

METROPOLITAN COUNCIL
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TRANSPORTATION **A**CCESSIBILITY **A**DVISORY **C**OMMITTEE **M**EETING
Wednesday, August 3, 2011

1. Call to Order

At 12:38 p.m. the meeting was called to order by Chair Ron Biss. **Public present:** Karen Hubescher from H.S.I., Elvira Barnes-Wycough from AARP, Steve Grans from the Minnesota State Fair and Jim Canine from Lorenz. **Council staff present:** Pam Steffen, Mary Pukenis from Metro Transit, Paul Colton, Mike Kuehn, David Russell, Andy Streasick and Alison Coleman.

Members Present: Ron Biss, Dave Bruflo, John Schatzlein, Kim Kang, Christian Knights, Margot Imdieke Cross, James Williams, Bruce Lattu, Heidi Myhre, Darrell Paulsen, Jerolyn Pofahl, John Lund, Chad McGuire, Diogo Reiss, Nichole Villavicencio and Willie Daniels. **Members Absent:** None. **Members excused:** Wayne Wittman.

2. Approval of the Agenda

Paulsen moved to approve the agenda. Imdieke Cross seconded the motion. The motion carried.

3. Approval of June 1, 2011 Minutes

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

4. State Fair Accessible Parking

Steve Grans spoke to the TAAC committee. We are probably going to do the same process as last year. Our free park and ride service is always offered in an exclusive lot for accessibility people and their guests. That will be the Oscar Johnson Arena. Last year we had approximately close to 12,000 round trip rides. That lot is located on Energy Park Drive just east of Snelling Avenue. It is the only bus service that we operate that exclusively brings people directly onto the fairgrounds proper. It is the loop gate nine, which is on Como Avenue. We also allow Metro Mobility to drop off and pick up at that site too. Those are the two areas we use for that.

Last year we took the Roseville area high school, which also does Grace Church and Saint Rose of Lima. We put accessible buses on that. That comes to the Midway Parkway area. We have about six stops at Midway Parkway. But we chose the Roseville area high school because that is the number one stop which is closest to Snelling. We operate one block of Midway Parkway between Snelling and Arona. But there is no sidewalk. It is a grass area that quickly turns into dirt after the first day. We felt that the best situation would be to operate from the high school and Grace and Saint Rose because it is all one trip. We drop at the very furthest corner west, which is closest to Snelling.

We have two transportation sites on the south side of Como. We do East Como or Block 56 which is directly across from Gate Seven, the South Underwood gate. We operate Gloria Dei and Nova Classical. We chose them for two reasons. They pick up and drop off close to Como Avenue and they

operate all 12 days of the fair. We also operate a huge area where Metro Transit also services the CTS, which is the state fair express area. We call it Block 55 or West Como, which is directly across from the Coliseum area. We use the U of M facilities. Those are various parking lots around the TCF Stadium. We have handicapped service on those buses. They drop off in that area. In that lot we are the closest to Como Avenue. We chose those sites because we cover the north, south, east and west portion of the metro with our free park and ride service. At the same time we drop them the closest to the hard surface, which would be the best for accessibility issues. Oscar Johnson is the best because all pick up and drop off is on an asphalt surface.

We also implemented a service where all of our 34 park and ride sites are manned with volunteers and/or employees of the State Fair. If we have someone who comes up with an accessible issue to another lot they will contact Lorenz Bus Service and they will dispatch a bus that will pick those people up and bring them to the fairgrounds. When they are done they will get instructions on how to contact Lorenz and Lorenz will return them back to that parking lot.

With almost 900,000 rides last year, we had no accessible complaints about our bus transportation. You can look up the State Fair bus locations at www.mnstatefair.org. All of our park and ride lots are monitored from 8:00 a.m. to midnight. They are not our property. So we are using other people's property. We will try to section off an area for accessible parking. If it is a church lot you have church volunteers. They may not always have accessible parking.

