

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting date: June 4, 2025

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

- Chair, David Fenley, at large
- Vice Chair, Darrell Paulsen, Precinct F
- Sam Jasmine, Precinct A
- Patsy Murphy, Precinct C
- Ken Rodgers, Precinct D
- Jeffrey Dains, Precinct E
- Kari Sheldon, Precinct G

- Michele Severson, MCD
- Erik Henricksen, MCD
- Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- Heidi Myhre, MCCD
- Claudia Fuglie, MCCD

Ex-officio:

- Andy Streasick, Metro Mobility
- Julie Seller, Metro Mobility Service Center
- Douglas Cook, Metro Transit Customer Advocate
- Anjuli Cameron, Metropolitan Council

= present, E = excused

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Metropolitan Council acknowledges that the land we currently call Minnesota and specifically the seven-county region is the ancestral homeland of the Dakota Oyate who are present and active contributors to our thriving region. As part of the Metropolitan Council's commitment to address the unresolved legacy of genocide, dispossession, and settler colonialism and the fact that government institutions, including the Metropolitan Council, benefitted economically, politically, and institutionally after the forceable removal of the Dakota Oyate, the Metropolitan Council is dedicated to instilling Land, Water, and People Commitments in regional policy. These commitments support the Dakota Oyate, the eleven federally recognized Tribes in Minnesota, Ho-Chunk Nation, and the American Indian Communities representing over 150 diverse Tribal Nations that call the seven-county region home.

Call to order

A quorum not being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:35 p.m.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was read by Council Member Henricksen.

Business and information items

1. Bus Overhead Sign guidelines presented by Nathan Bakken from Metro Transit. Bakken presented on proposed guidelines to standardize overhead bus signs across the Metro Transit fleet. The purpose of the project is to improve consistency in what is displayed, including destinations, street names, abbreviations, symbols, and font sizes. The goal is to help riders quickly identify their bus while waiting at stops.

The proposals include setting a default of two rotating panels, with three panels allowed only in cases of space constraints. The intention is to reduce the chance that a rider misses key information while the sign is rotating. Street abbreviations would follow the U.S. Postal Service standards, and the words "rapid" and "limited stop" would be removed from signs, though "express" would be retained since it identifies a distinct fare type. Signage would list the

primary street first, followed by the end destination. In addition, references to “Downtown” would be replaced with “Downtown Minneapolis” or “Downtown St. Paul” to provide clarity for new riders.

Committee members discussed whether the word “Line” should continue to be included for lettered bus rapid transit routes such as the A Line and B Line. One option is to keep the current approach, where “Line” is spelled out, while another option is to display only the letter to save space and allow larger fonts. Some members supported retaining “Line” to avoid confusion with route numbers, such as the 18B, and to preserve consistency. Others noted that excluding “Line” would provide more space for destinations and was visually cleaner. There was also discussion of color BRT lines such as the Red Line and Orange Line, which already omit the word “Line” on signs due to hardware space limitations.

Members also provided feedback on formatting and readability. Several noted a preference for consistency in bolding and font sizes across the front, side, and rear displays, and found highlighted text on the front displays helpful in distinguishing route names from destinations. Concerns were raised about visibility issues when signage lights are dim or partially out, as well as potential misinterpretation when single letters resemble route numbers. Participants emphasized the importance of signage that remains clear and accessible to riders with vision impairments.

Regarding the proposal to remove “rapid” and “limited stop,” some members questioned whether riders would still be able to identify limited-stop service. Nathan clarified that Metro Transit no longer uses the same route number for both local and limited-stop service. Current limited-stop routes are either numbered differently, such as the 59 instead of the 10, or are operated as BRT lines. This means that the terms “rapid” and “limited stop” do not convey essential information, and removing them allows the display to focus more on destinations and major streets.

The committee did not make a formal decision but provided feedback in support of greater consistency, clarity, and minimizing the number of rotating panels. Members expressed general agreement with retaining important identifiers such as “express” and noted the potential value of keeping “Line” for lettered BRT routes.

2. Bus Announcement System Updates presented by Melissa Bisilia from Metro Transit. She explained that one of the key issues identified in 2023 was that approximately 5% of announcements were being interrupted when passengers requested a stop, causing riders to miss wayfinding information. To address this, staff tested a change on a single bus in late 2023, piloted it on the A Line in early 2024, and then expanded it systemwide beginning in April. Under the new approach, a stop request no longer interrupts an announcement; instead, the “stop requested” chime plays immediately afterward. Feedback from riders, operators, and members of the committee indicated little to no confusion, and the change has now been implemented across the fleet.

