

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, May 15, 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: Kim Hoff, Jim Perez, Doug Diedrichsen, Ed Yorek, Suzanne Driessen, David Williamsen, Bruce Benner, Jenny Svihel, Brenda Severson and Aisha Bah.

Welcome. Jim welcomed everyone and read the purpose of the RAC. Everyone introduced themselves.

Public Open Forum. Open Discussion. There was none.

Old Business.

- 1) Email. Jim commented that one email had come in and it was from Jenny of the RAC. He shared the email with the committee which stated that Jenny had taken some pictures of what is happening in the bus shelters as well as the bus. She had forwarded the pictures to Jim, along with the date, time and bus number and route. She also mentioned that people are vandalizing the shelters on Rt. 21/22 by Coborns in Sauk Rapids. They are putting up stickers and writing on the glass and also by Country Manor and Walmart in Sartell. Jim commented that the shelter by Country Manor is currently closed due to road construction and the shelter will be moved in the future, possibly two blocks east of where it is currently. Jim commented that he appreciated the information that was provided (date, bus #, etc.) so that the Maintenance Department can act on it.

New Business.

- 1) Ed Yorek (Director of Maintenance) presented a Maintenance Update. He stated the bus shelters are the biggest challenge in regard to graffiti. They are cleaned on a regular basis (once a week) and follow up is done at the beginning of the week as needed. They try to get to them as soon as possible if there is graffiti but this is an ongoing problem. Kim asked Jenny if she had a picture of the person actually doing the graffiti. Jenny said she did and had shown it to a street supervisor. She couldn't remember his name but knows what he looks like.

Ed mentioned that snow removal at the shelters was a topic of discussion at last month's meeting. He stated this is also a big challenge. The Walmart stores are responsible for the shelters at their locations, but if maintenance gets a call from a driver about a particular shelter that hasn't been cleaned, they will go out and clean it. Bruce asked if Walmart is responsible all the way to the curb. Ed said they are but Bruce said they didn't clean it out to the curb due to liability reasons. Ed was not aware of that. Suzanne asked if a cost/benefit analysis has ever been done in regard to bus shelters. Ed mentioned that was a good question and felt there were areas where shelters are highly used and some areas where they aren't used much. He didn't think there had ever been an analysis done. Ed explained that some shelters have been removed due to repeated vandalism. Jim mentioned it's interesting how some of the shelters are put up. There can be three or four people calling elected officials saying that they want a shelter. So sometimes, from a political aspect, a shelter is installed even though the usage/ridership is not that high. From an operation/planning

perspective, they would like to see a specific amount of people boarding from that location in order to make a decision to add a shelter (which can cost \$14,000).

Brenda brought up safety issues in regard to Metro Transit and asked what St. Cloud is doing? Jim mentioned that last month Dean (from the Training Dept) commented about looking at programs throughout the country on how to train the operators in regard to safety issues. Metro Transit is doing a pilot program where they are putting up barriers around the driver area. St. Cloud is not looking to do this at this time. He doesn't feel we have a lot of crime here but it's on everyone's mind.

Ed gave a quick update on the bus fleet. He explained that all of the Dial-a-Ride buses that have lifts are now out of service. There are only ramp buses being used. He stated that two-thirds of the fleet are CNG buses and there are eight new buses on order: 5 Dial-a-Ride and 3 fixed route.

- 2) Planning Update. Doug stated they are working on route enhancement/connection timing restructuring. He knows there are significant connection time issues between some of the buses both at the Transit Center, Walmart and Crossroads. He stated he is hoping to see the connection times under 15 minutes, some of the remote routes will be 30 minutes.

The next major project he is working on is the ADA Transition Plan which comes from the Federal level to the State and then to Metro Bus. The plan is essentially laying out how Metro Bus plans to become ADA compliant over phases in time. It won't happen all at once because we don't have the funding to do it but we will plan annually how much money will be allocated toward compliance. Doug has been given the approval to hire an intern for the summer/fall and they will be doing an entire network accessibility survey of all our stops. The intern will also be updating boarding data at stops to help prioritize the stops. They will also be accessing intermodal connections (how does the bus stop connect to sidewalks, walking paths, bike trails, etc.) Once that assessment is done, Doug will be working with local municipalities. He also mentioned he wants to look at all the scheduled road projects (county and municipal) out through the next five years so he will know where roads are being improved, so we can look at transit access. The final major project that he will be working on is that there will be two, big, new high schools being built that will need to be served by transit. (Tech H.S. on 33rd Avenue South in St. Cloud and Sartell H.S. on Pinecone Road). Bruce asked about Costco. Doug explained that they are already on three bus lines and wasn't too worried about it. He will be rearranging the service in that area because it's going behind Burlington Coat Factory and there isn't anything in that area to serve anymore.

Ridership. Bruce asked if there have been any changes to Route 33. Doug stated there weren't any plans at the moment. Jim handed out the monthly ridership report for the month of April, and Doug reported that we are at 7.16 passengers per hour (pph) on Route 33 and the goal is to get all of the routes close to 20 pph. There are only a few routes that reach that amount currently.

Jim explained how to read the ridership report and felt it was important the committee understood the data, so when staff comes back with information on routes that they would like to change, they will know the reason why and the data behind the decision.

Doug mentioned there is money available to hire a consultant to do a facilities study where they will look at all of the facilities included within Metro Bus and project the needs for the future. One of the things that will most likely be addressed is having a facility on the west end of St. Cloud where we currently don't have anything.

There was also discussion about St. Joseph. Doug stated that eventually the census bureau will bring St. Joe into the metropolitan area (St. Cloud) and which point they will fall under the rules of needing public transit and that will have to be addressed.

Jim asked if everyone wanted the ridership sent out each month with the minutes. The consensus was that everyone wanted to receive it.

Open Discussion.

Bruce mentioned that the bus shelter closest to the hospital on Route 33 still doesn't have Route 33 departure information in it. He also mentioned that some operators are asking if a bush can be taken down because it blocks the view of the shelter. Jim explained that is hospital property and we aren't able to touch them but he thought that Gene from maintenance had been in contact with them last month, so he will need to follow up.

Suzanne asked about the fare forgiveness policy. She mentioned that on Route 4 – particularly by Place of Hope, there seems to be a lot of people that have don't have the full fare and the driver handles it well, but it makes it very uncomfortable for everyone on the bus. It happened a lot in March and April. Jim mentioned there is a policy and we don't want to give someone a hard time if they don't have enough money to ride the bus. Sometimes when the operator does demand they pay, it's because someone is abusing the fare forgiveness policy. When an operator sees a consistent issue, they will probably call a supervisor.

David asked if a survey can be done asking if people would like extended weekend hours, especially Saturdays. Doug stated that is one of the things he hopes to do when he talks about better frequency, better connections, and better service. The intern will be looking at all of these things. Staff is currently in training with a new software that will help make routes more efficient.

Jenny asked if college students are able to use their ID cards for free rides during the summer months because their cards aren't currently working. Jim wasn't sure of the answer but Kim stated if they are registered for classes, the passes should be valid.

Jenny also mentioned the interior advertising cards aren't all held in place very well because one of them fell down and hit her on the head and cut her. Ed mentioned some of them weren't made a perfect fit for the holders and it has been a problem to keep them inside the holders. Jim mentioned that the maintenance department has

been putting screws to hold them up for better securement. Ed wasn't sure what the permanent fix is but he will look at the situation again.

Brenda asked about having the driver's name posted somewhere behind the driver because she can't always see their name badge, and is embarrassed to ask the driver their name. She also asked if there could be a big umbrella on each bus for the driver to use.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.