The buses start at 8:00 a.m. and run continually. Midday to late day we end up with traffic congestion at the fairgrounds. The buses may be delayed at the lot. The buses constantly are running. They don't sit and wait. Every lot has a minimum of two buses. Most have three to four. Some of them like the U of M have eight to ten.

Jim Canine from Lorenz spoke to the TAAC committee. For the Oscar Johnson lot, we are running two buses on that lot. We will increase it to three or four buses during peak traffic time. The total number of park and rides that Lorenz operates is 34. Seven has accessible transportation. Oscar Johnson has continuous accessible transportation. We have a total of 85 buses operating. Forty of them are lift equipped buses. Every other bus or every third bus in the schedule is lift equipped. If somebody ends up at another lot, that is handled by the lot manager who can call for a lift equipped bus. We are usually able to provide ADA service within 15 to 20 minutes depending on traffic or the ADA passenger can get directions to another lot.

Lorenz provides ADA rides on the northeast, west and south areas. We chose the lots by where they unload the passengers. Roseville High School on the east and north and the University of Minnesota are the highest volume lots. Nearly half of the rides come from these two locations. If somebody ends up at another lot and needs a ride, we dispatch a bus. Every year we are increasing the ADA fleet by between five and ten buses. It will probably never be 100 percent ADA buses. But it will be 80 to 85 percent within three to five years as we acquire additional equipment.

The buses hold four to five wheelchair spaces. The scooters will have two to three spaces on a bus. Drivers check the lifts before they leave in the morning.

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. All of our (Metro Transit) buses are accessible. The Route 3 and the Route 84 go directly to the State Fair. That is our regular route service. The frequency of the Route 3 is every 10 to 15 minutes. We always put out a lot more Route 3's and 84's for the fair. Our operators are instructed that if they have to pass up someone in a wheelchair to call the control center and we do everything we can to get over there and transport that person.

We also have the Route 960 that travels along Nicollet Mall. It runs every 15 minutes. We have our park and ride lots in 10 locations. Some are every 15 minutes and others are every 30 minutes. It is \$5.00 to ride those express routes. You can purchase advanced tickets on our website.

5. Legislative Update

Mike Kuehn spoke to the TAAC committee. The final solution that closed the gap of the final \$1.4 billion was a combination of shifting and an additional \$700 million in school aid making the shift \$2.1 billion going into the next session, causing school districts to have to issue bonds to make up for the shortfall which will also add costs to their operations. They also did long term borrowing with the Tobacco settlement money for future payments on that which will require bonds to be sold for that. That is the solution they came up with.

What it meant for transit was we ended up closing the \$110 million proposed shortfall in the bill that the legislature passed late in the regular session. They closed that gap down to a loss of general fund revenue of \$52 million, which is still a 40 percent reduction of our general fund that was in the budget on the previous biennium. This means we are going to be receiving from the state in general funds over the next two years \$78 million compared to \$129.9 million that was the base budget from the previous session. We only received \$110 million of that because of budget reductions in the 2010 session. What it means is we are approximately \$52 million short of what is needed to operate the system at its current level.

There are several things that we are going to do to close that gap that will not necessitate significant changes in service. There is a little bit of evaluation of lower performing routes, which we do regardless of the budget conditions. There will not be a fare increase for the first year of the session. We will have to see what the budget forecasts bring next February. We are now in the second month of a two year budget cycle. The budget has to balance at the end of the year.

What the legislation did to close that \$52 million gap is it requires that revenue collected from the quarter cent metro sales tax by the five counties in the metro area that make up the County Transportation Improvement Board that some of the money be allocated to the Council for operations. They were providing 75 percent of current operations for a fixed guideway system for the Northstar and Hiawatha. Now they will have to provide in legislation 75 percent of the operating costs for all the fixed guideways, which include not only Hiawatha and Northstar but also include the I-35W BRT and the Cedar Avenue as that gets going in the next two years. These funds can only be expended in the five counties that are part of the County Improvement Board participation, which includes the counties with the exception of Carver and Scott in the metro area.

