

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, January 16, 2018 at 9:00 a.m. at the Mobility Training Center, 700 W. St. Germain St, St. Cloud, MN

The following individuals were in attendance: Debbie Anderson, Kim Hoff, Ryan Daniel, Jim Perez, Dave Green, Bruce Benner, Brenda Severson, David Williamsen, and Suzanne Driessen. Visitor: Jerry Schmitz, fixed route operator.

Welcome. Debbie welcomed everyone. Everyone introduced themselves.

Public Open Forum.

- 1) Open Discussion. Jerry mentioned he had a few of things he wanted to discuss: 1) the stop annunciation announces the stop too late – it is usually right at the stop instead of before so by the time person hears it, it's too late for the bus to stop. He gave the example of the stop by Burlington. Ryan asked if it says "now approaching Burlington" or does it just the intersection. Jerry said it says it right as you're going by the stop. When an operator is going 30 mph, they aren't able to stop until the next stop which is quite far away. 2) lights in shelters aren't working. He mentioned UVT apartments and Routes 8 & 9 and Country Manor (Route 22 & 32). 3) Passengers have asked if there is a possibility of having an app showing real time so if the bus is running late, especially in the extreme cold or heat, they wouldn't have to wait at the stop as long. 4) Passengers would like Route 31 to run an hour later, especially on the weekends. There are quite a few people that shop or work at WalMart.

Jim mentioned there are 65 shelters throughout the service area. Fourteen don't have any power or electricity or solar lights, and 6 are not working. Metro Bus maintenance facility staff wasn't able to fix them, so an electrician has gone out and fixed a few last week. The electrician that was hired to do the shelters had their first issue at Crossroads. When we went up on the roof to reset the circuit breaker, it sparked so our staff said they weren't going to touch it, so the electrician worked on it and there are now lights and heat. It's not as warm as it could be but it's working. Bruce commented that in one shelter there is only one bulb working and the other shelter has two for a total of three. Jim stated he wasn't sure why, because each unit can have three bulbs, so he didn't know if some of the contacts in the heating elements aren't working. He mentioned they can do two things: take everything out completely and not put anything back or see if they can get them all working. Another option would be to see if we can get some funds to put something new in that doesn't cost as much in electricity. Dave mentioned when he was a conference this past summer, he specifically looked at solar lights for shelters and bus stops and found it is very expensive.

Ryan asked about the stop annunciator. Dave explained the announcement times are pulled from the GPS, so they would have to see if there is a way for the system to update faster or maybe there is a setting that can be adjusted. He will talk to Steve in IT about adjusting it.

Bruce said thanks because the radio bus passes are now being sold at Crossroads. Debbie said she had called the radio station and they told her that they couldn't sell them at the mall, that people could call and order them online or order over the

phone and it's free shipping but they couldn't sell them at the mall due to safety reasons. Bruce stated he purchased one the day before. Debbie said maybe they changed their mind.

Old Business.

- 1) RAC email. Debbie mentioned there weren't any emails.
- 2) Updates on December Open Discussion. a) Debbie mentioned the item about whether the RAC members ride the bus for free with their badge and stated it is still under investigation. b) Grace period on transfers. Jim didn't think that a decision had been made yet however in his conversation with bus operators, when a bus is late, they are honoring 2 hrs.+ on a transfer. Debbie stated if anyone is having a problem with that in the future, please alert staff to it. Dave explained it would be easier if he could be told about it. c) No Smoking signs in shelters. Debbie stated staff is still discussing what can be done. Berta (Marketing Manager) has looked at the rules and ordinances and one of the issues of having a rule that says you need to be 10 or 25 feet from a shelter, is that we don't necessarily own the property where the shelter sits, so we can't control the distance. It has been acknowledged that better or more visual signage would help. Jim stated they are also looking at the size of the signage. d) Bruce commented there continues to be pets on buses that don't have a service animal harness. Dave explained the way the law has changed we can't question them as to whether it's a service animal and they don't have to wear a harness. It could also be a companion animal. Debbie also mentioned people that have mental health issues will sometimes have a companion animal and it can be a good day/bad day situation. e) Jenny had brought up the topic of bus connections on route so it isn't always necessary to go to the Transit Center, particularly the Eastside not connecting with Rt. #22 on E. St. Germain. Debbie mentioned there isn't a lot that can be done at this time in regard to the time points not matching but will be something that will be looked at when route changes are made. Jim stated trying to make connections on all of the routes is difficult. He stated their best effort will be to review the routes over the next several months and see where there can be better timing and connections.

New Business.

- 1) Hockey Day Minnesota. Debbie handed out a flyer showing a free shuttle service to Lake George which will be on Saturday (Jan 20th).
- 2) Dave discussed a new route that is being worked on which will be called the Express Route. The route will run up and down Division Street. The hope is to attract more riders that want to ride the bus in the morning that are going from the east side to the west side of St. Cloud and don't want to have to ride multiple routes. Jim mentioned it is in the preliminary stages but they are looking at departing from Shopko East and going all the way to Parkwood 17 theatre and have limited stops along Division Street. He stated it will depend on funding but they are looking into an app that will show the next bus (for example – you are at the Transit Center and want to catch the Express route bus, you can check your phone and find out the bus will be one block away in two minutes). Jim stated he would like to also have a kiosk at Crossroads that will tell when the next bus will be arriving.
- 3) Two new Northstar Link buses are in operation and one more will be shortly. The one complaint has been the seats are too comfortable. 😊

Open Discussion.

Suzanne asked if people know they can call the Transit Center to see if the bus is running behind. Jerry mentioned he doesn't know if everyone knows that but what he has noticed as an operator is that dispatch can get flooded with calls, especially on bad weather days.

David asked if a survey could be done to see what interest there is for later weekend service.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:50 a.m.