

Metro Mobility Enhancements Study: Condensed Report to the Legislature

March 2026

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Cover Letter

March 3, 2026

The Honorable Brad Tabke, Co-Chair
House Transportation Finance & Policy Committee
5th Floor, Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Scott Dibble, Chair
Senate Transportation Committee
3107 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable Jon Koznick, Co-Chair
House Transportation Finance & Policy Committee
2nd Floor, Centennial Office Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

The Honorable John Jasinski
Ranking Minority Member
Senate Transportation Committee
2227 Minnesota Senate Building
Saint Paul, MN 55155

RE: Metro Mobility Enhancements Study: Condensed Report to the Legislature

Dear Legislators,

The Minnesota Department of Transportation is pleased to present the condensed report on the full Metro Mobility Enhancements Study. The Minnesota Legislature directed the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to conduct a “Metro Mobility enhancement and service study to develop recommendations to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, reliability, dignity, and experience of riders of the special transportation service under Minnesota Statutes” ([MN Laws Chapter 127, Section 125](#)). The directive contained several specific requirements for the study and the study also assessed the extent to which the Metropolitan Council has addressed and continues to progress on recommendations from two previous reports.

This condensed report provides an overview of the Metropolitan Council’s paratransit and demand-responsive transportation services in the Minneapolis–St. Paul region, with a primary focus on Metro Mobility. Metro Mobility delivers ADA-compliant paratransit service within federally mandated areas and an expanded service area required by the State. The full study can be found on MnDOT’s legislative reports website.

Please let me know if you have questions, or you can contact Glenn Gadbois, MnDOT Study Coordinator, at Glenn.Gadbois@state.MN.us or (651) 366-5629.

Sincerely,



Nancy Daubenberger, P.E. (MN)
Commissioner

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1. Introduction

This report is an assessment of Metro Mobility, the Metropolitan Council’s (Met Council’s) paratransit service in the Minneapolis/St. Paul metropolitan region. Metro Mobility provides Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) paratransit service in a service area mandated federally and in an expanded service area mandated by the State. In addition to Metro Mobility, the Met Council’s family of demand-responsive transportation (DRT) services includes:

- Premium On-Demand (POD): A same-day, on-demand service available to Metro Mobility customers for trips made throughout the Metro Mobility service area.
- Metro Move: A service focused on the transportation of Medicaid-waiver individuals with intellectual or developmental disabilities going to/from day programs.
- Metro micro: A general public on-demand microtransit service.
- Transit Link: A general public dial-a-ride service serving the outer portions of the seven-county area not served by fixed-route transit and designed to link up residents from these areas with fixed-route and Metro Mobility service.

The Met Council also provides fixed-route bus and rail services via Metro Transit.

This report was prompted by the Minnesota State Legislature’s directive to the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT), detailed in [MN Laws Chapter 127, Section 125](#) (see Appendix A). In addition, the specific assessments in this legislative directive, the legislature asked that consultants engage several specific state agencies during the study. Finally, this assessment also documents the extent to which the Met Council—the regional governmental agency responsible for providing Metro Mobility—has addressed and continues to progress on previous recommendations from a 2017–2018 task force formed by the Legislature (see [Metro Mobility Taskforce Legislative Report](#)) and an April 2024 report by the Minnesota State Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) (see [Metro Mobility 2024 Evaluation Report](#)).

MnDOT retained the Study Team of Texas A&M Transportation Institute and Palo Consulting Group to conduct the study. The Study Team’s efforts began in late February 2025. The main assessments concluded in August 2025; work to structure and finalize this report and an accompanying technical report followed.

Prior to discussing the work performed and the results and recommendations, the Study Team wishes to highlight a foundational reality of public transit operations—especially DRT operations. It is obvious that public transit customers want high-quality service. A key element of service quality is on-time performance; that is, vehicles pick up and drop off customers on time. Although public transit agencies strive for service quality, they also must be good stewards of the resources they have, which means public transit agencies must also strive for cost-effectiveness and efficiency. In DRT operations, cost-effectiveness is principally achieved by carrying as many riders as possible for each hour a vehicle is in operation. However, in DRT operations, there is a tension between service quality and cost-effectiveness. To have higher service quality, transit agencies can reduce how many passengers they try to carry on the same vehicle and can add more buffer time into vehicle schedules. These actions make it easier for vehicles to pick up and drop off passengers on time, but these actions also increase cost while carrying fewer passengers. On the other hand, to increase cost effectiveness, transit agencies can try to carry more passengers on the same vehicle and can reduce buffer time in schedules. But these actions will make it harder for service to be on time. As readers review the results of this study, it is important to keep this tension in mind. Ultimately, the balance between service quality and cost-effectiveness is

a policy decision that is then operationalized through the goals and standards adopted and implemented in day-to-day operations.

2. Documentation and Assessments

The Study Team’s work plan included:

- Documenting existing conditions, policies, procedures, etc.
- Analyzing trends of various service and cost performance metrics vs. goals/standards.
- Comparing Metro Mobility’s metrics to peer ADA paratransit services.
- Assessing the Met Council’s oversight of the Metro Mobility providers.
- Assessing the Met Council’s complaint/feedback management processes.
- Assessing the extent to which Met Council’s supply of service accommodates the demand for service.
- Assessing the impacts of certain policies, such as the allowance of curbside reservations.
- Assessing the extent to which the Met Council’s other related demand-responsive services (Metro Move, POD, Metro micro, and Transit Link) are also used by ADA paratransit certified customers.
- Assessing the impact of State-mandated policies (relevant to the expansion of the service area) on ADA paratransit performance.
- Developing improvement scenarios and related recommendations.
- Evaluating the POD service and its Enhancement Pilot Program (an extension of operating hours).
- Identifying other recommendations and suggestions that stem from the various assessments.
- Assessing the Met Council’s follow-up to recommendations from the task force and OLA reports.
- Preparing a final report (i.e., this report) that includes findings and recommendations.
- Preparing a separate technical report that documents, in detail, the background research conducted by the Study Team, which is the foundation for the Study Team’s findings and recommendations.

