

**METROPOLITAN COUNCIL**  
Office of Transportation and Transit  
390 Robert Street North, St. Paul, Minnesota 55101-1805  
Telephone (651) 602-1000 TDD (651) 291-0904 FAX (651) 602-1739 Metro Info (651) 602-1611

**T**RANSPORTATION **A**CCESSIBILITY **A**DVISORY **C**OMMITTEE **M**EETING  
Wednesday, September 7, 2011

**1. Call to Order**

At 12:31 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Ron Biss. **Public present:** Mark Hughes and Faith Mathias. **Council staff present:** Pam Steffen, Jan Dietrich, Adam Harrington and Charles Carlson from Metro Transit, David Russell, Mary Karlsson, Allison Brummel, Nora Riemenschneider (intern), Andy Streasick and Alison Coleman.

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

**2. Approval of the Agenda**

Lund moved to approve the agenda. Kang seconded the motion. The motion carried.

**3. Approval of August 3, 2011 Minutes**

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

**4. Regional Transitway Guidelines**

Mary Karlsson spoke to the TAAC committee. I am a Senior Transportation Planner at the Metropolitan Council. I am Co Project Manager of the Transitway Guidelines Development Effort along with Cole Hiniker, who could not be here today. We have been working on this project for about 1½ years. We first introduced this project to this committee in September of 2010. The public comment period is coming up on these DRAFT guidelines. The purpose of this presentation is to provide you with information. If you would like us to answer some specific questions, we can come back in October.

The DRAFT guidelines are not available for comment yet. They are scheduled to be available following next Wednesday's Metropolitan Council committee meeting. We need to wait for them to be approved at the meeting itself.

We have a number of other outreach efforts planned including meeting with the Counties Transit Improvement Board (CTIB) on September 21. We are working on what our outreach meetings will be in September, October and November. That is including coming back to this group in October.

The guidelines have been developed by 11 committees. There are 10 technical committees and one advisory committee that oversaw the whole effort. The 10 technical committees have included station spacing and siting. What we call project development, leadership and oversight. Runningways, stations

and support facilities, vehicles, fare-collection systems, project funding, technology, identity and branding and service operations. Again 10 technical committees and one advisory committee.

These committees have been meeting since April of 2010 to draft these guidelines. This is the first time that these sort of guidelines have been written down for transitways. This has been an entirely new effort. This is the first time we have undertaken something like this. So it has been quite a bit of work.

The advisory committee has consisted of two members of the Metropolitan Council. Wendy Wulff has been chair of the effort throughout the whole development process. Now Lona Schreiber is the other Metropolitan Council member on the committee. The Metropolitan Council Director of Metropolitan Transportation Services has also been on this committee as a member. We have had three members of the Counties Transit Improvement Board. That includes Commissioner Peter McLaughlin, Commissioner Jim McDonough all the way through the process. Then today you have Commissioner Nancy Schouweiler from Dakota County is also on the committee.

The Suburban Transit Association, MnDOT and then the Transportation Advisory Board are also represented on the committee. Those members have been consistent throughout the process. That includes Commissioner Will Branning, Tim Henkel and Russ Stark from the Saint Paul City Council.

We have been working to develop technical guidelines. These are not intended to be policy. We hope they are based on best practice both based on our experience here in the region as well as in other regions. We are anticipating that these guidelines will be used by planners, by project managers, engineers, and the engineering consultant community as well. Also that these can serve as an education tool for developing a common language amongst all transit, either planners, project developers or users here in the region. That we can have common expectations and common language for discussing transitway issues.

The DRAFT guidelines are divided into 10 sections. Introduction; service operations; station spacing and siting; stations and support facilities; runningways; vehicles; fare-collection systems; technology and customer information; identity and branding; and project development, leadership and oversight. Project funding was one of our technical committees. One of the conclusions from this effort was that we did not need stand alone guidelines for project funding. Instead all of the financial management responsibilities have been discussed in project development, leadership and oversight. We merged those two committees.

There have been four driving needs supporting the development of these guidelines.

