

Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



Meeting date: February 4, 2026

Time: 12:30 PM

Location: 390 Robert Street

Members present:

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

- Michele Severson, MCD
- Erik Henricksen, MCD
- Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- Heidi Myhre, MCCD
- Claudia Fuglie, MCCD
- Chris Leifeld, AARP MN

Ex-officio:

- Scottie Carter, Metro Mobility
- Julie Sellner, 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 being present, Committee Chair Fenley called the regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee to order at 12:30 p.m.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was read by committee member Sheldon.

Agenda approved

It was moved by member Paulsen, seconded by member Thorsen to approve the agenda. Committee members did not have any comments or changes to the agenda. **Motion carried.**

Approval of minutes

It was moved by member Fuglie, seconded by member Thorsen to approve the minutes of the January 7, 2026, regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Business and information items

1. TAAC confirmation of new committee Vice-Chair Patty Thorsen. It was moved by member

Fuglie. **Motion carried** with one abstention.

2. Metro Transit staff Nathan Bakken and Melissa Bisila presented an early overview of a proposed **onboard passenger information system** intended to improve real time information on buses and light rail vehicles. The concept involves replacing or upgrading existing simple LED signs with more robust digital screens that could display next stop information, route progress, arrival times, detours, transfer connections, and service alerts. The project is currently in the discovery and requirements phase, with rider research already completed and operational research underway to assess vehicle capabilities, vendor options, scope, and budget. A pilot of two to three technologies is anticipated in 2027, with feedback from the committee planned as part of that evaluation.

Survey findings showed that riders prioritize clear next stop information, understanding where the vehicle is along the route, and timely updates about detours and transfers. Staff emphasized that the goal is to enhance customer experience by providing clearer wayfinding and transit information, particularly for riders who may not use smartphones or are unfamiliar with existing tools. They also noted that current onboard audio announcements would not be eliminated and that the new system is intended to complement, not replace, existing communication channels.

Committee members raised significant accessibility concerns and recommendations. Members stressed that visual screens must not overload riders with information, should use readable font sizes visible throughout the vehicle, and maintain consistent language aligned with existing rider alerts to reduce cognitive burden. Participants emphasized the need to ensure full accessibility for people with visual, hearing, cognitive, and learning disabilities, including maintaining robust audio announcements, considering ASL access, avoiding inconsistent voice changes, and ensuring information is usable by those without smartphones. Concerns were also expressed about whether limited screen placement would restrict access for riders seated farther away or using mobility devices.

Members encouraged Metro Transit to clearly define the purpose and measurable benefit of the system before advancing beyond the pilot phase and welcomed continued engagement. Staff acknowledged the early stage of the project and committed to incorporating accessibility considerations into requirements, testing, and vendor selection, with plans to return for further feedback as the project develops.

3. Metro Transit customer experience staff Jasna Hadzic-Stanek and Tariq Muwahid presented findings and recommendations from a year-long evaluation of **stop-level signage** at tier 2 bus stops, defined as medium-high ridership stops with at least 10 average daily boardings and no shelter. The project was initiated to reassess signage that was last updated in 2017 and to respond to changes in customer information tools, service patterns, and maintenance challenges, including the prior removal of detailed frequency charts during the pandemic due to inconsistencies and upkeep limitations. Staff conducted extensive engagement between May and August 2025, including intercept and online surveys in English, Spanish, and Somali with more than 1,700 responses, pop-up events at community festivals, and focus groups with riders with disabilities, new and lapsed riders, and Spanish- and Somali-speaking community members.

Across engagement methods, participants generally indicated that existing signage meets basic needs, but consistently prioritized clear route numbers, stop numbers, travel direction, and bus frequency information, including span of service. Riders with disabilities emphasized the importance of readable font, strong color contrast, appropriate sign height, and directional clarity using destinations and landmarks. New and lapsed riders highlighted difficulty locating signs and supported including maps and frequency details. Spanish-speaking participants valued translations when text-heavy information is present, while Somali-speaking participants uniquely raised fare information and expressed a preference for confirming information with operators or others at the stop. Survey results largely aligned with focus group findings, with route number, service hours, direction, and stop number ranking highest in importance, while fare information, detours, and closures ranked lower overall.