3. Stakeholder and Rider Engagement

The Study Team conducted extensive stakeholder and rider engagement for this project. Stakeholders included:

- The Met Council/Metro Mobility staff.
- The Project Advisory Committee.
- The management, staff, and drivers from the Metro Mobility providers (Transdev and Transit Team).
- Five peer transit agencies.
- The Metro Mobility riders who responded to a rider survey.
- The attendees of the Metro Mobility 2025 Spring Conversations.
- The participants of two focus groups—the first with Metro Mobility riders and the second with members of the DeafBlind community (the second focus group was facilitated by American Sign Language, tactile, and Protactile interpreters).
- Representatives from several state-level agencies and other stakeholders.

The Study Team especially wishes to single out the Met Council management and staff who *touch* Metro Mobility. These individuals were particularly helpful in promptly providing requested documents, making themselves available for interviews, and providing feedback on the findings documented in the interim and draft final reports.

Also, per the Legislature’s directive, the Study Team engaged with representatives of state-level agencies and other stakeholders including the Minnesota Board of Aging; Age Friendly Minnesota; the American Council of the Blind in Minnesota; the Minnesota Commission of the Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing; the Minnesota Department of Human Services, Disability Services Division; the Minnesota Council on Disability; and the National Federation of the Blind of Minnesota.

4. Major Findings and Recommendations

This section of the report details the major findings of the study. The next section, Section 5, provides a table summarizing the Study Team’s recommendations and maps these recommendations to their discussions in the technical report. For details about the Study Team’s methodology, data collection, and analysis, readers should consult the technical report. (Appendix B maps the technical report’s contents to the various elements of the legislative directive.)

4.1 Metro Mobility is the Fourth-Largest ADA Paratransit Service Among Similar Agencies

Metro Mobility provided 1,411,915 trips in 2024, making it the fourth-largest ADA paratransit service in the United States based on ridership (out of 39 transit agencies serving areas with 2,000,000 or more in population). Approximately 73% of these trips were ADA paratransit trips in the federally mandated area, while 27% were non-ADA trips in the State-mandated area. The term *State-mandated* refers to the State-mandated service area (and trips to/from/within that area), which extends beyond the area required by federal law. The term federally mandated refers to the service area (and the ADA paratransit trips within that area) that is required under the ADA.

4.2 Metro Mobility Is Meeting Its Performance Goals

With respect to performance goals, Met Council has been able to fully meet the demand for its services in both the federally mandated and State-mandated service areas, while meeting—if not exceeding—its service quality performance goals across the following key performance metrics:

- **Denials:** There were 2 denials of federally mandated trip requests in 2024, essentially meeting the Met Council’s zero denial goal for federally mandated trips. While Met Council does not have any specific not-to-exceed goals or thresholds for denials of State-mandated trips, there were only 113 denials of State-mandated trips in 2024, which equates to 0.02% of the total State-mandated bookings in 2024.
- **On-Time Performance:** Metro Mobility’s 2024 on-time performance (OTP) was slightly below the Met Council’s 93% OTP goal. However, actions taken by the Met Council have boosted OTP in the first quarter of 2025, resulting in an OTP for pickup trips of 94.2% (94.2% for federally mandated and 94.1% for State-mandated trips) and an OTP for non-late appointment trips of 94.1% (94.3% for federally mandated trips and 93.8% for State-mandated trips).
- **Ride Times:** The Met Council has met its goal of ensuring that 95% of Metro Mobility trips do not

violate distance-based, not-to-exceed maximum travel times. The 2024 percentage of trips at or below the travel time maximum was 95.7% (95.3% for federally mandated trips and 96.9% for State-mandated trips).

- **Missed Trips:** The percentage of missed trips in 2024 was 0.42%. While the Met Council does not have a not-to-exceed goal for missed trips, standards adopted by other large transit agencies range between 0.5% and 2.0%.
- **Telephone Hold Times:** Metro Mobility telephone hold times were far less than required standards, surpassing the Met Council’s goals.
- **Safety:** Metro Mobility’s actual systemwide preventable accident frequency ratio (AFR) was 0.04 based on 100,000 miles, and 0.06 based on 150,000 miles. Most transit agencies strive to keep preventable accidents under 1 for every 100,000 total miles.
- **Maintenance Proficiency:** Two metrics used to gauge maintenance proficiency are preventive maintenance (PM) adherence and miles between road calls (MBRC). In 2024, only 0.60% of Transdev’s and 0.65% of Transit Team’s preventive maintenance was late. In addition, there were almost 175,000 MBRC (for major mechanical incidents) systemwide, meaning that, on average, 175,000 miles passed between a vehicle breaking down while in service.

4.3 Metro Mobility Compares Well to Peers

Based on data from 2024, Metro Mobility fared quite well in comparison with peer systems in Baltimore, Denver, Houston, Los Angeles, and Seattle (see Table 1).

Table 1 Metro Mobility rankings among peer ADA paratransit systems

Key Performance Indicator	Top-Ranked Agency	Metro Mobility’s Position among Peers	Number of Agencies with Credible Data
Productivity (high)	Baltimore-Maryland Transit Administration	2 nd	5
Cost per Trip (low)	Metro Mobility	1 st	6
Cost per Revenue Vehicle Hour (low)	Houston METRO	2 nd	5
On-Time Performance Percentage (high)	Los Angeles-Access Services	3 rd	6
Missed Trip Percentage (low)	Baltimore-Maryland Transit Administration	2 nd	3

4.4 State Mandates Have Had an Insignificant Impact on ADA Paratransit Performance

The Study Team determined that not having to serve the State-mandated area did result in a significant decrease in the number of runs necessary to deliver Metro Mobility service, along with corresponding reductions in revenue hours (and cost). Hypothetically, if the State-mandated service area were to be dropped, the current number of vehicles could be reduced to a number that achieves Met Council’s desired balance between productivity and OTP. That said, the insignificant differences between the pickup and drop-off OTP for federally mandated trips vs. State-mandated trips (described previously) indicates that having to serve the State-mandated area does not materially impact the OTP of federally mandated service.

