

Minutes

Equity Advisory Committee



Meeting date: October 21, 2025

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Virtual

Members present:

- Co-Chair, John Pacheco Jr., District 5
- Co-Chair, Carmeann Foster, District G
- Yassin Ossman, District 7
- Dr. Tyrone Carter, District 3
- Toni Carter, District 14
- Michael Luseni, District A
- Vacant, District B

- Samirra Isse, District C
- Anita L. Urvina Davis, District D
- Zakariya Abdullahi, District E
- Vacant, District F
- Vacant, District H
- Vacant, at large

- Mitchel Hansen, at large
- Markeya Knight, at large
- Astrid Benedetto, at large
- Vacant, at large
- Vacant, at large
- Vacant, at large
- = 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, Co-Chair John Pacheco called the regular meeting of the Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:03 p.m.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was read by Co-Chair John Pacheco.

Agenda approved

It was moved by CM Dr Tyrone Carter, seconded by Anita Davis 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 CM Toni Carter, seconded by Co Chair Carmeann Foster to approve the minutes of the September 16, 2025, regular meeting of the Equity Advisory Committee. **Motion carried.**

Public invitation

No conversation here.

Information

Presentation Title-

HR Recruiting and Programmatic Update- Cassandra Tabor, Chief HR Officer/ HR Director

Presentation Overview-

- Expanded workforce development and recruitment efforts across the organization.
- Implemented a unified recruitment strategy to improve hiring timelines and accountability.
- Strengthened Metro Transit hiring through targeted outreach, training, and retention programs.
- Built partnerships with community organizations, faith groups, and schools to grow talent pipelines.
- Improved data systems to better track recruitment outcomes, equity, and workforce trends.

Meeting Notes-

Committee Member:

Let me see, I'm sorry. Is there a place online where we can find the hard numbers for the data on that last slide you showed? Or is that something we would need to request directly from you?

Presenter:

You can access that information directly through the dashboard yourself. If you run into any issues accessing it, just let me know, and I'll make sure one of my staff members helps you.

Committee Member:

Okay, thank you.

Presenter:

Yeah, absolutely.

Committee Member:

Hi, thank you. I'm sorry my screen isn't working very well but I just wanted to say how much I appreciate what you've shared with us tonight. It really feels like we're doing better in many categories and actively working toward our goals. I know there's still a lot to do, but I really want to applaud the progress you've shared.



I do have a couple of specific questions about recruitment. I know you're conducting a number of information sessions across different areas, especially to help Metro Transit staff up. In addition to working with schools on training programs, are we also partnering with community organizations and high schools to make sure people are aware of the work we're doing and the opportunities available — even with an eye toward the future?

I understand the priority is getting people hired now and moving them through pathways and training programs, but are we also making sure young people see Metro Transit as an option by partnering with schools and community organizations? Could you talk a little about that?

Presenter:

Yes, absolutely. Thank you for the question, Council Member.

We work closely with well-established faith-based community groups and cultural community organizations. We also bring employees who are connected to those communities with us voluntarily to speak directly with those groups. They share about their work, talk about available jobs, and help people understand what opportunities exist. That part of the work is very well developed.

My understanding is that years ago maybe even a decade ago the organization tried some high school programming, but it didn't go very well, and there wasn't a lot of satisfaction with it. However, I had really good success with high school engagement in a previous role. When I came on board and started working with Aaron, who leads our workforce development unit, he said he really wished we could build a high school pipeline.

I told him, "Let's do it." We started conversations with Transit and other leaders to identify opportunities, and we worked with OGC to make sure we're doing the right things with young people. Just like you said, it's about making students aware of the positions we have, the type of work we do, and helping them understand those jobs are an option.

We're now in the process of developing a high school internship program. That will support students who want to go straight into the workforce instead of immediately going to college or into one of our other pathways or apprenticeship programs.

One of the photos on the front of the presentation was of Thomas, who leads workforce development. He brought in a group of young kids we jokingly called them "Thomas's Tots" and they toured locations, learned about the work, and heard directly about job opportunities.

This is something I did in a past role too going into schools and talking to young people about careers they don't always hear about. Often in school, you hear teacher, doctor, nurse but not all the other options. So we're really excited about building this high school program, while continuing our faith and cultural community partnerships.

Committee Member:

If I can ask one more question I was really impressed by the week-one retention numbers for Metro Transit. I wanted to clarify something about that. You mentioned CDL training and test prep, and the difference between those who came in without a CDL versus those who already had one.

Are the people attending week one experienced drivers or drivers who already have a CDL? And how does that compare to week zero?

Presenter:

Great question. Week zero is specifically for individuals who do not have a CDL. Week one is for those who already have a CDL but need additional training or support.

