

Metropolitan Council

Metro Transit Heywood Chambers, 560 Sixth Avenue North, Minneapolis MN 55411

Meeting of the Transportation Committee

Monday, August 22, 2011

Members Present	Steve Elkins, Chair Lona Schreiber, Vice Chair Edward Reynoso	James Brimeyer John Đoàn Jennifer Munt	Jon Commers Adam Duininck Roxanne Smith
Members Absent	(None)		
Staff Presiding	Brian Lamb, General Manager Metro Transit	Arlene McCarthy, Director Metropolitan Transportation Services	
TAB Liaison	Robert Lilligren		

CALL TO ORDER

A quorum was present when Committee Chair Elkins called the regular meeting of the Transportation Committee to order at 4:02 p.m. on August 22, 2011 at Metro Transit Heywood Chambers, Minneapolis.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Chair Elkins suggested that in the interest of time information item #3, Midtown Corridor Update, be deferred to a future meeting. A motion was then made by Smith, seconded by Commers to adopt the amended agenda for the August 22, 2011 Transportation Committee meeting. Motion carried.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A motion was made by Schreiber, seconded by Duininck to approve the minutes from the August 8, 2011 Transportation Committee meeting. Motion carried.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION – Metro Transit

General Manager Brian Lamb commended the operations team of the Blue Line (Hiawatha) light rail for their response to the August 5 service disruption and system equipment damage. Due to a large power surge resulting from detached catenary wire, a fire in a signal bungalow at Target Field destroyed a number of the wires leading into it. Communications were lost to critical system components in the station area. Staff worked continually to repair the wiring, and despite the extensive damage, repairs were complete and all communications restored within two and a half days.

Brian Funk, Assistant Director Bus Transportation, introduced South garage bus operator Anna Penland. Ms. Penland started with Metro Transit in 1983 as a bus operator. In 2000 she left to work in another large transit agency out of state but returned in 2008. Since then Ms. Penland has become a Peer Support member and a Relief Instructor and has earned an Essential Supervisor Certificate through LOD. To date she has received 22 customer commendations, and most recently was instrumental in helping other operators set up and use the Council's new Employee Self Service tool. Chair Elkins and General Manager Lamb offered their thanks and congratulations and presented Ms. Penland with a plaque commemorating her achievement.

METRO TRANSIT GENERAL MANAGER REPORT

Brian Lamb, General Manager, Metro Transit, reported the following:

With the Minnesota State Fair kicking off on Thursday, August 25, Metro Transit is looking forward to serving fairgoers again as part of a long and proud tradition. This year service to half a million customers to and from the fair is anticipated. More details will be provided in an information item to be presented later in the meeting.

Northstar Commuter Rail and BNSF Railway have worked out an agreement to serve every pre-season and regular season Vikings home game as well as any post-season home games. Special trains will be offered to those games where the regular Northstar schedule doesn't line up with the game time. Northstar customers can easily transfer to Hiawatha trains at Target Field station and get off right at the Dome. Details for all Metro Transit options to games are available at www.metrotransit.org/Vikings

Systems staff from Hiawatha light rail recently moved into the new rail support facility located about one-half mile south of the current operations and maintenance facility near Franklin Avenue station in Minneapolis. Staff from the Signal & Communications, Track, and Traction Power departments are relocating. The move frees up space at the Franklin location to accommodate an expanded overhaul program, new light-rail vehicles and staff.

From January through July, 2011, Metro Transit's two Customer Advocates have given 510 "How to Ride" presentations to nearly 8,100 participants. The Advocates travel to locations throughout the metro area to present basic transit riding information to seniors, students, disabled persons, worship-based groups, immigrants, those in need of social services and other groups. On average there are 15 people in a group. Any groups or individuals interested in learning more are encouraged to contact Customer Relations.

Representatives from transit agencies in both the southern and the eastern U.S. visited Metro Transit during the week of August 15. Leaders of Tulsa Transit took bus and facility tours to learn about bus operations unique to the Twin Cities such as the bus-only shoulder network, the express corridor of Marquette and Second Avenues and the on-freeway stop at I-35W & 46th Street station. The second visit was from Maryland Transit Authority (MTA) to discuss use of technology in operations, fare collection and customer communications. MTA is considered a peer transit system and is evaluated and compared with the Twin Cities. Feedback from both agencies indicates that they found the exchanges very valuable.