4.5 The Zero-Denial Policy Should Not Be Extended to the State-Mandated Area

As mentioned previously, the 113 denials of State-mandated trips in 2024 represented only 0.02% of total State-mandated bookings. Should the zero-denial policy for federally mandated trips be extended to the State-mandated area, the providers should be able to accommodate these 113 trips without additional funding needed, noting that 110 of the 113 trips were in the West Zone. However, because the State-mandated area is more challenging to serve, and because the 113 denials represent a very small portion of the overall trips booked, the Study Team does not recommend an extension of the zero-denial policy at this time. That said, if the Met Council were to implement a zero-denial policy for the State-mandated area, the Study Team would recommend that provider contracts be amended to include a monthly not-to-exceed 0.04% goal, with a performance compensation adjustment for exceeding 0.05%.

4.6 Metro Mobility Rider Ratings Are Mixed

Metro Mobility riders expressed mixed opinions of the services. Feedback received from the rider focus group and the rider survey is as follows:

- **Rider Focus Group:** In the Metro Mobility rider focus group, participants expressed a desire for more individualized service tailored to varying levels of need and ability, along with driver training to facilitate understanding of the proper ways to interact with riders. Participants recommended having people with disabilities train the drivers. There was a clear call for greater coordination between Metro Mobility and other transportation providers, as well as improved outreach to ensure users are aware of existing policies and options. Collectively, the feedback underscored the need for Met Council to modernize its systems, invest in inclusive service delivery, and engage riders as partners in designing solutions that meet their diverse mobility needs. Several actions already taken by the Met Council, as well as various recommendations that resulted from the study including a recommendation to diversify the fleet, are reflective of this feedback.
- **Rider Survey:** The Metro Mobility rider survey—conducted in April and May 2025—attracted 2,584 responses. Of the 2,584 survey respondents, 81.7% were deemed to be ADA paratransit users (i.e., users who took trips in the federally mandated area), while 372 respondents (14.4%) were deemed to be non-ADA paratransit users (i.e., users who took trips in the State-mandated area). About 83% of the users of federally mandated service and 77% of the users of the State-mandated service were satisfied or very satisfied with Metro Mobility. The level of satisfaction for users of the State-mandated service was, on average, about 6% below the level of satisfaction for users of the federally mandated service, meaning the difference between the two groups on average was not significant. On the positive side, users appreciate the service’s accessibility, safety, vehicle comfort and cleanliness, ease of paying fares, and level of driver assistance and professionalism. Long ride times and inaccurate/delayed estimated times of arrival (ETAs) for vehicles were ranked more negatively, as were untimely pickups and untimely drop-offs. In concert with these responses, a significant number of users in both groups would like to see improvements to OTP and access to real-time ETAs. The Met Council, through specific actions, has significantly improved its OTP for both pickup and appointment trips and has improved estimated time of arrival accuracy with the Metro Mobility mobile app, which was launched in the first quarter of 2025.

It is possible that the rider perspective on untimely trips may result from unclear expectations on pickup windows. In the section that discusses recommendations, Met Council is encouraged to train reservation agents to state a *be ready* window rather than a specific time when confirming details of the trip booking. This applies to both phone and online bookings.

4.7 State Agency Stakeholder Perceptions Are Mixed

In considering Metro Mobility service, the state-level agency stakeholders (listed previously) emphasized the need for more on-demand transportation options, expanded service areas, and greater flexibility in scheduling, particularly around medical appointments and employment. Many of the stakeholders also called for technology enhancements such as app-based scheduling, real-time driver tracking, and better communication tools for riders with disabilities, including the DeafBlind community. Geographic limitations, outdated global positioning systems, and inconsistencies in driver performance and cultural sensitivity were recurring concerns, especially regarding assistance for individuals with service animals or requiring hands-on help. Met Council has already taken steps to address geographic and technology issues by updating the underlying map in the Trapeze software used for Metro Mobility reservations, scheduling, and dispatching; expediting efforts to replace the Ranger devices on board Metro Mobility vehicles with tablets/DriverMate; and offering customers the ability to track the location of their vehicle prior to arrival via the mobile app. Met Council is also working with its providers to better emphasize the issues suggested by riders (described previously) in their training.

4.8 The Met Council's Provider Oversight Is Effective

Met Council staff have improved the program for monitoring contractors by fine-tuning contract-based bonuses and performance compensation adjustments to ensure that key goals and standards are being met and to steer the Metro Mobility contractors toward providing service that emulates the desired balance between service quality and service efficiency metrics.

The Study Team recommended a few tweaks to the bonus/credit structure (see the technical report). However, the Met Council has historically had a hands-off relationship with its providers regarding how scheduling is performed. The Study Team's assessment identified several inconsistencies and shortcomings with the current scheduling processes (as performed by the contractors), which have led to suboptimal service efficiency.

