

# Minutes

Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee



**Meeting date:** January 7, 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 Henriksen, MCD
- Patty Thorsen, MAAA
- Heidi Myhre, MCCD
- Claudia Fuglie, MCCD
- Chris Leifeld, AARP MN

## Ex-officio:

- Scottie Carter, Office of Equity and Equal Opportunity
- 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 12:32 p.m.

## Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was read by Chair Fenley.

## Agenda approved

It was moved by member Paulsen, seconded by member Sheldon 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 Sheldon, seconded by member Fuglie to approve the minutes of the December 3, 2025, regular meeting of the Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

## Business and information items

1. A presentation about the **Bronze Line** project from Elizabeth Jones from Metro Transit. It is a restructured and newly renamed successor to the former Purple and Rush Line concepts. Staff explained that after many years of uncertainty, the project is now positioned to move forward, with design restarting later this year following internal restructuring and the addition of new staff. The Bronze Line will run approximately ten miles from Union Depot in downtown St. Paul to the Maplewood Mall Transit Center, replacing earlier plans that extended farther north. The renaming reflects significant changes in scope, alignment, and delivery approach, with a focus on advancing a feasible, community responsive project that fills a long-standing transit gap in the northeast metro.

Staff described the Bronze Line as a reimagined BRT corridor intended to improve transit reliability, safety, and accessibility through a mix of dedicated bus lanes, side running bus lanes, mixed traffic operation, and upgraded stations. The project will include 22 full BRT stations with near level boarding, lighting, heating, and enhanced safety features, all receiving the highest priority for snow removal and daily cleaning. Approximately half of the corridor will operate in some form of bus lane, including a fully exclusive guideway segment parallel to the Bruce Vento Trail, while other segments will rely on side running lanes or transit signal priority. Two new council owned bridges are planned to carry buses and the trail across key crossings, following evaluation of and rejection of at grade alternatives based on community feedback and technical constraints.

The presentation emphasized the corridor's equity and access needs, noting high proportions of BIPOC residents, zero car households, older adults, youth, people with disabilities, and residents with limited English proficiency. Staff highlighted the corridor's role in connecting schools, health care facilities, libraries, and daily destinations, stressing that the project is about all day, two way access rather than traditional peak commuter travel. South of Maryland Avenue, the alignment largely reflects earlier plans and is already at approximately thirty percent design, while major changes occur north of downtown St. Paul, including reconstruction of Pennsylvania Avenue and full roadway reconstruction of Maryland and White Bear Avenues to address longstanding pedestrian safety concerns.

Staff detailed how roadway reconstruction in St. Paul and Maplewood will prioritize safer crossings, reduced vehicle speeds, concrete medians to limit unsafe turning movements, and improved pedestrian infrastructure alongside side running bus lanes. In Maplewood north of Larpenteur Avenue, the project will have a lighter footprint, with no major roadway reconstruction, BRT platforms replacing existing Route 54 stops, ADA improvements at all corners of station intersections, transit signal priority, and an upgraded Maplewood Mall Transit Center. Staff also described how the Bronze Line will integrate with planned service changes under Network Now, including restructuring Route 54, future Route 58 service, additional frequent routes, and a new Metro Micro zone serving Maplewood and nearby destinations.

The committee asked questions about bridge ownership, long term maintenance, alternatives to bridge construction, service continuity to medical destinations, rider communication, accessibility during construction, and how changes would be explained clearly to customers. Staff confirmed that the Metropolitan Council would own the bridges and exclusive guideway, that alternatives had been studied and rejected with community input, and that extensive marketing, outreach, and ambassador support would accompany service changes. Members emphasized the importance of clear wayfinding, accessible construction staging, and proactive communication to prevent riders from being stranded or confused.

Staff also outlined the project's funding and delivery approach, noting that the Bronze Line will be fully locally funded, with Ramsey County covering costs in St. Paul and the Metropolitan Council funding the Maplewood portion. This approach is unprecedented in the region for a project of this scale. To support this structure, the project will use multiple coordinated contracts, including separate contracts for roadway reconstruction, transit elements, and a dedicated strategic communications and community engagement contract. Staff explained that elevating outreach and engagement was intended to ensure consistent messaging,



strong disability access expertise, attention to business impacts, and sustained community presence throughout design and construction.

Committee members raised concerns about safety, cleanliness, heating, lighting, and long term maintenance, particularly given experiences with standard bus stops. Staff acknowledged these concerns and emphasized that full BRT stations are intended to address many of these issues through design, operational standards, and ongoing engagement. The presentation concluded with a request for guidance on how best to involve the committee moving forward, including regular updates, smaller group discussions, corridor tours, and early input on station access and design. Members expressed support for continued engagement and appreciation for renewed momentum on a long awaited project, while underscoring the need to keep accessibility, safety, and rider experience central as the Bronze Line advances.