Based on these findings, staff recommended reintroducing simplified frequency charts organized into four consistent time categories, adding prominent stop names to align with online tools, incorporating location-specific QR codes linking directly to real-time arrival information for each stop, and expanding tier 2 signage to additional locations beyond the current approximately 680 stops. Because producing and installing more than 1,000 new signs would require significant staff capacity, implementation will begin with a pilot at 25 locations in spring 2026, with evaluation of QR code usage, rider feedback, and internal coordination before broader rollout.

Committee discussion focused heavily on real-time information, accessibility, and coordination with other agency initiatives. Member Rodgers highlighted draft goals under the state's Olmstead implementation planning process that prioritize real-time arrival information as especially critical for riders with disabilities and encouraged coordination to align signage improvements with broader accessibility goals. Staff acknowledged the importance of real-time information but noted that this project involves static signs and that QR codes are intended to bridge that gap by linking riders to real-time updates where available.

Members also raised concerns about QR code placement, height, consistency, winter conditions, graffiti, and digital access. Member Paulsen emphasized the need for consistent placement across signs and accessibility for shorter riders or those with mobility limitations. Member Myhre raised questions about outreach to additional communities as well as cybersecurity and physical accessibility of sign placement. Staff explained that signs are generally installed at a readable height between approximately three and four feet when possible, that QR codes would be location-specific and securely managed through a vendor, and that maintenance practices include protective overlays and graffiti removal procedures. Additional discussion addressed the importance of keeping information simple, ensuring alternative access such as texting next-trip information remains available, and potentially providing a broader overview of related communication initiatives to show how multiple projects align.

The presentation concluded with confirmation that feedback was being documented and that the pilot phase will allow for further refinement before systemwide implementation.

4. Metro Mobility staff presented a potential **new vehicle option** for the non-wheelchair-accessible portion of the fleet and conducted an in-person garage tour for committee members. Jodi Janssen, senior project administrator for Metropolitan Transportation Services, and fleet manager Paul Colton introduced the Kia EV9, a fully electric, all-wheel-drive SUV that would serve as a counterpart to the Toyota Sienna previously reviewed by the committee. The vehicle has an estimated range of about 280 miles per charge, strong fuel economy equivalency ratings, seating for up to seven passengers, and is manufactured in Georgia. Staff noted that while it includes third-row seating, that row would not be used for clients and would instead house equipment such as onboard technology.

Staff reviewed key dimensions and compared the vehicle to the existing Highlander and Ford Flex models currently in service. The EV9 offers comparable ground clearance, slightly greater height, and increased rear legroom, which could provide additional space for service animals or personal items. Operationally, the vehicle would carry up to three riders at a time, consistent with current practice, and would not require riders to climb into a rear third row. During discussion, staff addressed questions about regenerative braking and ride quality, explaining that while regenerative braking takes some adjustment for drivers, the ride itself is smooth.

Accessibility considerations were a central focus during the tour and follow-up discussion. Members asked about step-in height, the possible use of step stools similar to those used with current Highlanders, and whether running boards would be evaluated for safety and depth before installation. Staff indicated these features would be assessed to ensure safe boarding. Members also commented on the placement and stability of interior grab handles, noting that lower, more secure handles are easier to grasp than overhead ones.



After returning upstairs, members shared initial impressions, with at least one participant reporting they were able to enter, exit, and maneuver across the seat more easily than in a previous vehicle demonstration. Staff indicated that feedback from the tour would inform ongoing evaluation of the vehicle as Metro Mobility continues exploring fleet updates.

Public invitation

No public comment

Member comment

Member Myhre had some positive feedback regarding a Metro Mobility driver.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.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 February 4, 2026.

Approved this 4th day of March 2026.

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