4.9 Centralized Scheduling May Provide Benefit (But More Analysis Is Needed)

Met Council uses a zone-based, decentralized reservations and scheduling model, with each contractor handling its own reservations and scheduling. To date, this decentralized model has proven effective for Met Council. Having multiple contractors is not uncommon and is often beneficial as a way to reduce risk and incentivize contractor performance. On the other hand, decentralized reservations and scheduling are increasingly uncommon among large paratransit systems. Many agencies have moved toward centralized call-and-control operations to seek improved efficiency, consistency, and customer experience. For example, the Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority (MBTA) in Boston transitioned from a decentralized model to a centralized call-and-control manager about 10 years ago, and New Jersey Transit is considering a similar approach. Among the peers reviewed, only Los Angeles Access Services and Pittsburgh ACCESS still use a decentralized model.

The Study Team recommends that the Met Council:

- Implement a consistent approach to scheduling across all contractors and retain a run-cutting

expert with Trapeze skills to perform a full run cut.

- Investigate the potential benefits of centralizing scheduling, eliminating provider zones, and/or centralizing other call-and-control center functions. To perform such an investigation, the Met Council should:
 - Retain a run-cutting expert to perform a full run cut, while preserving the current zone structure.
 - Based on the improvements from the run cut, decide whether a more significant change is warranted (e.g., implementing centralized scheduling or moving to a contracted call-and-control manager with no zones). Additional analyses may be needed beyond a scheduling analysis.

4.10 Met Council Should Explore Options for Demand-Responsive Software Providers

The Study Team’s opinion is that the Trapeze PASS software has often failed to innovate and adopt modern technology to replace its aging platform. New versions and modules can be expensive, and the responsiveness of its technical support staff has declined. Meanwhile, on-demand technology vendors, such as RideCo, Spare Labs, and Via Transportation, now have legitimate versions of their technology that fully support large ADA paratransit services in such cities as Austin (Spare), Charlotte (Via), and Philadelphia (RideCo). MBTA in Boston recently selected Spare as its new platform. Efforts are also underway at the Maryland Transit Administration in Baltimore and at New Jersey Transit to replace Trapeze.

The Study Team recommends that the Met Council begin exploring options for demand-responsive scheduling/dispatching software using a two-step process—first releasing a request for information (RFI) and then a request for proposal (RFP).

4.11 Complaint Management Has Improved

The OLA report correctly asserted that the Metro Mobility providers had too much of a role in the complaint management process. The Met Council has since bolstered its complaint management staff with additional staff focusing on the complaint process, and designated staff interacting with complainants, investigating complaints, and providing resolutions back to the complainants. With the exception of following up on Met Council requested investigations, the providers have been removed from the process.

In addition, the Met Council has hired a complaints investigator who will be responsible for creating operational reports and dashboards and for analyzing complaint data. Prior to the audit, the Met Council had changed its website materials to clarify that customers should register complaints with Metro Mobility’s Customer Service Department and not call the contractors to make a complaint. Since the audit, the Met Council has posted new messaging on each bus about how to file a complaint (including information about how to obtain a fare receipt).

Lastly, the Met Council is in the process of updating its written procedures for staff to reflect these changes. In this study, the Study Team also suggested that resolution letters be sent to complainants, whether their complaint was deemed an *issue* or a *nonissue*.

In conclusion, the Study Team finds that Met Council complaint management has improved significantly.

4.12 The Addition of Transportation Network Companies and Taxis Is Adequate

Transit agencies may choose to use ADA-paratransit-compliant taxis or transportation network companies (TNCs) to provide supplemental service (i.e., additional capacity to handle peak demands, long trips, and other types of trips that are hard to schedule efficiently on ADA paratransit vehicles). Using taxis or TNCs for supplemental service helps control costs and improve the effectiveness of ADA paratransit. However, the Met Council does not use taxis and TNCs for their overflow supplemental service needs.

Regular TNCs (such as Uber and Lyft) and most taxi companies are prohibited from providing ADA paratransit trips because their drivers are not trained to proficiency and do not participate in drug and alcohol testing programs required by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). However, the Met Council could use TNCs and taxi companies to provide State-mandated trips and to provide trips in the federally mandated area through an opt-in program. In such a program, Metro Mobility users would be required to sign an opt-in agreement, essentially permitting the Met Council to convert their trips from an ADA paratransit trip to a non-ADA paratransit trip (even though it is being taken in the federally mandated service area). In this way, trips could be assigned to a TNC or taxi, with whom the Met Council would contract as an opt-in program provider.

Apart from Metro Mobility, the Met Council has added TNCs and taxis to its service providers through POD—an alternative service for ADA-paratransit-eligible riders rather than a supplemental service to Metro Mobility. POD's providers now include Transportation Plus (a taxi company), Carepool (a licensed TNC), and UZURV (an adaptive TNC¹)—all of which provide same-day, if not immediate, on-demand trips.

4.13 POD Provides a Cost-Effective Alternative for Increasing the Mobility of Metro Mobility Customers but Only During Standard Hours

The Met Council's on-demand alternative service, POD, enables Metro Mobility users (i.e., users eligible and registered for ADA paratransit) to make on-demand, same day trips, and advance-reservation trips (1–4 days in advance). POD has been operating since 2004. Trips are provided by taxi companies and TNCs under contract to the Met Council. POD operating hours have historically aligned with Metro Mobility's operating hours. However, in 2023, the Minnesota Legislature introduced the Metro Mobility Enhancement Pilot Program—a pilot program extending POD's operating hours throughout the Metro Mobility service area. The extended hours pilot program is due to expire on December 31, 2025.

In summary, mode-shift POD trips during standard hours save the Met Council \$30.73 per trip, mode-shift POD trips during nonstandard hours cost about the same as Metro Mobility, and new POD trips during pilot hours add cost to the Met Council. An analysis by the Met Council estimated that 795 unique users took pilot hour trips on POD during the 2025 calendar year. Of the 795 users, 244 (30.7%) were new users—users who did not have any Metro Mobility or POD usage prior to the extended hours pilot program. Again, although the pilot program enhances mobility by extending POD operating hours to beyond Metro Mobility's operating hours, the new users and their trips ultimately add cost to the Met Council's budget.

