fare collection enforcement. As people are looking at off board fare collection. On commuter rail and light rail we have off board fare collection where the payment happens off of the vehicle. When you are on the vehicle an officer can approach you and validate that you have paid your fare.

There is a lot of interest in the transitways moving to that kind of fare collection system. Even the Bus Rapid Transit. One of the things that has come to light is how much that costs. The idea on the highway Bus Rapid Transit system, so that would be Cedar Avenue and I-35W. Those would have some targeted enforcement. So there would be some more police presence. The projects are responsible for finding the funding for the police presence. There would be off board fare collection for arterial BRT, which would include increased police presence on those vehicles.

Andy Streasick said my understanding of the ADA, non ADA situation is that what they really mean is ADA paratransit eligible individuals and other individuals with disabilities. So folks who are Metro Mobility eligible based on their inability to take regular fixed route transit all the time because of their disabilities and also those of us with disabilities who are capable, some of us some time, some of us all the time, of taking other modes of fixed route public transit.

Karlsson said it is my understanding that the Transitway Guidelines are not speaking to Metro Mobility. That the Transitway Guidelines are speaking to commuter rail, LRT, Highway Bus Rapid Transit and Arterial Bus Rapid Transit. I don't know that we have talked about the relationship with Metro Mobility.

Lattu said is there an intent that Metro Mobility would use this system? Somebody would get picked up at their home. Get dropped off at one of these pick up points for the regional transitway and then brought to where they need to go. Then brought back to that place and have Metro Mobility bring them back to their residence.

Streasick said Metro Mobility is always interested in functioning as a feeder to fixed. This is where we use a paratransit ride to bring someone who is conditionally eligible and is capable sometimes to use fixed route to bring them to that corridor. We are happy to do that now under the light rail system or the Metro Transit bus system. We would certainly be happy to continue to do that along the corridors.

Karlsson said to speak from the transitway side, we encourage in the station design and the vehicle design that folks of all ages and abilities are considered in designing that. If you want to see any more emphasis in the guidelines that would be an important comment to pass along to us.

We are talking about transitway stations. So for example, along LRT it would be 46th Street, Lake Street. Some people would call them transit hubs but we are working hard to define them transit stations. We are not talking about Uptown Transit Center or Robbinsdale Hubbard Street Marketplace. Because they are not on one of the fixed guideways. Those are not the subject of our discussion. But we are really focusing on these stations along light rail, commuter rail, highway Bus Rapid Transit or what we are calling arterial Bus Rapid Transit and where they connect to local routes or other transit services. Cedar Grove would be one of the stations that would be called an off line transit station. The Apple Valley Transit Station is part of the Cedar Avenue Bus Rapid Transit. They are planning two more. One at 140th and 147th Street in Apple Valley.

Indieke Cross said I just did an access survey of the Egan transit hub and I found a great number of accessibility problems. Do you know at this point what level of accessibility is going to be expected? What kind of amenities would be included in these transit gathering areas?

Karlsson said we do say that all stations need to be ADA compliant at a minimum. We do talk about that all stations need to be accessible for everybody. All the way up to where they board the vehicle and then on the vehicle itself. We do have a list of other amenities that need to be included in the stations. They are things like ticket vending machines, lights, heating, trash receptacles, etc. Accessibility from the sidewalk system all the way through and on to the vehicle is expected and outlined in these guidelines.

Indieke Cross said would it be possible at some point to establish some sort of a process whereby we could look at some of the plans or drawings regarding these particular stations? ADA compliance misses the boat on a number of issues. With the Egan transit hub, to get to the restrooms you had to go through an exterior door. There is no maximum weight resistance for that. So these doors were between 12 and 15 pounds of pressure with no way to fix them. So I had to ask that they put automatic door openers in. They are not required by the ADA. So in order to make them usable, functional and accessible I suggested three different sets of automatic door openers at that particular transit station. It was to make it usable. That is the type of issue that we need to advise on.

Karlsson said I would suggest that you look through the language we use in these guidelines. I am not a technical expert in this area of accessibility. If you can suggest better language for how to articulate in the guidelines that would be an important contribution from this committee for these guidelines. Try to identify areas where we can provide better wording. The second approach would be that in these guidelines we talk about the importance of identifying a lead agency. A lead agency for every project is clearly identified. One of their responsibilities is stakeholder coordination. I would definitely consider this group a stakeholder group that should be coordinated with for the development of each project. So I think one of the comments that you should provide on these guidelines is the importance of the lead agency identification and the importance of that stakeholder coordination and that you would like to be one of the groups that is coordinated with. The third point is that you could invite corridors in. I think one of the roles of this committee would be to work to invite the different projects in and ask them for an opportunity to provide your stakeholder input opportunity. I committed to David that I would help in identifying who the lead staff are on the projects so that we can get you connected.

I would encourage you to submit comments on this. We are accepting comments through November 18. The guidelines are available on the Met Council's website. If you go under Transportation there is a link for Transitway Guidelines. You can click on that and get the DRAFT guidelines. They are in a PDF format right now. If you would need them in a different format let us know and we can provide that format. Our outreach coordinator is Michelle Fure. Her information, my information and Cole Hiniker's is on that website.

Let us know if you see value in these guidelines. If there are areas that you see that are very important to this committee. The lead agency identification, the coordination of stakeholders, the access pieces at the stations and on the vehicles are examples of topics that you might want to comment on. Or even provide suggestions on how to improve those. If you think that there are areas that we missed, you can pass that along to us.

Lattu said if it is just in a PDF you would probably need to provide a html or word format for persons using screen readers. Not all PDF's can be used by screen readers.

Streasick said one thing that we should stress is that the Council would welcome any feedback that comes from you as an individual. Anything that is coming from you as a TAAC member should be submitted to Chair Biss first so we can insure consistency and minimize duplication.

