Minutes

Equity Advisory Committee

Meeting date: September 15th, 2026 **Time**: 6:00 PM **Location:** Virtual

Members present:

- ☐ (E) Co-Chair, John Pacheco Jr., District 5
- ☒ Co-Chair, Carmeann Foster, at large
- ☐ Yassin Osman, District 7
- ☐ (E) Dr. Tyronne Carter, District 3
- ☐ Toni Carter, District 14
- ☒ Michael Luseni, District A
- ☒ Taiwo Giwa, District B
- ☒ Samiira Isse, District C
- ☒ Anita L. Urvina Davis, District D
- ☐ Zakariya Abdullahi, District E
- ☐ Sabrina Tapia Contreras, District F
- ☐ Odell Brown, District G
- ☐ Vacant, District H
- ☒ Elizabeth Jones Stephens, at large
- ☐ Ibrahim Owolabi, at large
- ☐ (E) Robert Blake, at large
- ☐ (E) Marquita Stephens, at large
- ☒ Brian Xiong, at large
- ☒ Astrid Benedetto, at large
- ☐ (E) Markeya Knight, at large
- ☐ Mitchel Hansen, 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

Co-Chair Carmeann Foster called the regular meeting of the Equity Advisory Committee to order at 6:02 p.m. A quorum was not present so neither minutes nor agenda were approved.

Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment

The Dakota Land, Water, and People Acknowledgment was read by Co-Chair Carmeann Foster.

Agenda approved

Insufficient attendance for quorum.

Approval of minutes

Insufficient attendance for quorum.

Public invitation

No registered public comments.

Information

1. Network Now Framework: 2026 Amendment (Ryan Heath, Manager, System Planning, Metro Transit – TMSA, Metro Transit)

   Anita Urvina Davis (AUD): I have a question about the north because I live in north Minneapolis and we've been hearing about the beginning date for a long time. Can you give me something to look forward to, or to let some of my neighbors know what's happening, or what the opening timeline looks like?

   Ryan Heath (RH): For the green line extension in particular?

   AUD: Yes

   RH: Right now, the opening is in 2027; however, there is an event planned for Saturday, September 26th, where Metro Transit will officially announce the opening date. It will be at the Green Line Louisiana Avenue station, there will be different activities, but the key is officially announcing that date. So right now, I don't have that date, but it's coming soon. Torri, can I send you that link and then you can send it out to the committee members?

   Torri Hampton (TH): Yes, for sure. I can for sure send that out for you Ryan.

   AUD: So, Louisiana Avenue, are we talking north or south?

   RH: So that would be the Louisiana Avenue green line extension station, and that is just south of highway 7. That's the location that's planned.

   AUD: Could you consider planning anything in north Minneapolis?

   RH: I'm not directly involved with those preparations, but I will bring that feedback to the people who are leading that work.

   As a resident of north Minneapolis, we've been hearing about it, and there's been a lot of controversy in the last couple of years over it. I know I've attended a presentation over at U Rock on Plymouth Avenue. So if you're going to pass that information on, U Rock would be a good place to do that as well because there was a lot of participation there.

   RH: I know that the green line extension team is doing quite a few events, and I will ask them to add events in north Minneapolis to help spread the word.

   AUD: When you're going to be announcing these changes, are you going to be doing it as advertising on the buses, or will you be doing it with a community newsletter, are you doing it on the website, are you doing it online, how are you reaching out to people?

   RH: Green line extension will have an extensive marketing campaign, and I'm not directly involved with preparation for that but there will be in-person, website, electronic, social media communications. Not only that green line extension is coming, but also the route changes that are associated with that. On a normal basis, we make route changes every quarter, we call them a "pick". Typical methods for spreading the word include a news story that goes out to local media, on our website we have a news story that is posted, we have rider alerts, so if you're subscribed to rider alerts you actually get a ping that something is changing on your route. We do onboard announcements on the bus that say, "quarterly service changes are

coming up, go to the website for additional information". And then, especially if there are stops that are being discontinued, we post physical rider alerts on the bus stop pole so people can see that. Those are some of the methods that we use. When it comes to GLE, our green line extension, and highway 55 we're going to be doing even more. So the social media outreach, working with cities to get out into their community newsletters, things like that, to really try to spread the word as much as we can.