METROPOLITAN TRANSPORTATION SERVICES DIRECTOR REPORT

Arlene McCarthy, Director, MTS, stated that there was no report for this meeting.

BUSINESS

Consent Items

None.

Non-Consent Items

INFORMATION: Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (Green Line) Project Update

Mark Fuhrmann, Metro Transit Deputy General Manager, presented a status report accompanied by photographs of the ongoing construction activity for the Central Corridor (Green Line) project. CM Brimeyer asked whether FTA is funding half the street improvement costs, and Fuhrmann replied that yes, that was part of the original project scope. CM Reynoso commended the planning efforts and the rate at which the project is advancing. CM Smith asked whether data is tracked on minority contractor participation. Fuhrmann replied that it is, although not included in today's presentation; he noted that the project goal for DBE participation is 15 percent and that the two main contractors continue to build toward that level. CM Duininck inquired about the timing of the release of contingency funds. Fuhrmann responded that the funds are released at each 20 percent increment of completion and that more detail will be provided at the September 12 meeting. In response to a further comment from CM Duininck about earlier issues noted, Fuhrmann responded that a record is being kept of issues to review as contingency funds are released.

2011-219 Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (Green Line): Subordinate Funding Agreements with the City of Minneapolis

Mark Fuhrmann presented the business item. There were no questions from committee members and no further discussion.

Motion by Reynoso, seconded by Duinick:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute Subordinate Funding Agreement (SFA) #9 under the existing Master Funding Agreement to reimburse the City of Minneapolis for water inspection and construction services for an amount not to exceed \$350,000.

Motion passed.

Hearing no objection, Chair Elkins stated that this item could proceed to the full Council as a Consent Item.

2011-211 SW 2011-2014 TIP Amendment Request from Metropolitan Council for Central Corridor Light Rail (Green Line) Construction (TAB Action 2011-54)

MTS Transportation Coordinator Kevin Roggenbuck presented the business item. There were no questions from committee members and no further discussion.

Motion by Smith, seconded by Duinick:

That the Metropolitan Council concur with the Transportation Advisory Board (TAB) action to amend the 2011-2014 Transportation Improvement Program (TIP) to include \$45 million in Section 5309 New Starts Allocations for Central Corridor Light Rail Transit (CCLRT) Construction in St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Motion passed.

INFORMATION: SFY 2012-2013 Biennial Budget Solutions and Suburban Transit Provider MVST Allocations
Metropolitan Council Chief Financial Officer Wes Kooistra presented a summary of the impact of the 2012-2013 transportation funding bill on the Council's 2011 operating budget. Chair Elkins asked about the issue posed by SouthWest Transit. Staff responded that SouthWest wanted to transfer some of its federal fund allocation to operating funds but was notified that the Council would not replenish those funds or acknowledge the transfer. CM Brimeyer asked whether transferring capital funds to operating was allowable under federal regulations. Staff responded that using the funds for preventive maintenance can be considered an investment in capital. CM Commers asked whether once the Council reaches the statutory 36 percent maximum contribution from motor vehicle sales tax (MVST) revenues it will begin to decrease. Staff replied that although the Council's share of proceeds won't go down, the overall MVST revenue is decreasing. CM Commers asked whether a new long-term source of revenue had been identified. Staff responded that options were currently being studied. Dave Jacobson, Chief Operating Officer of SouthWest Transit, addressed the committee to reiterate SWT's previously stated desire to retain \$1.3 million of its funds for capital projects. CM Munt proposed a recommendation from the committee that staff work to find a way to assist SWT with its capital fund cash flow now with the understanding that SouthWest would reimburse the Council when they next received federal funds.

2011-205 2011 Unified Operating Budget Amendment

Ed Petrie, Metro Transit Director of Finance, and MTS Financial Analyst Sean Pfeiffer presented the item. CM Duinick asked what examples would be of administrative reductions to offset deficits. Staff responded that these reductions could include decreases in cost of fuel and parts and perhaps looking at deferring the staffing of vacant positions. CM Brimeyer asked whether the increase in CTIB contributions was temporary. Staff replied that yes, it is a one-time-only increase through the biennium. CM Smith noted that while the business item document listed no known opposition, there has in fact been ample opposition expressed and the document should be amended to reflect that. CM Commers asked whether providing assistance to a suburban provider with cash flow is unprecedented. Staff responded that it is not typical but is not unprecedented. CM Reynoso asked how the wording of the statute was communicated to the suburban providers. Staff replied that informational material was sent out and that they had also met with the governing board of the Minnesota Valley Transit Authority and with the Suburban Transit Association. CM Smith noted that she and CFO Kooistra will be meeting with Maple Grove Transit on Wednesday, August 24, to further clarify. Meetings with other providers may be scheduled as well.