1. We have a progressively growing transitway system.
2. There are multiple agencies involved in the development of our transitway system (the County Regional Rail Authorities start the development of a transitway and lead the first steps. Once the project is proved feasible and competitive for federal funds then it can come over to the Metropolitan Council, like the Central Corridor has or it can go to MnDOT like the Hiawatha or the Northstar did. Cedar Avenue BRT is another example of a project that is under development. That is being led by the Dakota County Regional Rail Authority. On our stakeholders side we have cities who are involved in the stationary and land use planning and the land development that happens around transitways. That is not a responsibility of the technical project itself or the transitway project.)
3. The region has been taking initial steps to development of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). BRT can span an envelope of service types. Everything from LRT like but not on rails. That is one end of the spectrum. We call that a dedicated bus way. The other end of the spectrum is called arterial BRT.
4. The region is working on better aligning transit land use planning and the development of sustainable communities.

All four of these things prompted us to write everything down to make sure that we have this common tool for everyone to use and this common language.

Karlsson showed a map of the transitway plan from the 2030 Transportation Policy Plan. There are four types of service represented on this map. 1. Express bus with transit advantages. 2. Arterial Bus Rapid Transit corridors that are identified in the plan. 3. Corridors where the mode has not been determined (Red Rock Corridor, I-94 corridor or Gateway Corridor, Trunk Highway 36 corridor, Bottineau corridor, etc.) 4. The ones that are complete and in operation, under construction or in some phase of design.

The corridors that we have operating today are the Northstar (commuter rail), the Hiawatha LRT (the blue line), the I-394 corridor (a high occupancy toll lane that provides service to express bus).

The lanes under construction include the Central Corridor (the future green line), Cedar Avenue BRT and the I-35W BRT line.

The projects that are in design include the Southwest LRT line (which will be an extension of the green line or the Central Corridor). The reason we are calling the Central Corridor and the Southwest one line is because someone can have a one seat ride from downtown Saint Paul all the way out to Eden Prairie.

The development process is based on existing best practices, local and peer regions. There is input from advisory and technical committees. There are over 100 participants and over 25 agencies represented in the technical process. These are the people who are involved in drafting the guidelines. Now we are taking them out for public comment.

The guidelines provide guidance for four modes: 1. Commuter rail 2. Light Rail Transit (LRT) 3. BRT Highway Bus Rapid Transit 4. Arterial BRT.

We don't have dedicated busway, express bus with transit advantages and street cars. For these three modes we can go back in the future to develop guidelines for those as they are needed. The City of Minneapolis is undertaking an alternatives analysis to investigate streetcars. If they are shown to be a viable transitway mode for the region we can go back and develop guidelines for those.

The Service Operations Guideline purpose is to establish operational guidelines comparable to existing standards for local and express bus, frame expectations for service, ensure service aligns with travel demand in a cost-effective way and to promote customer understanding of transit through consistent service design. Our guidelines talk about the structure of the service, the frequency of the service, the span of hours and days per week and then the coordination of the service with the rest of the transit system.

The next topic is station spacing and siting. With these guidelines we establish criteria for identifying where transitway stations should be located and the parcels they should be located on. The key theme is making sure that the transitway balances access to a community with travel time advantage. One of the key features of transitways is that they provide faster travel time than local bus. So we want to make sure that we provide that balance between both access and travel time.

The purpose of these guidelines is to promote the development of attractive functional and cost effective stations that are regionally consistent. So that it does what it needs to do in an attractive and informative way. All stations need to be accessible by foot, wheelchair, bicycle and car, etc. In these guidelines we talk about access to wheelchairs explicitly.

Another guideline is passenger information. It should be consistent throughout the region. Signage should accommodate new transit riders, riders with disabilities, non English speakers and non readers.

The fifth topic is runningway guidelines. One of the conclusions from this section is the difference between the runningway and the right of way. The runningway is the surface the transitway vehicle actually drives on. For light rail and commuter rail that would be the rails. For Bus Rapid Transit that would be the lane that the bus drives in. The right of way would include the runningway plus stations, plus signal bungalows along LRT, traffic signal poles for Bus Rapid Transit. We want to make sure the runningways promote the transitway's ability to provide competitive, reliable travel time. We talk about the importance of bicycle and pedestrian access and providing safe crossings of the runningway for all modes, especially for our transit customers.

Our sixth topic is vehicles. In this section we wanted to establish what are the key considerations in designing a vehicle. These primarily discuss BRT station to station vehicles but applies to LRT and commuter rail as well. We do not discuss express vehicles. In terms of BRT vehicles, they should try to provide an interior experience that is similar to LRT. BRT vehicles should be styled and branded so that they are clearly distinguished from local buses. So that people can tell that this is a different service than a local bus service.

