

Union Park District Council Transportation Committee Meeting

Monday, 9.12.2022, 6:30-8:25 p.m. via Zoom videoconference

Committee Members Present: Scott Berger (co-chair), Gene Christenson, Amy Gage, April King, Debbie Meister, Lisa Nelson (presiding co-chair), Sean Ryan, Barb Thoman.

Guests: Ellen Fee, UPDC board member; Anika Stokes and Shay Taylor (light rail riders); Ben Swanson-Hysell.

Staff: Abdulrahman Wako, Leah Timberlake Sullivan

1. Agenda and Minutes

- Meister/Thoman moved to approve the minutes and agenda.

2. Open Forum

- No topics

3. Follow-up Items

- Neighborhood Sustainability & Vitality Committee: Co-chair Ellen Fee is here to listen for ideas about collaboration with this committee.
- Berger reported on visits to the board and the Committee on Land Use and Economic Development (CLUED) from the Reimagine Midway plan that is emerging from the Midway Chamber of Commerce. UPDC board member and CLUED co-chair Bruce Corrie is leading.
- The Prior Avenue reconstruction is proceeding. Grand Avenue reconstruction: <https://www.stpaul.gov/projects/public-works/pw2024grandavereconstruction>. Gage suggested that the committee invite Deanna Seppanen, executive director of the High Winds Fund at Macalester, to speak to the college's role in Grand Avenue reconstruction.
- Joint Transportation meeting: Representatives from district councils throughout the city shared what is going on in their neighborhoods. Berger said it helps to become more aware of other neighborhoods' meetings.
- Capital Improvement Budget (CIB) projects.
 - Two projects recommended for funding: Bike racks and City Parks and Safety Improvements (flashing pedestrian beacon) at the north end of Ayd Mill Road at Selby.
 - The CIB process will happen again in two years; Nelson urged the committee to start thinking about projects now, "small things that would improve the neighborhood and make them safer for people."
 - The theme of the past two cycles has been "Crime Prevention Through Design."
 - <https://www.stpaul.gov/departments/mayors-office/committees-boards-and-commissions/capital-improvement-budget-cib>
- Ice Cream, Peanut Butter & Jam: Volunteers are still needed for tear-down, after 4 p.m., for the annual fundraiser in Merriam Park.

4. Light Rail Safety - *Anika Stokes and Shay Taylor, community members*

Sharing experiences and concerns about safety on the light rail trains.

- Anika Stokes has ridden the light rail since she moved to the Twin Cities in 2016. Shay Taylor has been riding light rail since 2014. She's seen people smoking, sleeping; nobody seems to do anything about it. She feels unsafe as a pregnant person riding the train. They ride the Green Line mostly; Shay won't ride the Blue Line.
- For Anika, who is 22, the Green Line is chaotic. People don't care what goes on or what behavior they display in front of anyone. Shay says, "They'll be *using* on the train in front of people." Anika's mom was robbed about 9 p.m. They took her purse and hit her on the head. "I think safety should be a No. 1 concern."

Q&A and discussion

- **Different since the pandemic?** It wasn't that bad before. Shay said people "forgot about the rules" after George Floyd was killed.
- **Metro Transit police:** They'll board to check tickets. Once they leave, "things still go on," said Shay.
- **UPDC actions:** Anyone can run onto the train and get on, without paying. People are carrying knives and mace, stealing people's stuff. Shay said checking fares is less important than making the trains safer.
- **Two-car change:** People are still smoking drugs.
- **Emergency measures:** Can text to get directly to transit police, but the number and the program are not visible enough, King said. Thoman said she has far fewer problems on the bus. She said legislators know there's a problem but aren't sure what to do. We need the governor to care, she said, and appointed someone who doesn't understand the system or the issues. She has not experienced these problems in other cities. Funding is available for more uniformed peace officers on trains. <https://www.metrotransit.org/textforsafety>
- **Community ambassadors:** Wako said Minneapolis uses ambassadors (Monday through Saturday, 6 a.m. to 11 p.m., and Sunday, 6 a.m. to 5 p.m.) who are there to have a presence of safety. <https://www.mplsdid.com/ambassadors>. Gage suggested the committee reach out to Move Minnesota.
- Timberlake-Sullivan said riding the train is not an option for those who have no cars; someone who's pregnant with groceries can't hop on a scooter. She'd like this dialogue centered around "non-optional users."
- Thoman said to ask a county commissioner to come to a meeting; before you study other Metro Transit routes, maintain the ones that you have. Ryan said the voices that tend to get privileged are those who seldom use the system, "the man from Blaine going to a Vikings game."
- Nelson promised Anika and Shay that UPDC would "amplify your voice."