In view of these findings, the Study Team's recommendation is to allow the extended hours pilot program to sunset on December 31, 2025, and, if possible, to use the financial resources supporting the pilot program to

¹ The term *adaptive* means that UZURV tailors its services to rider needs, including the needs of riders with disabilities.

enhance the availability of POD during Metro Mobility hours, helping to manage Metro Mobility costs, while enhancing the mobility of many Metro Mobility riders.

4.14 Other Metro Mobility Recommendations from the Study Team

4.14.1 Technology Recommendations

Technology-related recommendations presented by the Study Team include the following:

- Replace the Rangers with DriverMate Loaded on Tablets: This recommendation is on the Met Council's to-do list. Replacing the Rangers, which are no longer made, are failing, and are difficult to replace (with other used Rangers) will solve several short-term operational problems. The Met Council recently retained an information technology (IT) expert (from NASA) who has already identified some of the root causes and is working to identify and initiate solutions.
- Augment Metro Mobility's In-Department IT Staff to Solve Mission-Critical Needs: If decentralized scheduling and the use of Trapeze is continued (see previous discussions), the Study Team recommends hiring additional in-department staff (or a contractor) with expertise in run-cutting and Trapeze to perform annual (or more frequent) run cuts, to affect a more consistent use of Trapeze's scheduling functions between providers, and to handle other Metro Mobility mission-critical IT issues as they arise.
- Enforce a More Consistent Approach to Handling No-Show Requests: No-show disputes are, by far, the top complaint among Metro Mobility riders. New directives to providers should be put in place on the handling of no-show requests, specifically to reduce the number of no-show disputes. Such procedures should include strict adherence to required documentation so that no-show investigations provide the detailed evidence needed for disputes.
- Fix the Trapeze Issue Associated with Scheduling Pickup Times for Appointment Trips: The Met Council should continue to work with Trapeze or a third-party Trapeze expert to solve the mis-scheduling of pickup times for appointment trips. In the meantime, the Met Council should work with its Metro Mobility providers to utilize the work-around provided by the Study Team, which will allow the scheduling function to recognize the drop-off window.
- Separate Reservation Calls from Service-Day Calls: The Study Team recommends modifying the phone tree such that reservation calls and service-day calls are split up. This will provide a heads-up to the call-taker, enable the assignment of call-takers with more experience to handle the service-day calls, and allow for different hold-time standards for each call type.
- Improve Driver-Dispatcher Communication: The high ratio of drivers to dispatchers inhibits timely effective communication between drivers and dispatchers. This imbalance creates operational issues and negatively impacts OTP. The Study Team recommends that the Met Council require a 20:1 driver-to-dispatcher ratio in future contracts.
- Establish a Linkage with the New Fleet Maintenance System: While the Met Council has recently acquired Hexagon's Enterprise Asset Management system to support its fleet management activities, contractors should be allowed to continue to use their vehicle maintenance software for work orders/day-to-day operations and report up for required reports only.

4.14.2 Provider Contract Recommendations

Recommendations presented by the Study Team related to provider contracts include the following:

- Add Goals/Standards: The Met Council has established goals and/or standards, with associated bonuses and invoice credits, for most KPIs to shape expectations and gauge actual performance. Two KPIs—missed trip percentage and MBRC—should be added.
- Consider Changing Contractor Payment to a Split Structure for the Next Procurement: To reduce risk applied to both parties, the Study Team suggests that the Met Council consider changing from a rate per revenue vehicle hour (RVH) structure that covers all costs incurred by the contractors to a split structure where approved fixed costs and related overhead/fees are paid via a monthly fixed rate and variable costs and related overhead/fees are paid via a rate per RVH. This structure is emulated by many paratransit services to minimize proposed rates.
- Extend the Contract Term on the Next Procurement: In the next procurement cycle, the Study Team recommends that the Met Council consider a longer contract term (e.g., 10 years) to create more stability, lower risk, and lower the cost of facility leases in cases where the contractors are responsible for their own facilities—all of which generates lower provider rates.
- Consider Providing the Operations/Maintenance Facilities: The Study Team recommends that the Met Council explore owning or leasing the Metro Mobility/Metro Move operational and maintenance facilities. Advantages include a reduced federal match for capital purchases, reduced risk for the contractors, a level playing field for subsequent provider procurements, and a place for a replacement provider to land if a current contract ends prematurely. In the meantime, the Met Council could add a contract/lease provision for—at the option of the Met Council—taking over a lease should a provider contract end prematurely.
- Revise Reservation Agent Branding: Reservation agents currently answer calls from customers by saying “Transdev” or “Transit Team.” The Study Team recommends that they answer the phone by saying “Metro Mobility.”
- Revise Confirmation Summary: To clarify pickup and drop-off windows, the Study Team recommends that the provider’s reservation agents state a be ready window rather than a specific time when confirming details of the trip booking. For example, rather than stating that the pickup time is 8:00 a.m., the agent should specify that the rider should be ready to be picked up between 8:00 a.m. and 8:30 a.m. This recommendation also applies to online bookings.

4.14.3 Provider Monitoring Recommendations

Recommendations presented by the Study Team related to provider monitoring include the following:

- Develop Procedures for Detecting Patterns that Might Point to a Capacity Constraint: The Study Team recommends that the Met Council develop procedures to identify spatial patterns (within each zone), temporal patterns (certain days and time periods), or patterns involving specific rider or population subgroups that may point to a capacity constraint on Metro Mobility. The procedures should be conducted at least quarterly as required by FTA.
- Fix Data Tracking and Reporting Issues: The Study Team recommends that the Met Council address several data tracking and reporting issues for Metro Mobility. Specifically, Met Council should use both definitions of denials and all five definitions of missed tips (see Section 6.5), fix the Power BI reports such that the denominator used to calculate missed trip percentage uses total eligible

passenger trip totals, and calculate pickup OTP for all trips—not just the trips that are requested by pickup times.