Our seventh topic is fare collection systems. There isn't a broad understanding of the fare collection systems. We wanted to make sure that we identified what are the key factors in making fare collection system decisions. Then promote efficiency and effectiveness while meeting fiduciary and regulatory requirements. We did not go into fare policy discussions. We did not talk about what fares would be or how they would be structured. We try to make sure that we keep accessibility in mind at all times for the fare system. We keep them consistent and predictable so people know what to expect.

Our eighth topic is technology and customer information. Technology is broad and is always evolving. We want to provide a process for exploring technological solutions and provide guidance on implementation of existing technology. We talk about the process of identifying new technologies and for testing them before implementation on transitways. We talk about the importance of customer information. We also talk about traffic signal priority and traffic signal preemption.

Our ninth topic is identity and branding. We all have an opinion on how things look and feel. Those are important pieces of branding. We wanted to make sure that we brought our opinions into that light of what is the best practice in the industry. One of the purposes of our branding guidelines is that we distinguish transitway services from other types of transit service in the region. That people have a clear understanding that there are different types of services in the region. It also provides guidance on the implementation of station-to-station Bus Rapid Transit. Station names is one of the key discussion points. They should reflect major street or landmark names and they should be succinct and easy to recognize.

Our final topic is project development, leadership and oversight. This is where we talk about the management of both the project development process and the operations and maintenance of a transitway. We want to make sure that these guidelines promote the effective coordination and the simple, efficient and consistent organization of a project. This will promote a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities among all partners involved in developing and operating a transitway. We also wanted to work on making sure that we promote effective stakeholder and public involvement and that we make best use of available resources especially in these difficult economic times. We promote consistency in travel demand and ridership forecasting. That we compare apples to apples in the region.

These guidelines talk about lead agency identification. An agency needs to be identified. It is not always done through statute. There are some instances for commuter rail or light rail where statute speaks to who the lead agency should be after the locally preferred alternative is selected. But in instances before the locally preferred alternative is selected or for non LRT or non commuter rail projects that the lead agency should be identified. Along with that that they then should understand

what the responsibilities are of a lead agency. That they are responsible for everything. They are responsible for financial management, project management and stakeholder involvement and management. They do not have to do everything but they need to make sure it gets done. They can do that through an inter agency agreement.

These are guidelines. They are not requirements. There really isn't an enforcement piece of this effort. Deviations from these guidelines should trigger discussion with funding partners.

We have three project deliverables. The first is the guidelines themselves. They will become available after next Wednesday. Those guidelines are supported by two pieces. The first ones developed are user guides. These are for very technical topics like stations and support facilities, runningways and ridership forecasting. We found that if we tried to include all the information in the guidelines they got too long and too technical. So we developed the user guides to supplement the guidelines. Finally we have a report that documents all the work that has gone into developing these. We call that the Guidelines Technical Report. It is about 250 pages and it documents the process and the findings for each of the technical committees.

The guidelines are scheduled to become available after next Wednesday's Metropolitan Council meeting. We are going to be working with the Regional Rail Authorities and the CTIB and the counties to provide meetings to provide feedback. We want to make sure our stakeholders are engaged in this project. The general public is also invited to participate. We will anticipate having public comment cards as well as having a formal comment period.

## **5. Corridors of Opportunity**

Allison Brummel spoke to the TAAC committee. I am the project manager for the Corridors of Opportunity project. I work here at the Met Council. I have been here since January when this project started. Corridors of Opportunity is a partnership that seeks to make our current and future transitway corridors better places to live, work and play for all. We are looking at the land use that surrounds these transitways. We are looking at the communities around these transitways. We look at what happens before they are built. What happens after they are built. How it affects the people in those neighborhoods. How it affects the housing there and how it affects jobs. We are trying to make those areas great places for everyone to live, work and play.

The formal vision statement that the policy board adopted earlier this year. We have a policy board made up of different officials and non profit leaders and foundation folks. It is co chaired by the Council Chair Sue Haigh. It is also co chaired by Lee Sheehy of the McKnight Foundation. They are the board that really guides our work. The vision they adopted is that transitway corridors will guide our region's growth, vitality and competitiveness. Development along transitways will create distinctive places and strength in local assets while increasing ridership.

The tape cut off here. There is no more information.

## **6. Arterial Transitways Corridors Study (ATCS)**

Charles Carlson spoke to the TAAC committee.

## **7. Member Comment**

None.

**8. Public Comment**

None.

**9. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 2:36 p.m.