Committee Action:

- Ryan/Meister **moved that the committee ask Thoman to draft a letter summarizing Shay and Anika's experiences and issues discussed by the committee, for the board to review on October 5;** she'd like to note that other regions don't seem to have the problem. Shay and Anika will review the letter.

Passed unanimously

5. Residential Transit Pass program - Berger

Report from a webinar attended in August

- <https://www.metrotransit.org/residential-pass>
- Webinar was presented by Karl Hedlund (Move Minneapolis) and Molly Burns-Hanson (Move Minnesota).
- The program gives monthly discounts to people in multi-family housing developments; landlords can offer at \$14/pass per month. That's a significant savings over the \$120 rate.
- A pilot study showed that the passes significantly improved transit ridership.
- District councils can remind developers of the initiative.

6. Neighborhood Cleanups

- Coming up on Thursday, September 15, noon to 2 p.m., UPDC is co-hosting with Allianz Life and Hamline-Midway Community Council on a neighborhood cleanup. Allianz will have 25 volunteers.
- The committee has done summer cleanups on second Saturdays at 10 a.m. Should they keep the dates and do some sort of cleanup throughout the winter?
- Contacting businesses could also be effective. Target has trash on their boulevard.
- The group will keep second Saturdays but change the time to 2 p.m., since 10 a.m. doesn't work for two members (Gage and Meister).

7. Bike and Pedestrian Safety

- The committee had a bike ride on Summit Ave over the summer.
- The Pedestrian Safety & Traffic Calming presentation and forum was last month.
- Stop for Me events: Wako said it could work as an educational opportunity, rather than issuing tickets. He will get in touch with Patty Lammers.
- Light-rail tour: Scott suggested the group take the train. Thoman suggested that we each commit to riding the light rail once before the next meeting. Nelson will create a shared document for taking notes on experiences.
- Highland Bridge tour: We could also collaborate with other district councils on taking a tour of this new neighborhood. It's got great bike infrastructure.

8. Rethinking I-94

- Meister says there's a lot of tension between Our Streets and Reconnect Rondo. Meister, Thoman, and Gage are signed up to attend one of Keith Baker's listening sessions on September 26.
- Committee members expressed concerns; "tired of being called a racist"; frustration that people won't jump on these millions of dollars in federal funding.
- Nelson has done a lot of work on the document that Thoman started months ago: proofing the numbers, added maps. Some 360 structures got torn down or displaced by freeway construction. Commercial area similar to downtown Saint Anthony Park was destroyed. "We had a story, too. It's not better or different, it's just our story," said Thoman.
- Minneapolis has backed away from collaborating on federal funding, said Meister. Former City Councilmember Cam Gordon was the one spearheading it.
- Our letter to the city did say we support the "Reconnecting" study and initiative. Meister agrees that we restate our ask and that Baker is concerned only with the five blocks of Rondo.

- 
- Wako will send a letter to City and other stakeholders, restating the request from a previous letter (approved by the committee & board) that the city seek grant funding from the ReConnecting Communities to study the feasibility of a highway-to-boulevard conversion.

Meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m.

Next Meeting:

October 10th, 6:30 p.m. via Zoom videoconference.