4.14.4 Complaint Management Recommendations

Recommendations presented by the Study Team related to complaint management include the following:

- Update and Add to the Complaint Processing Procedures: In addition to improvements identified as already underway, the Study Team recommends several new procedures to be added to the Met Council’s complaint processing procedures. These procedures include sending both a resolution or a closure letter to all complainants, measuring response turnaround times, and documenting actions resulting from a non-response in cases where more information is requested of the complainant. The Met Council should immediately update its written procedures to include those that the Met Council actually implemented.

4.15 The Met Council Has Responded to Task Force and OLA Report Recommendations

With the exception of a few cases where a different course is explained, the Met Council has acted upon the recommendations from the 2017–2018 Task Force Report and the 2024 Office of Legislative Auditor Report as follows:

- Improve Opportunities for Customer Feedback: In addition to improving its complaint management process, the Met Council is now providing opportunities for users and other interested people to provide feedback twice per year via Met Council’s community conversations program.
- Implement a Family of Services: The Met Council has implemented and, through its website and outreach efforts, has encouraged the use of a family of DRT services, including Metro Mobility, Metro Move, POD, Metro Micro, and Transit Link.
- Increase the Number of Shared Rides: The Met Council decided not to increase but rather to decrease its productivity goals, which equates to a decrease in shared rides to boost OTP. This strategy has proven successful.
- Increase the Number of Direct Rides: This recommendation seems to contradict the previous recommendation for more shared rides. Metro Mobility, Metro Move, Transit Link and Metro micro are defined as shared-ride services. And, in the case of Metro Move, the service is inherently a *many-to-one* group trip, serving waiver clients living out in the community by bringing them to/from their day programs. That said, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Met Council implemented and has continued a new curbside service that allows customers to chain trips. Approximately 90% of the curbside trips are direct trips. Also, POD is an exclusive ride service.
- Coordinate Human Service Transportation Programs: The Met Council is responsible for developing Coordination Plan Updates every 5 years. These plans include coordination projects and strategies that have since been implemented, in part, using FTA Section 5310 funding.
- Coordinate with Waiver Transportation Programs and Medicaid Non-Emergency Medical Transportation (NEMT): The Met Council implemented Metro Move as a separate service for waiver transportation riders. The Met Council is not otherwise actively pursuing infusing Medicaid-sponsored NEMT trips into Metro Mobility because it would pose a significant logistical challenge that has the potential to impair ADA paratransit performance and the financial implications of providing such trips is unclear given the nature and requirements for NEMT trips. For these

reasons, very few large ADA paratransit systems coordinate with Medicaid NEMT. That said, there may be some potential benefit in seeking Medicaid sponsorship of dually eligible trips (i.e., ADA paratransit eligible and Medicaid NEMT eligible) that Metro Mobility is already serving. Further study on this is recommended.

- Coordinate with the Legislature’s Transportation Accessibility Advisory Committee: The Met Council regularly informs this committee of any anticipated changes to Metro Mobility.
- Provide Incentives to Private Companies to Increase the Number of Wheelchair-Accessible Vehicles (WAVs): Transit agencies nationwide have faced the challenge of incentivizing or compelling TNCs to provide adequate wheelchair-accessible service. Future research should identify best practices for achieving this goal. As part of the POD providers’ contracted rate structures, the Met Council allows providers to charge extra for WAV rides, with the Met Council covering 100% of the extra cost. This rate structure provides an incentive for prospective drivers to operate a WAV. The Met Council has also made it known to POD providers that the Met Council is allowed to donate retired accessible vehicles to taxi providers.
- Provide an On-Demand Option: The Met Council’s POD service has been in place since 2004 as an alternative service option for Metro Mobility customers. POD’s operating hours match those of Metro Mobility. POD’s operating hours were extended beyond Metro Mobility’s operating hours in September 2023 only during a pilot program that will sunset in December 2025. As noted previously, two new POD providers have since been added so that three different companies—one taxi company and two TNCs—are available to provide trips. In addition, the Met Council added Metro micro as a general public, curb-to-curb, on-demand service in September 2022. Providing an on-demand ADA paratransit-compliant service is ill-advised because it would require an unsustainable budget.
- Increase Driver Consistency: To the extent possible, Metro Mobility and Metro Move contractors strive to assign the same driver to standing orders (on each day of the week that the standing order is served).
- Provide Customers with a No Escort Option: The Met Council also has a long-running policy where Metro Mobility customers may ask for a reasonable modification. However, there is no specific mention of an escort waiver as an example of a reasonable modification, nor a form to fill out. The Study Team is recommending that one or both be done.
- Shorten the Pickup Window: Met Council’s default span for both pickup windows and drop-off windows is 30 minutes, corresponding to the Met Council’s 93% OTP goal, which is in the upper range for peers and well above the minimum OTP of 90% suggested by FTA guidelines. Shortening the pickup window from 30 minutes to 20 minutes would cause a significant decline in OTP. Only two of the top 10 ADA paratransit services (in New York City and Los Angeles) have 20-minute pickup windows. Such an action is not recommended at this time.
- Increase Sedan Service: Met Council has historically and intentionally kept a uniform fleet. The current fleet mix is 93% WAVs and 7% non-WAVs, with most of the WAVs being cutaways with 8 seats and 3 wheelchair positions, while the non-WAVs include larger capacity minibuses and sport utility vehicles (SUVs). Riders, as well as contractor managers and drivers, are all in favor of adding smaller non-accessible vehicles to the current fleet—a strategy emulated by many of the larger paratransit service in the United States. The Study Team suggests that the percentage of non-WAVs (sedans and SUVs) be increased to at least 10% and possibly ratcheted up to 20% over time. The POD service is predominantly served with sedans, and Metro micro is served with smaller,

accessible vehicles.