Motion by Munt, seconded by Smith:

That the Council amend the 2011 Unified Operating Budget in accordance with the table attached to the original business item.

Motion passed.

2011-206 2011 Unified Capital Program Amendment

Ed Petrie presented the business item. There were no questions from committee members. CM Reynoso noted that moving forward with the Ramsey station for Northstar commuter rail was a very positive development.

Motion by Smith, seconded by Reynoso:

That the Metropolitan Council:

- Amend the 2011 Authorized Capital Program (multi-year authorization) by adding spending authority as follows:

Metro Transit-New/Continuing	\$63,972,843
Metro Transit-Completed	(12,560,953)
Metro Transit-Net Change in Authorization	\$51,411,890
- Amend the 2011 Capital Budget (annual appropriation) by increasing appropriation as follows:

Metro Transit	\$39,643,683
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Motion passed.

2011-221 Authorization to Purchase 41 40-Foot Replacement Buses

Jan Homan, Metro Transit Director of Bus Maintenance, presented the item. CM Smith asked why the entire fleet is not hybrid. Staff responded that hybrid buses are more expensive than standard diesel buses and are most efficient on city routes due to the technology, while standard buses are more efficient on the longer-distance, express routes. CM Schreiber asked how the buses being replaced are disposed of. Staff replied that they are put up for sale. Chair Elkins asked whether there is information on the Metro Transit website about the difference in emissions levels for hybrid buses versus standard. Staff replied that the information will be there soon if it isn't already. CM Đoàn asked what the term was of the purchase contract. Staff responded that it was a five-year contract, although it could be extended to a sixth year as long as orders were placed before the end of year five.

Motion by Đoàn, seconded by Schreiber:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to exercise an existing contract option with Gillig Corporation to purchase 41 forty-foot, low-floor transit buses in an amount not to exceed \$23,537,561.

Motion passed.

Hearing no objection, Chair Elkins stated that this item could proceed to the full Council as a Consent Item.

2011-234 Amendment of Business Item 2011-201, Northstar Locomotive Purchase

Ed Byers, Director of Commuter Rail Operations, presented the business item. There were no questions from committee members.

Motion by Schreiber, seconded by Commers:

Amendment of Business Item 2010-201, approved on June 9, 2010, by \$112,813, authorizing the Regional Administrator to negotiate and execute a purchase agreement with the Utah Transit Authority for an MP-36 locomotive in the not-to-exceed amount of \$2,798,536 to a new not-to-exceed amount of \$2,911,349.

Motion passed.

Hearing no objection, Chair Elkins stated that this item could proceed to the full Council as a Consent Item.

2011-232 Authorization to Amend Supplemental Funding Grant Agreement with Minnesota Valley Transit Authority
Sean Pfeiffer, MTS Financial Analyst, presented the item. There were no questions from committee members. Arlene McCarthy noted that MVTA is very appreciative of the additional funding.

Motion by Munt, seconded by Smith:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to amend Supplemental Transit Operating Funding grant agreement (SG-2011-001) with Minnesota Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) to increase the grant amount by \$729,000 for a revised total of \$2,679,000.

Motion passed.

Hearing no objection, Chair Elkins stated that this item could proceed to the full Council as a Consent Item.

2011-220 Authorization to Execute Grant Agreement with Minnesota Valley Transit Authority for Cedar Avenue BRT Station Construction

MTS Planner Cole Hiniker presented the business item. There were no questions from committee members and no further discussion.

Motion by Reynoso, seconded by Munt:

That the Metropolitan Council authorize the Regional Administrator to execute a grant agreement with Minnesota

Valley Transit Authority (MVTA) for an amount up to \$3,543,691 for design and construction of two walk-up stations on Cedar Avenue BRT.

Motion passed.

Hearing no objection, Chair Elkins stated that this item could proceed to the full Council as a Consent Item.

