

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, May 21st, 2019 at 9:00 am at the Mobility Training Center, 700 W St Germain, Cloud, MN.

The following individuals were present: Ryan Daniel, Doug Diedrichsen, Jill Justin, Nate Ramacher, Newton Mutuku, Bruce Benner, David Williamsen, Jenny Svihel and Jan Scott. Absent: Alexis Lutgen and Aisha Bah. Visitor: Vicki Williams--St Cloud APO.

Welcome. Ryan welcomed everyone and read the purpose of the RAC. Ryan introduced Jan Scott at the newest member of the RAC committee. Jan is a long time Dial-a-Ride user, and is looking forward to serving on the committee.

Public Open Forum. Open Discussion.

There was none.

Old Business.

Open Committee Positions:

Doug stated that there is one Fixed Route position still unfilled. Jenny has a possible candidate, but an application has not yet been received. Ryan again asked for the members help in recruiting people to fill the open position. Interested persons should submit an application.

New Business.

- 1) RAC email. There was none.
- 2) Ridership—Doug Diedrichson. The top performing route continues to be #91, with an average of 62 riders per hour. Among the core routes, #8 is averaging 22 riders per hour and routes #1 and #6 are both at 18.9 riders per hour. The Connex service has the lowest ridership, but is continuing to trend upward each month. Routes #10 and #33 are the other lowest performing routes. Overall, the fixed route service had about 16,000 fewer riders versus April of 2018—a decrease of approximately 3 riders per hour. Dial-a-Ride is increasing across the board, as has been the trend. The only exception is Sunday rides, which are down very slightly. 506 additional rides were provided April 2019 versus April 2018. Doug also announced that the Connex pilot service has been extended until 12/31/2019. Although the ridership is trending upward approximately 9% each month, it still has not met expectations. Due to changes in the #31, it is difficult to be completely accurate in comparing and tracking ridership. It was decided that more data should be gathered and analyzed before making a permanent decision on the future of the service. Some tweaks to the service hours will be made to better match the trends we are seeing. These will go into effect July 1, 2019.

Bruce mentioned an incident where a rider in a power chair fell off the ramp of the Connex bus. He asked what level of service the operator is expected to provide on the Connex service. Doug explained that since it is a fixed route service, riders are expected to enter/exit the bus with no assistance from the operator. In certain instances, such as the one Bruce described, one could expect basic assistance from the operator.

Vicki asked where Metro Bus was at with re-evaluating the Connex service—was using this model for route #10 still on the table? Doug stated this is an unknown at this time.

Metro Bus will concentrate on getting the service in Sartell ironed out before considering implementing this service model in other areas.

Ryan asked if anyone had been able to ride the Connex service. Jenny stated she has ridden frequently, and has found that the wait times seem to be improving. She also mentioned that there has been an issue with the Connex farebox reading valid transfers as invalid. Doug will speak to Steve in IT regarding this issue.

- 3) Marketing Update—Nate Ramacher. Nate introduced Newton Mutuku as the new Marketing Specialist. Newton comes from SCSU, where he is working on his Master's degree. His help is very appreciated!

Nate mentioned that the U-Go Free program is scheduled to start June 1. This program will run until August 31, and provides free rides for kids 17 and under. No pass is required this year, kids just need to let the operator know they are 17 or under. Jenny asked about potential abuse by persons who do not qualify for the program. Nate explained that the Operators are to report suspected abuses so that a Street Supervisor can address the issue with the rider. This program applies to Fixed Route buses only, and does not include Northstar Link or Dial-a-Ride services.

This year marks 50 years of Metro Bus service in our community. The service began in October of 1969. In the next month, a wrapped bus with the 50 Years of Service logo on it will be on the street. Other celebratory events will occur over the next few months.

Metro Bus is going to run a series of radio ads. Marketing is looking for 5 to 10 people to tell their story about why they ride the bus, or what the bus means to them. A sign-up sheet was circulated in the room, and Nate encouraged members to direct anyone they think might want to participate to get in touch with him.

The Benton County Fair is just two months away. Metro Bus has an information booth there for the duration of the fair, and will be looking for volunteers to staff it. As the time draws closer, sign-up sheets will be available.

Open discussion:

Jan mentioned that there was a posting in the Dial-a-Ride buses regarding the Release of Information forms. She suggested that the drivers have a stock of these forms available on the bus to give to riders. Ryan and Doug will look into this.

David mentioned that a neighbor of his was not provided with door-to-door service recently. David did not have the date of the incident, but Ryan and Doug will look into it. Members were reminded to have a date and time when incidents happen, so that they may be addressed in a timely manner.

Jenny asked about moving a bus stop closer to Executive Express and changing time points on routes #10 & #33 to facilitate transfers without radio traffic. These items are on the route restructure list. She also suggested a larger sign at Wal-Mart in St Cloud that directs persons going downtown to catch the bus at Arby's on 33rd for faster service. She also mentioned that she has been seeing vandalism on the buses recently.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:52 am.