AUD: I look forward to the information that you pass on to Torri so I can make sure that people in my neighborhood and my communities are getting that information.

Elizabeth Jones Stephens (EJS): I live in St. Louis Park near the SLE, no, GLE, and my question was how can I help get the word out on this? You mentioned to look out for it and go to the website, anything else?

RH: I did provide Torri with the link to the September 26th event, and I have already reached out to the person who's coordinating a lot of the green line extension launch activities here about the request for some additional engagement. I'll also note that we should come back to the EAC with additional information on the green line extension launch.

2. Immigrant Contributions to the Regional Economy (Baris Gumus-Dawe, Planning Analyst, Research, Community Development)

3. Small Business Voices: OMS Effects and Business Contribution to Regional Resiliency (Dr. Darcie Vandegrift, Manager, Research, Community Development and Dr. Asha Warsame, Researcher, Community Development)

Brian Xiong (BX): I noticed that in your slide 5, you talked about the method of research on this project and on one of the slides you also mentioned about any real demographic observation in English, Mandarin, Somali, and Spanish, and to follow through with that, you also provided in slide number 6 you talked about local small businesses in different areas throughout the metro area and one particular concentration was in the Payne-Phalen area and I notice they also have a large Hmong population and business owner in the area. Being that Hmong is the largest Asian-American in the state of Minnesota, are there any particular reasons why the Hmong are not interviewed in your project, or why they were singled out?

Darcie Vandegrift (DV): Brian, thank you so much for that question, and I think you're raising a really important point. There are three aspects I would jump in with. We, on our team, do not have language capacity in Hmong, and we realize that insufficiency, and we tried to make that up in a couple of ways. First of all, we were intentional in selecting Payne-Phalen to include Hmong-owned businesses on Payne-Phalen, but we do do those interviews in English. My third part of the answer is that with our collaboration with the Hmong-American partnership we are working to do some additional interviews particularly to make sure that that perspective in Hmong with interpreters is completed. We see that also as a really important piece that we're working to bring in.

AUD: The people who are here without documents, most of my colleagues know, they came here for a reason, because their countries were poor, because they wanted better for their families. ICE created an issue that affected us all, not just the small businesses, those of us in the communities where those businesses were, those of who have friends and neighbors who were affected, communities of color. We're still struggling in our communities with these issues, not just the small businesses, but everybody in these communities, especially the immigrants. While I appreciate that you went after the small businesses, I want you to know that these issues are not over. That everything that the small business owners told you

during these conversations are still going on. They still have financial issues, they still have marketing concerns…these issues are still going on, I would urge you to, maybe after the fact this fall, go back to those businesses and ask them how they're doing, and follow-up with them.

DV: Madame Chair, that's a crucial point, I wonder if I could invite my colleague Asha Warsame to reiterate our research process and how we really share your concern and how we're incorporating that into our work.

Asha Warsame (AW): The research started in February, and from February to August we were going out every month back to these places and asking similar questions about how they were doing.

DV: And our research will last for 2 years, we're going to go back and talk to businesses until February 2028.

Zhu Gong (ZG): I wanted to reiterate that this is a longitudinal study so we are planning to continue this research as Darcie said until February 2028 and reiterating what Asha said, we have been going every few weeks and then tapering down to monthly but we are going regularly to continue. We share the concerns that Operation Metro Surge is not over and these effects are still impacting not just the businesses but the communities that they serve. We certainly have heard a lot of the stories of the communities that these small businesses serve and we certainly are integrating these concerns into our research methodology and process.

Announcement

Equity Advisory Retreat in October, please RSVP, will be located at Wilder Center.

Adjournment

Business completed; the meeting adjourned at 7:49 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 15th, 2026.

Approved this 17th day of November 2026.

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