2. Metro Transit staff provided an update on the **Franklin Avenue light rail station renovation**, building on a previous presentation from late summer. Liz Morice, the project manager, and Kevin Murray, a community engagement specialist, described the station's current condition, noting broken glass, worn elevators, shelter disrepair, and safety concerns. They reported recent interim improvements, including increased supplemental security and efforts to reopen and staff both elevators to improve safety and reliability. The project priorities were reaffirmed and refined based on committee and community feedback, with accessibility, safety, customer experience, neighborhood connections, mobility between modes, and long term sustainability identified as central goals.

Staff outlined the project scope, which includes replacing and rethinking elevators on both sides of the station, improving ramps and street crossings, upgrading the platform canopy and wayfinding, adding warming and cleaning facilities, improving bike and micromobility parking, and incorporating cultural elements and placekeeping. They described extensive technical coordination across Metro Transit, the City of Minneapolis, and Hennepin County, along with site surveys, mobility data analysis, and coordination with transit oriented development efforts. Mobility analysis showed heavy pedestrian activity, particularly from the west, frequent crossings at 17th Avenue and Cedar Avenue, and significant unsafe midblock crossings under the bridge, reinforcing the need for improved pedestrian infrastructure and safer crossings as part of the project.

Multiple station layout concepts were developed and shared with the public, focusing on different configurations of ramps and elevators on the east and west sides of the station. Based on engagement and technical analysis, staff highlighted a leading concept that maintains bus stop locations while improving the northeast ramp connection to Cedar Avenue, redesigning elevators for better visibility and safety, and exploring an additional west side ramp connecting to 17th Avenue. They emphasized the need to continue working with nearby property owners to ensure ramp placement supports future development and neighborhood goals. Additional improvements discussed included expanded sidewalks and lighting under the bridge, a safer and more visible bus waiting area closer to bus stops, clearer fare payment zones, improved sightlines on the platform, and removal of unnecessary equipment to reduce hidden spaces.

Staff summarized an extensive engagement process that included workshops, station popups, meetings with community organizations, an open house at the American Indian Community Center, and a public survey with approximately 125 responses. Consistent themes included safety, cleanliness, accessibility, better lighting, reliable elevators, clearer signage, stronger staff presence, and amenities that reflect and support the surrounding American Indian community. Community members expressed interest in art, greenery, seating, restrooms, water access, and information about local resources. The project has completed its visioning phase and is entering early design, with 30 percent design expected to be shared publicly in February, continued engagement planned through 2026, and construction to follow final design. Committee members emphasized the importance of elevator reliability, sidewalk conditions, lighting, intuitive wayfinding, and a site visit before finalizing ramp locations, and staff committed to continued collaboration and follow up.



3. **Minnesota State Fair** staff presented an overview of accessibility initiatives offered during the 2025 fair, emphasizing that accessibility is a cross departmental priority embedded throughout fair operations. Christine Noonan and Blaire Huneke described a range of services designed to make the fair more inclusive, noting continued growth in usage and feedback driven improvements. They highlighted the fair’s commitment to welcoming all guests and treating accessibility as an evolving effort shaped by guest input, partnerships, and data.

Staff reviewed multiple access services, including continued use of the Aira mobile app to assist guests who are blind or have low vision with navigation, which saw a significant increase in use. ASL services were expanded, with roving interpreters available from morning through evening hours, reflecting feedback from deaf guests who wanted later programming access. Audio description offerings were expanded for fine art and crop art exhibits through QR codes, and captioning continued to be provided for selected shows, with discussion about future options to stream captions directly to personal devices. Committee members provided feedback on the need for richer audio descriptions, broader promotion of navigation tools for people with learning disabilities, and continued outreach to disability communities.

The presentation also covered physical accessibility supports, including the Frasier Sensory Building, which provides a calm and low stimulus space, and mobility equipment rentals through Hometown Mobility, with the highest demand occurring at Gate 16 near the transit hub. Momentum Refresh was highlighted as a critical service, offering a fully accessible restroom with an adult sized changing table, hoist, and additional sensory and lactation space, serving hundreds of guests. Additional adult sized changing tables were discussed, including plans to add one to the renovated Coliseum, with committee members raising safety concerns about tables without lifts and emphasizing the importance of clear communication about where hoists are available.

Staff concluded with a transportation overview, reporting that more than 44 percent of fair attendees arrived by transit, including Metro Transit express buses, suburban express partners, and state fair operated park and ride services. Accessible parking and shuttle services were described, including a dedicated accessible park and ride lot serving Gate 9. Metro Mobility usage declined slightly from the prior year but continued to serve over 1,700 riders. Staff noted that while most accessibility services are offered during the fair, some are also provided at fair produced events outside the fair season, and they encouraged continued feedback through the fair’s accessibility contact line and newsletter.

### **Public invitation**

Alex Elegudin spoke regarding on-demand paratransit services and potential lessons to learn from other transit agencies around the country.

### **Member comment**

Member Paulsen inquired about the vacant vice chair position and interest from committee members. Chair Fenley stated that this will be an agenda item for next month. Member Fuglie stated accessibility concern for buses replacing the Northstar train.

### **Adjournment**

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 2:47 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 January 7, 2026.

Approved this 4th day of February 2026.

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