- **Evaluate Driver Wages:** The Met Council conducted market analyses in 2021 and 2022 to evaluate driver wages. These analyses resulted in a \$2.00 per hour increase with a subsequent additional \$3.00 per hour increase for a total increase of \$5.00 per hour.
- **Explore New Technologies:** In addition to upgrading its current technology (Trapeze), along with various improvements scheduled for later this year, the Met Council explored the new Ecolane scheduling/dispatching technology in 2019–2021 as a pilot on Transit Link. However, the pilot using Ecolane software and tablets was not successful and was discontinued in 2021. In addition, Spare Lab’s technology is currently being used for the Metro micro microtransit service (Spare also has software that supports ADA paratransit). The Met Council has continued to monitor the market for alternatives. And, as noted previously, the Study Team recommends that the Met Council begin exploring scheduling/dispatching software options using a two-step RFI/RFP process.
- **Miscellaneous Actions Not Taken:** The Met Council did not follow up on the recommendation to provide a shared-ride, non-accessible alternative or opt-in service because this would clearly violate the ADA. The Met Council has not yet operationalized conditional eligibility for either federally mandated or State-mandated Metro Mobility trips but is open to pursuing such actions. In response to suggestions to differentiate the level of service between the federally mandated and State-mandated service areas, the Met Council has opted to keep the fare levels and service standards the same, noting that State-mandated trips with trips lengths of 15 miles or more are subject to an additional 75 cent surcharge.

5. Summary of Recommendations

The table below contains a summary of the Study Team’s recommendations and maps these recommendations to their discussion in the technical report. Recommendations are ordered according to their appearance in the technical report.

No.	Recommendation for Met Council	Technical Report Section
*1	Mention an escort waiver as an example of a reasonable modification to Metro Mobility’s procedures and policies.	Section 2.15
*2	Create a reasonable modification form so Metro Mobility users can request reasonable modifications (e.g., an escort waiver).	Section 2.15
*3	Consider extending the Metro Mobility contract term to 10 years in the next Metro Mobility procurement.	Section 6.2.1
4	Explore owning or leasing the Metro Mobility/Metro Move operations and maintenance facilities.	Section 6.2.1
*5	Consider changing Metro Mobility’s contractor payment structure to a split structure (a fixed fee plus variable rate) in the next Metro Mobility procurement.	Section 6.2.2

No.	Recommendation for Met Council	Technical Report Section
6	Calculate key performance metrics for each call center function, date, and hour to better monitor call center performance. If possible, separate data by federally mandated and State-mandated trips.	Section 6.6.4
7	Modify the phone tree to separate reservation calls from service-day calls.	Section 7.6.3
*8	Improve driver-dispatcher communication. Work to reduce the driver-to-dispatcher ratio. Consider requiring a 20:1 driver-to-dispatcher ratio in future Metro Mobility provider contracts.	Section 7.6.3
9	Increase the proportion of Metro Mobility’s fleet that is non-WAVs to at least 10% (potentially increasing to 20% over time).	Section 7.10.1
10	Work toward providing enough Metro Mobility vehicles so that contractors can have more than a 10% spare ratio—one that takes into account current operational and fleet conditions.	Section 7.10.1
*11	Do not extend the zero-denial policy for Metro Mobility to the state-mandated service area.	Section 8.4
*12	Fix the Trapeze issue associated with scheduling pickup times for appointment trips.	Section 16.2 and Section 19.7
*13	Train reservation agents to state a <i>be ready window</i> to Metro Mobility users rather than a specific pickup time when confirming trip booking details. Update online booking interfaces to do the same.	Section 17.3
14	Implement a consistent approach to scheduling across all Metro Mobility contractors and retain a run-cutting expert with Trapeze skills to perform a full run cut.	Section 18.1 and Section 19.2
15	Investigate the potential benefits to Metro Mobility from centralizing scheduling, eliminating the provider zones, and/or centralizing other call-and-control center functions (e.g., reservations, scheduling, dispatching, and responding to service-day calls).	Section 18.6.2
16	Explore options for demand-responsive scheduling/dispatching software using a two-step RFI/RFP process.	Section 18.6.3
*17	Continue to replace the Rangers with DriverMate loaded on tablets.	Section 19.1
18	Augment Metro Mobility’s in-department IT staff to solve mission-critical needs (especially if decentralized scheduling and Trapeze use continue).	Section 19.2
*19	Add the missed trip percentage and MBRC performance standards (and associated bonuses and credits) to Metro Mobility provider contracts.	Section 19.7

No.	Recommendation for Met Council	Technical Report Section
20	Develop procedures for detecting patterns that might indicate a capacity constraint on Metro Mobility (i.e., based on denials, untimely trips, missed trips, long ride times, and long hold times in the call center, etc.) associated with specific geographies, days and times of day, or rider/population subgroups.	Section 19.7
*21	Fix several Metro Mobility data tracking and reporting issues related to denials, missed trips, and OTP.	Section 19.7
*22	Update Metro Mobility complaint processing procedures and add a new step to send a final resolution or closure letter to all complainants.	Section 19.8
*23	Enforce a more consistent approach to handling no-show requests.	Section 19.9.3
*24	Allow contractors to use their current vehicle maintenance software as long as those systems can effectively integrating their data with the Met Council's new Hexagon EAM.	Section 19.9.5
*25	Allow the Metro Mobility Enhancement Pilot Program (i.e., POD extended hours) to sunset in December 2025.	Section 20.3

Note: An asterisk (*) indicates that the Met Council has already implemented or is in the process of implementing the recommendation.