This change will allow about \$15.3 million more revenue. The CTIB board, which is the county commissioners, are not happy with this because that money is originally designated to help with capital improvements of growing the system. That is what the legislature decided. They also in legislation require the Council to reduce the financial assistance to suburban transit providers commonly known as the Opt Out programs in the amount of approximately \$3.3 million over the two years. They also require the revenues for the Opt Outs be held at the 2011 level, which is also about a \$3.9 million reduction for the Opt Outs, which closes the gap about \$7.2 million.

How we close that \$52 million gap is administrative cuts to the Met Council - \$3 million. Using reserve funds of the Council - \$3.3 million. The cuts to suburban Opt Outs – funding at the 2011 level plus hold backs of the \$3.3 million in legislation – which is \$7.2 million. A contingency appropriation from the Central Corridor - \$2.8 million. Council federal funds – transferring from capital to operations - \$6.5 million. The CTIB one time transfer from the County Improvement Board to pay 75 percent of the fixed

guideway operations - \$15.3 million. Another \$8.3 million comes out of the Council's balances in what is called the RALF Fund (Road Acquisition Loan Fund) to preserve right-of-ways for future highway expansion. We do a small regional property tax levy for that. Some of that has not been used in recent years. We do have a reserve in there. We are looking at \$3 million savings in evaluating and making changes to the lower performing routes. A Met Council contribution of \$2.3 million. This gets us to \$51.7 million, which basically closes the \$52 million gap in funding. That is presuming that during the next two years the Motor Vehicle Sales Tax revenues will hit as forecast. It has not in the nine of the 10 years. It is also presuming that the state budget will continue to perform at the current level of revenue collections.

The next state budget cycle is estimated to have about a \$3 billion projected shortfall.

We did get the regional authorization to issue \$35 million in regional bonds for transit capital expenditures as laid out in the Council's Transit Capital Improvement Plan. That will give us about \$100 million for transit capital. Many of these purchases take a couple of years. This will get us through the next 2½ years of our capital purchases. A lot of this is fleet replacement. Some of it is park and ride improvements and ramp improvements. It is a lot of things we work on to capitalize the service and make it work. Some of it is computer purchases and Metro Mobility vehicle purchases. It is all laid out in a capital plan five years in advance.

The Transportation Finance Bill also has language in there that will require for new capital projects a request from the legislature that involves state funds to build transit guideway projects. A state agency or political subdivision including the Council must provide a summary financial plan for the project. This plan must include capital expenditures and funding sources for the project with a breakdown by committed and proposed sources of funding. It is a statewide agreement but most of the impact is on the metro for that. That report will be pulled together and issued by November of each odd numbered year. The first one is due January 15, 2012. Thereafter it is due in November of the odd number of years by MnDOT. Then we have to collaborate on doing that report with them.

In addition as part of the agreement with the governor, the legislature agreed to do a bonding bill this year. It was about half a billion dollars of which the Council is receiving \$25 million in bonding appropriations. Five million dollars of that is for the metro park systems. Twenty million dollars is for transit capital improvement. It is allowing the Council to designate where the funds will go for particular projects. But it does mention specific projects that we have to focus on and it can only be on those projects. The language provides \$20 million to the Council or for the Council to grant to the Anoka, Dakota, Hennepin, Ramsey or Washington Regional Rail Authorities to perform environmental studies, preliminary engineering, acquire property, design or construct transitway facilities for the following projects: The Northstar City of Ramsey station, which has not been built but is in the plan, the Gateway Corridor, which is the I- 94 East from Saint Paul to Hudson, the Minneapolis Interchange Facility, which is the facility being proposed where the Southwest, the Hiawatha/Central and Northstar will be coming together near the new ballpark area, the Red Rock Corridor, a Newport Park and Ride station, the Rush Line Corridor, the Robert Street Corridor, the I-35W South BRT and the Cedar Avenue BRT. Those are the projects we can designate the funding for out of the \$20 million in state bonds to advance those projects.