Our biggest success is with week zero. In that phase, we're not only teaching the CDL test content we're also transporting participants to the test site and making sure they can actually take the test. They get two official attempts. If they don't pass the first time, they can come back, receive additional programming, and try again.

Some participants choose to take the week-one materials and prepare on their own. We do have people who do that, but the success rate for that group is similar to anyone who walks in off the street — it's significantly lower than those who go through week zero.

Committee Member:

Thank you for clarifying that. I really appreciate it.

And lastly, I just want to say I hear you on the data and how well we're doing in many categories, like internships, POC representation, and women in the workforce. I just want to make sure that progress is happening across all divisions that no one division is carrying the lion's share of that work.

I know there are certain roles, especially at Metro Transit, where physical requirements matter. But I want to make sure opportunities are spread across the organization and that all divisions are engaging in internships, training, and representation efforts. Thank you for keeping that focus.

Presenter:
Absolutely.

Committee Member:

On a related note I'm president of the Latino Chamber of Commerce, and we've been reassessing our workforce efforts. We've received funding from DEED and have been looking at how others recruit and post jobs. Minnesota Council of Nonprofits has a good site, and of course there's Indeed and others.

We'd really like to have government entities post jobs with us as well. We're expanding our reach, especially around Spanish-speaking candidates. We're adding a separate skills-based line focused on Spanish speakers including tellers, healthcare workers, and others.

We're also doing more direct outreach at younger ages, including interns. Our community is often overrepresented in trades and construction, so we're working with Summit and others on that. If you could send opportunities our way, I'll tap your shoulder when our site is fully ready. We're especially focused on Spanish speakers and small businesses, since they do a lot of hiring.

Presenter:
I appreciate that. We work closely with hiring managers, but we've also significantly expanded the list of places where we post jobs over the last two years. We've also made sure we have capacity to attend job fairs.

When HR was understaffed, we couldn't always show up in spaces where people were actively looking for jobs. We're now redirecting efforts to address that and increase visibility.

Committee Member:
I just wanted to ask how people can apply for the positions. The slide showed three vacant positions in workforce development. Is there a direct link? I'd like to send someone a link rather than having them navigate the website and try to figure it out.

Presenter:
Yes, I can send those directly to you. That's not a problem.

Committee Member:
I don't know why my hand keeps going up, but I just want to say kudos on the program. It really seems like a dynamic effort. As someone who's worked in human resources for over 20 years, I can see you're doing a great job.

My question is this: a lot of organizations are struggling to recruit right now. How do you stack up against other organizations in the Twin Cities when it comes to filling vacancies, how long positions stay open, and turnover?

Presenter:
Just to clarify — are you asking about our ability to build a candidate pool and move people through the process?

Committee Member:
Yes how long vacancies stay open, how quickly positions are filled, and things like that.

Presenter:

That's a great question, and it's a major area of opportunity for us.

When I started two years ago, I learned that the way we entered data into our recruitment system didn't allow us to accurately pull timeline information. Demographic data was correct, but we couldn't tell a clear story about recruitment timelines.

In 2024, we rebuilt and tested the system. During the first half of 2025, we continued testing. In the second half of 2025, we began entering data consistently using the new format. Because of that, starting in 2026, we'll be able to accurately report on recruitment timelines.

Our goal is twelve weeks or less, which is fairly standard in HR. That said, we don't yet have complete data on timelines since launching the unified recruitment plan.

What we do know is that if someone in the process isn't moving efficiently within that twelve-week window, there are consequences. Recruiters may receive warnings, or positions may be pulled if hiring managers aren't ready to move forward. We're no longer waiting months for people to get things together.

The unified recruitment plan has helped us identify gaps. Our biggest challenges are subject matter expert reviews — which should take two weeks but sometimes stretch to six or seven — and interview scheduling due to staff capacity. We're working closely with division leaders to address that.

I know we're more efficient now, but I'll have the full data story next year.

Committee Member:

Okay. Thank you.

Facilitator:

It looks like we don't have any other questions. This has been a very good presentation. I learned a lot and will be following up myself.

These are exactly the kinds of discussions that should come before the Equity Advisory Committee. We often get questions about hiring and how people can connect, so this is very helpful. I appreciate the work you're doing, and it's reflected in the community.

Presenter:

If I can add one more thing I shared hard-copy handouts with Layla and Tori that include the dashboard data. If anyone would like those, they can provide them. And if you'd like me to present more often, I'm happy to do that just let me know what updates you'd like and how often.

Announcement

New members have been selected and interviewed.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.

Certification

I hereby certify that the foregoing narrative and exhibits constitute a true and accurate record of the Equity Advisory Committee meeting of September 16, 2025.

Approved this 20 day of January 2026.

Council contact:

Lila Eltawely, Equity Senior Manager
Lila.Eltawely@metc.state.mn.us
612-456-8095