ADA = Americans with Disabilities Act; EAM = Enterprise Management System; IT = information technology; MBRC = miles between road calls; POD = Premium On-Demand; OTP = on-time performance; RFI = request for information; RFP = request for proposal; WAV = wheelchair-accessible vehicle

Appendix A: Minnesota Legislature Directive

Section 125. HF No. 5247, Conference Committee Report of the 93rd Legislature (2023-2024): METRO MOBILITY ENHANCEMENTS REPORT.

(a) The commissioner of transportation must, in consultation with the chair of the Metropolitan Council, perform a Metro Mobility enhancement and service study and develop recommendations to improve the efficiency, effectiveness, reliability, dignity, and experience of riders of the special transportation service under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.386.

(b) The study must include:

- (1) an evaluation of the Metropolitan Council's efforts to deliver improvements in the reliability, effectiveness, and efficiency of services as required by state and federal law, including workforce and procurement efforts to meet the demand for Metro Mobility services;
- (2) an analysis of the extent to which Metro Mobility can fully meet demand for its services in both the federally defined and state-defined services areas, including a comprehensive examination of the Metropolitan Council's on-demand taxi alternative for Metro Mobility-certified riders and Metro Move services;
- (3) an evaluation of whether Metro Mobility met performance goals for the fulfillment of ride requests in the state-mandated service area under Minnesota Statutes, section 473.386, subdivision 1, paragraph (a);
- (4) an analysis of whether state service requirements in law should be amended to prohibit or restrict the denial of ride requests in the state-mandated service area and whether such a requirement in service can be met with existing resources;
- (5) suggested improvements to the Metropolitan Council's oversight and management of its reservation and dispatch structure and a detailed analysis and recommendations on a Metropolitan Council-operated centralized reservation system;
- (6) a comprehensive analysis of the Metropolitan Council's oversight and management of transit providers contracted to provide rides for Metro Mobility, including services plans, payment and bonus structure, and performance standards;
- (7) recommendations on the adequacy of the Metro Mobility complaints process and an evaluation of whether the Metropolitan Council receives all rider concerns and whether concerns are addressed appropriately;
- (8) an evaluation of the Metro Mobility enhancement pilot program instituted under Laws 2023, chapter 68, article 4, section 121;
- (9) an evaluation and assessment of how to implement the use of transportation network companies or taxi services to provide an enhanced service option in which riders may pay a higher fare than other users of Metro Mobility services;
- (10) an evaluation of the feasibility of nonsubsidized, subsidized, and tiered ride services handled by a dispatching service provider; and

(11) an analysis of and recommendations for comprehensive improvements in route coordination, call sequencing and customer service, integration with transportation network company applications, and cataloging rides for maximum efficiency and driver compensation.

(c) The Metropolitan Council must cooperate with the Department of Transportation and provide information requested in a timely fashion to implement and conduct the study.

(d) The commissioner must consult with interested parties and stakeholders in conducting the service study and report, including representatives from the Minnesota Council on Disability, American Council of the Blind of Minnesota, the Minnesota DeafBlind Association, the National Federation of the Blind's Minnesota chapter, metro-area private transportation companies, identified riders of Metro Mobility, transit providers, Metro Mobility drivers, the Board on Aging, the Department of Human Services, and any other interested party with experience in providing mobility services for disabled persons.

(e) By February 15, 2026, the commissioner must submit the report and findings to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over transportation policy and finance.

Appendix B: Connections Between Legislative Directive and Chapters in the Technical Report

Analysis	Location(s)
An evaluation of the Met Council's efforts to deliver improvements in the reliability, effectiveness, and efficiency of Metro Mobility, including workforce and procurement efforts to meet the demand for service.	Chapters 2–7 and 17
An analysis of the extent to which Metro Mobility fully meets the demand in both the federally mandated and State-mandated service areas, including a comprehensive examination of POD and Metro Move.	Chapters 8–11 and 20
An evaluation of whether Metro Mobility met performance goals for the fulfillment of ride requests in the State-mandated service area.	Chapters 12–14
An analysis of whether State service requirements should be amended to prohibit or restrict the denial of ride requests in the State-mandated service area and whether such a requirement can be met with existing resource.	Chapter 10
Suggested improvements to the Met Council's oversight and management of its reservation and dispatch structure and a detailed analysis and recommendations on a Met Council-operated centralized reservation system.	Chapters 6 and 18
A comprehensive analysis of the Met Council's oversight and management of Metro Mobility providers, including services plans, payment and bonus structures, and performance standards.	Chapter 6
Recommendations on the adequacy of the Metro Mobility complaints process and an evaluation of whether the Met Council receives all rider concerns and addresses concerns appropriately.	Chapters 6, 16, 17, and 19
An evaluation of the Metro Mobility enhancement pilot program.	Chapter 20
An evaluation and assessment of how to implement the use of TNCs or taxi services to provide an enhanced service option in which riders may pay a higher fare than other Metro Mobility users.	Chapter 17
An evaluation of the feasibility of nonsubsidized, subsidized, and tiered ride services handled by a dispatching service provider.	Chapter 17
An analysis of and recommendations for comprehensive improvements in route coordination, call sequencing and customer service, integration with TNCs, and cataloging rides for maximum efficiency and driver compensation.	Chapters 17 and 19

Analysis	Location(s)
Engagement with the Minnesota Council on Disability, American Council of the Blind of Minnesota, Minnesota DeafBlind Association, National Federation of the Blind's Minnesota chapter, metro-area private transportation companies, identified riders of Metro Mobility, transit providers, Metro Mobility drivers, Board on Aging, Department of Human Services, and any other interested party with experience in providing mobility services for disabled persons.	Chapters 15 and 16

POD = Premium On-Demand; TNC = transportation network company