In addition in that bonding bill there was an appropriation to the University of Minnesota of \$12.5 million to design, construct, furnish and equip the relocated biomedical nuclear magnetic resonance imaging facility. And to mitigate impacts on other research laboratories associated with the Central Corridor LRT line for costs not covered by the Central Corridor project budget. That is part of the continuing agreement that Peter Bell worked out about a year ago with the University of Minnesota.

They passed all of their major appropriation bills after the agreement. The only rider language for money in the direct appropriation of the general fund is \$140,000 a year which was in previous legislation to implement a free bus pass program for disabled veterans. The continuation of services for all of the things we provide service for should continue as is.

The federal funding program for transportation for both transit and highway systems is up for reauthorization. They have been debating it for over a year.

The funds that the Opt Outs receive will be lessened to meet the funding gap. They will be held to the funding level they received in fiscal year 2011, which is \$3.9 million less than what they anticipated they were going to receive this year. Then also there is under the language in this bill is what is called a “hold back” of \$3.3 million more that they won’t get in payment as well. Part of that is based on the state auditor’s study of transit governance that came out in January or February of this year. It showed that several of the suburban programs have significant reserves. The Maple Grove program had enough reserves to run their entire program for almost three years. They have been asked to spend down their reserves.

The CTIB (County Transportation Improvement Board) has money that is used to build transitways. They have been helping to pay the operating costs of the Hiawatha and the Northstar. Now they are being asked to pay \$15.3 million more for transit operations (LRT, BRT and the commuter rail) just for the next two year budget cycle. They receive money from the quarter cent metro sales tax.

6. Finalize TAAC By-Laws

Chair Ron Biss spoke to the TAAC committee. What the committee received in print was what the committee agreed on. We do have one change. Elvira Barnes-Wycough from AARP discussed the change. Imdieke Cross moved to accept the By-Laws. Daniels seconded the motion. The motion carried. The current DRAFT will be brought to the Metropolitan Council for approval.

7. Task Force Update-CCLRT

Chair Biss said that new member Chad McGuire will be taking on Rozanne Severance’s position with the Central Corridor.

Bruce Lattu spoke with the TAAC committee. He will be sending out updates on the Capitol area. They do have a complaint process and a hot line number. If there are any concerns or complaints, call the hot line number 651-602-1404.

8. Metro Mobility Statistics

David Russell spoke to the TAAC committee. From May to June the system ridership was up about 5,000 to 116,895. The system trips per hour is up from 2.44 to 2.46. The demand service ridership is up from May to June to 86,354. The demand service number of passenger trips per revenue hour is 1.82. Demand service ADA denials is 0. Demand service STS denials is 0. Demand service percent of customer no shows is 2.6 percent. Demand service percentage of customer cancels is 16.3 percent. Demand service ride time performance is 88.16. Demand service average weekday demand for rides is 3,383. Demand service percentage of on time performance 97.51. Demand service accidents 0. Demand service total number of complaints is 39. Demand service revenue hours up 47,468. Agency service ridership 30,541. Agency service number of passenger trips per revenue hour 3.7.

9. Member Comment

Indieke Cross asked about electrical outlets for the accessible seating on the Northstar train. Steffen said she would look into it.

Indieke Cross asked about door to door service for Metro Mobility drop offs at parks. She asked about waivers for door to door service. Several members on the committee would like to see more flexibility with the requirement since it is a state requirement, not a federal requirement. She would like it to be added to a future TAAC agenda.

Schatzlein asked about putting the wheelchair symbol on the entrance of the car that has the two wheelchair slots and the flip up seats on the LRT. He also talked about snow removal on the LRT tracks.

Pam Steffen spoke to the TAAC committee. She said she would address those issues with the Metro Transit staff.

10. Public Comment

None.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 2:23 p.m.