Karlsson said initially when we started this process we talked about these guidelines being adopted as an appendix to the Transportation Policy Plan. Throughout this process we have come to understand that our regional partners are not interested in doing that. Instead the advisory committee recommended that these guidelines be adopted by the Metropolitan Council as a stand alone document. That they would be updated in the future as needed separate from the Transportation Policy Plan. If that is something that is a concern to this committee or if the committee has any interest in weighing in on it that would be a welcome comment.

Transit governance in the region is complex. Funding is one of the major complexities. The concern with adopting these as an appendix to the Transportation Policy Plan is that the Counties Transit Improvement Board is required that all of their funding be consistent with the Transportation Policy Plan. So the feeling from CTIB and the Regional Rail Authorities is that amending these to the TPP would introduce a level of complexity in CTIB reviewing their grant applications that no one had anticipated. So for example, every year going through every project and making sure that it is consistent with these guidelines that the policy makers felt that that would be a hardship for the organization and for the staff reviewing the grant applications. It would be a huge scope of review. Chair Haigh heard their concern and felt that it would be acceptable for the Council to adopt them as a stand alone document.

5. Metro Transit Information

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. There are five concerns that Chair Biss forwarded to me.

1. Bus operators. Bus drivers fail to announce the upcoming stop. Some of you may encounter this on a routine basis. It was Ron's understanding that the driver is to announce every lighted intersection. Under federal law all intersections controlled by lights, stop signs and transfer points must be announced. Even if driving on an onboard freeway express route or a limited stop express route. Operators must announce their route number and terminal letter when stopping at a bus stop. In addition if you were to request that certain streets be called that are not at lights or stop signs the operator absolutely has to do that if requested. It is very important for a visually impaired person to remain oriented along the route and that we definitely have to do.
2. Bus stop identification. Many bus stops are identified only by a sign. This can be of no help to someone who is visually impaired. How would you know where a certain bus stop is? The suggestion is to investigate some kind of tactile audible indicators that help visually impaired riders identify bus stops. I do know that currently along Marquette and Second corridor we do have audible bus stop locators. The Mall of America also at 46th Street station and the Uptown Transit Station. It is a button that you push and it tells you what stop you are at. Typically we see visually impaired people who are going to start riding the bus run the route with a mobility specialist. If that is not the case we can provide that for them. So those are our newer developments that we have implemented those types of things. One of my coworkers within our division did a study of all of our bus stop signage and how it seems to be not very consistent and random. With that there is a project to make those types of things more consistent. I will recommend it as to include some type of signage or raised lettering, Braille or audio when this project does kick off. Metro Transit does work with cities to post bus stop signs and put them in certain places.
3. Bus stop closure. If you have ridden the bus lately we have had a lot of detours. For short term closures like with a parade can be difficult because it is mostly signage at the bus stop. A transit

information center does keep a list of customers who request either a phone call or an email when either short term or long term closures or reroutes happen. For longer term routes and detours and alerts we communicate on line. We have service alerts on line. On our automated system we also use twitter to alert for detours. Metro Transit has on their project but hasn't started it yet is subscription service. If you provide us your email address or phone number we will be able to email you those detours and alert. That is called subscription service. It is in the works but I don't have a completion date.

4. GoTo card on Metro Mobility. I did talk to Tom Randall, who is the senior manager in our sales operations department for Metro Transit. He along with Gerri Sutton, who is in charge of MTS Contracted Services here at the Met Council. They have been working very closely on figuring out a way for us to become more seamless by accepting GoTo cards on Transit Link and Metro Mobility. Currently we have given our specifications to the vendor, Cubic. They are working on providing us with an estimate on how to get this accomplished. He hopes that sometime next year we will be able to do this.
5. GoTo card swipe access on low floor Metro Transit buses. There is speculation that on some of our low floor buses there might be an issue on tagging your card. I took pictures of where our GoTo card reader is located and the height of that on our low floor buses, the 40 footers verses the articulated buses. I did measure this and it does measure under the 48 inches. It seems to be accessible. Where you actually have to tag your card, where the logo is, it is around 43-44 inches. There might be an issue with our 40 footers. The top could be as high as 51 inches. I got an answer from the farebox technician. He told me it specked out. That the black poles that the reader is sitting on was built at the manufacturer. When we get the bus we get it without the card reader. Then we just put the card reader on it. I will get the information about this and get back to you next month.

Indieke Cross said my first suggestion for the LRT is that the accessible seats are kept in an upright position. The conductor, at the end of each run returns the seats to an upright position and it stays in an upright position. Then it would be available to someone who needs it if it were unoccupied and in an upright position. Right now it is always in the down position.

Williams said mechanically it could be spring loaded so it is always in the up position. When needed in a down position it could be pulled down like in a theater seat.

6. Member Comment

Indieke Cross said that each and every time that they are in the process of ordering buses they have to come before us and tell us what they are doing, how many they are going to order, what they look like what the specifications of those buses look like so that we have some consistency there. We made it perfectly clear years ago that we wanted arm rests and now they are not doing arm rests. They didn't give us the bother of an explanation. **Indieke Cross's motion is that each time that Metro Mobility buses are to be ordered that the operations manager comes before us and discusses that order with us.**

Paulson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Streasick said we did order over 30 vehicles that are now in place. They all have arm rests. We do still have some older buses (turtle tops) on the street that don't have arm rests. All of the buses that we recently ordered all have arm rests on them and they all will in the future.

Indieke Cross said I do want to know that if there were a number of vehicles received this past summer that didn't have arm rests, I would like to know that they are in fact being fixed.

7. Public Comment

None.

8. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 1:58 p.m.