Bisilia reported that staff are conducting ongoing audits of announcement accuracy. In the first quarter of 2024, 399 announcements were audited, with an 84% pass rate. Most issues were concentrated on a few buses rather than being widespread, but committee members emphasized the importance of raising the pass rate above the mid-80s to better support riders who rely entirely on auditory cues. In the second quarter, audits shifted toward local routes with high ridership, and data checks are being performed in the transit master system to ensure correct naming of streets, landmarks, and points of interest. Staff are also working to address occasional errors in phrasing, such as when a stop is announced at the wrong cross street, by updating the internal phrase-maker tool used to generate announcements.

Looking ahead, Metro Transit is exploring strategic improvements. These include adopting text-to-speech technology for faster and more flexible audio content production, centralizing management of bus, train, platform, and annunciator audio files to keep them accurate and up to date, and continuing to evaluate accessibility tools such as Aira, which provides live visual interpretation support for riders with vision impairments. Staff are also reviewing options for



improving technology on buses and platforms to better support navigation for riders with disabilities.

Committee members asked questions about the audit methodology, how errors are detected and corrected, and whether long-term detours are incorporated into announcements. Bisilia clarified that announcement data is updated quarterly, with mid-quarter changes made for long detours when possible, though updates require buses to return to garages for system syncing. Members also discussed whether operators could play a greater role in reporting errors, though Bisilia noted operators already have many responsibilities and that technology improvements may be a more sustainable solution.

She concluded by stressing that bus announcements are a primary wayfinding tool for riders with vision impairments and that Metro Transit is committed to improving accuracy, consistency, and reliability to make the system more accessible.

3. Metro Mobility Performance Update presented by Julie Sellner, Metro Mobility customer service manager. She noted that while the committee had received a full presentation last month, going forward, detailed annual updates would be provided, with monthly meetings focusing on performance metrics. She shared that Metro Mobility's year-to-date on-time performance was 93.5% across 669,000 trips, with 43,500 late pickups. Appointment time performance stood at 93.4%, with 1,700 early arrivals and 11,600 late arrivals. Onboard time performance was 97.3%, though about 18,000 trips exceeded the maximum allowed travel time.

Breaking the data down, ADA trips had a 93.6% on-time performance rate, with 31,000 late pickups, and a 93.9% appointment time performance, with 1,200 early and 7,900 late arrivals. Onboard time for ADA service was 96.9%, with 14,900 trips running too long. Non-ADA service had similar results, with 93.4% on-time performance and 3,375 trips exceeding onboard time limits. Sellner emphasized that although performance is strong overall, there is always room for improvement, particularly from the perspective of riders whose trips fall outside of the standards.

Committee members expressed appreciation for the detailed numbers and for separating early and late arrivals. They suggested that monthly data comparisons would help identify trends more clearly. Discussion followed about which data points should be tracked and shared. Sellner explained that Metro Mobility collects hundreds of data points, though the most critical to daily operations are on-time performance, onboard time, appointment time, and productivity. She agreed to bring additional potential data points, such as customer complaints, incidents, and no-show rates, for future committee review.

Committee members stressed interest in data that reflects the rider experience, including validated complaints and other customer-focused measures. Sellner noted that daily no-shows and cancellations significantly affect efficiency, as drivers lose time traveling to missed pickups. She also explained how routing decisions can sometimes appear inefficient to riders but are made to balance multiple appointment needs.

Further discussion touched on vehicle downtime, routing challenges, and software limitations. Selner acknowledged that while the system is strong, human error and operational realities still lead to occasional inefficiencies. She confirmed that driver shortages are improving, and that the vehicle fleet has been significantly renewed, with 75% of buses now between model years 2023–2025. She also highlighted that there have been zero denials for ADA and non-ADA trips so far this year.

Committee members shared personal experiences with long or inefficient trips, and Selner emphasized that every complaint is reviewed to determine whether issues stem from routing, driver error, or technical problems. She acknowledged that even with high overall performance rates, the experience of individuals who encounter delays must remain a focus.



Public invitation

No public comment

Member comment

Member Thorsen stated that she participated in a focus group for Metro Mobility at the Wilder Center. She stated that it was very helpful to heard from a lot of different users with different needs.

Member Hendricksen suggested that a card be sent around thanking former Member Christopher Bates for his service to the TAAC.

Vice-chair Paulsen had a negative experience on the bus 54 and shared it with the committee.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:02p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee meeting of June 4, 2025.

Approved this 3rd day of September 2025.

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