2011-233 Approval of the Draft Transitway Guidelines for Public Comment

Cole Hiniker and MTS Senior Planner Mary Karlsson presented the item. CM Brimeyer asked when the public comment period would be over. Staff responded that it was anticipated to be late November or early December, 2011. CM Munt asked how partners would be aware of the guidelines, and what would happen if the guidelines were violated. Staff replied that the guidelines are posted on the Council's website and that there are Council representatives on each of the projects. They stated that any deviations noted would trigger a conversation with the project's lead agency and all funding partners. CM Schreiber commended the Transitway Guidelines committee on its work and also noted that the proposed Ramsey station did meet the guidelines.

Motion by Schreiber, seconded by Reynoso:

That the Metropolitan Council adopt the Draft *Regional Transitway Guidelines* for the purpose of soliciting public comments. The Draft *Regional Transitway Guidelines* will be available for public review and comment at the Web address below or by requesting a copy from the Metropolitan Council Data Center:

<http://www.metrocouncil.org/planning/transportation/transitways/RegionalTransitwayGuidelinesDraftAug2011.pdf>

Motion passed.

INFORMATION

1. State Fair Update

Metro Transit Market Development Specialist Kelci Stones and Assistant Manager of Street Operations Lee Bennett presented an overview of transit involvement in the State Fair, including staffing and equipment requirements, projected ridership levels, express service sites and marketing and advertising plans. Chair Elkins asked how the extra buses required were provided. Bennett replied that some of the buses were recently received new ones and others were buses whose scheduled retirement was deferred until after fair service was completed. CM Doan asked how the shuttle service (park-free-ride-free) was funded and how express sites were selected. Staff responded the Minnesota State Fair funded the free shuttle service and solicited bids from providers. The location of express service sites is determined by demand and capacity levels and by existing traffic issues that would be mitigated by the service. CM Munt asked whether there is a means to determine how many customers who try State Fair express service go on to use regular route service after the fair. Stones stated that this year surveys are being distributed in an effort to track that information. CM Reynoso asked whether all of the State Fair operator hours are worked as overtime. Bennett responded that most of it was. Lamb clarified that these labor costs were funded by fare revenues and that no additional public subsidy is necessary.

2. Northstar Update

Ed Byers, Director of Commuter Rail, presented an overview of the Northstar commuter rail service and provided an update on ridership numbers, schedule changes and current status of the proposed Ramsey station. CM Reynoso asked about the status of the possibility of adding a midday run to the schedule on weekdays. Byers responded that it was still being explored with BNSF; one option under consideration is substituting some of the weekend service, which historically has lower ridership, for midday service on weekdays. CM Brimeyer asked how much the Council currently pays BNSF under its contract. Byers replied that the amount is just under \$6 million per year and includes the operation of the trains and track maintenance. CM Lilligren asked whether the line could be considered to be underperforming and what was being done to increase ridership. Byers noted that daily ridership is currently around 2,400, an increase over 2010, and that on-time performance consistently averages in the high-90 percent range. Ongoing outreach efforts have included a direct-mail campaign to residences in the corridor and free-ride days at the one-year anniversary of the opening of the line.

3. Electric Vehicles Plug-In Stations Funding

Fran Crotty and Kevin McDonald of the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency presented information about a proposed project for development of a system of charging stations for electric vehicles in the metropolitan area. Stemming from the goals of a coalition called Drive Electric Minnesota, the project's intent is to install 76 publicly available charging

stations in high-density areas. Ms. Crotty and Mr. McDonald outlined the benefits of EV use and projected sales over the next five years and gave examples of vehicles that will be available to consumers as well as an EV already in use by the St. Paul Parks Department. Also shown were examples of charging stations and signage as well as the planned locations of the stations. Chair Elkins asked whether existing outlets such as those in the Bloomington municipal parking ramp could be used for this purpose. MPCA responded that while it was possible, a standard outlet at 110V could take 15 to 20 hours to fully charge a vehicle, whereas the 240V (Level 2) connector proposed for the charging stations would typically require only 3 to 4 hours. CM Đòàn asked how individuals would pay for the service. Ms. Crotty replied that stations could be designed so that customers could swipe something such as a key fob or a credit card. Various committee members noted that they had heard concerns about whether EV use would ultimately threaten the revenues received from the motor vehicle sales tax and whether promoting this technology could be construed as government interfering with the free market.

OTHER BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

Chair Elkins adjourned the Transportation Committee meeting at 6:52 p.m. August 22, 2011.

Respectfully submitted,
Liz Maday, Recording Secretary