

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, November 21, 2017 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, Brenda Severson, Jenny Svihel, Bruce Benner, David Williamsen, Suzanne Driessen, and Alexis Lutgen.

Welcome. Debbie welcomed everyone and read the purpose statement which was printed on the agenda. "The purpose of the RAC is to provide feedback and recommendations for improving operational or service issues affecting Metro Bus riders. Members also will have input on the organization's ongoing long-range transit plan. Members of this committee will also act as ambassadors for Metro Bus."

New Members. Debbie announced there were some new committee members and that Karen and Janice have elected to resign from the committee at this time. She asked everyone to go around the room and introduce themselves and explain why they are serving on the committee. Alexis Lutgen (new member) introduced herself. She works for United Way with the Community Impact sites and works with the programs that they fund. The three areas she works in are early learning- early literacy, access to food and homelessness. Transportation comes up a lot in these areas.

#### Public Open Forum.

- 1) Open Discussion. There was no one in attendance.

Volunteer Opportunities. Debbie announced the next volunteer opportunity will be the Jolly Trolley Food Drive the week of December 11<sup>th</sup>. The event is held at a different grocery store each evening Monday thru Friday from 4-7pm. Debbie passed around a sign-up sheet for anyone that was interested, or they could contact Debbie at a later time.

#### Old Business.

- 1) RAC email. Debbie mentioned there weren't any emails from October or November.
- 2) Updates on September Open Discussion. a) Debbie mentioned the hospital construction was completed. She spoke with Gene about the bushes and they are hospital property, so we are not able to trim them. Bruce asked if we could contact the hospital about trimming the bushes. b) Smoking is happening in the shelters and it was asked if we could have bigger No Smoking signs. Debbie mentioned that size doesn't matter. The Transit Center is now smoke free but they are constantly having to remind people to not smoke on the property. If an operator sees someone smoking in a shelter, they are asked to write it up as an incident report and a street supervisor will investigate. Bruce commented on the Crossroads shelter. He has asked people to not smoke and he gets sworn at. Ryan stated he doesn't want people to get into an altercation about it. We're not police officers so we can't enforce the law, we can only remind them of our rules and regulations. c) Journey Home strollers. There is a posting at the Operations Center to remind the operators to let the passengers know they need to take the child out and collapse the stroller and put it under the seat and out of the aisle. Debbie mentioned that Kim goes to Journey Home once a month and does an orientation on riding the bus to the new residents, and she explains the

stroller policy. d) Stop Annunciation not working in some of the buses. Steve and Ken in the IT department has fixed the buses with problems. e) Karen Maruska (previous committee member who is an Orientation/Mobility Specialist) had volunteered to do an in-service training for the operators on visually impaired passengers and what we can do to help make our system more accessible. The training department has been notified of her offer. f) There was a site in the community that is considered to be more of a clinic and so now medical returns can be given from this location on Dial-a-Ride.

### New Business.

- 1) Welcome new Chief Operations Officer – Jim Perez. Jim announced that he has sat on a number of different committees similar to the RAC over the years and he thanked everyone for participating and giving feedback. He mentioned that not all suggestions/changes can be implemented but along the way we can become more efficient and effective in how we serve the public. He started his career in the 80's in San Diego working with ADA/Paratransit, working his way up. He put in a little over 20 yrs. in San Diego, then moved to the State of Kansas and worked for the Secretary of Transportation and oversaw 70 transit providers. After that he went to Central Maryland for a few years, and then moved to Billings, Montana. He looks forward to working with everyone and hopes to make changes.
- 2) MPTA Conference updates. Ryan thanked everyone that came to the conference. Jenny was able to meet some FTA staff from Chicago and she had good things to say about Metro Bus and they were very impressed with the success story that she had to share. Brenda and Bruce were disappointed because they thought more information was going to be sent about the conference and they never received anything so did not attend the conference. Debbie apologized for the miscommunication and emphasized that in the future, if anyone is unsure, to be sure and contact staff at the Mobility Center. Debbie explained the Mobility Center's participation in the conference. There was a 2 hour presentation on Travel Training and Community Outreach which was a huge success. There was another system that also presented on their Community Outreach program as well. We also hosted two separate groups that came for a tour of the building and explained how the building and program started, as well as restoration costs.
- 3) Metro Bus System Updates. Ryan mentioned there are some challenges that are being looked at on a daily basis in regard to ridership – how can we improve our service and improve our product? Metro Bus did a route evaluation study two years ago, during which Phase I was implemented on the fixed route. The ridership numbers aren't what was expected, so we are going to look at the system again and are looking at doing some innovative things but he didn't want to "let the cat out of the bag too much because it's top secret". He did give an example: Sartell route is only about 3-4 passengers per hour which is a low performing route. They call it a neighborhood circulator bus which runs hourly. This is a prime prospect where we could look at tearing it apart and make it more efficient and decrease the route time from an hour and a half to 45 minutes. Southwest Transit in Eden Prairie is doing something that Metro Bus staff has visited and are looking at as far as what technology, etc. are they utilizing. Ryan is hoping changes will attract the choice riders.

### Open Discussion.

- 1) Bruce mentioned that the heat lamps at Crossroads shelter need to be either fixed or taken out. A lot of people are complaining about it.
- 2) It's hard for senior citizens to get to WJON to get their reduced passes. He wondered if people could use their Freedom Cards and get the reduced passes at the Transit Center. Kim explained that the radio station will mail them at no charge. Bruce stated that people don't want to give a credit or debit card number over the phone, so they won't do that. She explained the passes sold by WJON is a program they offer, it isn't something that Metro Bus can provide. They offer reduced bus passes in exchange for radio advertising. The Freedom Card allows people with disabilities or if you're 65 yrs. or older, you get a reduced cash fare on the bus.
- 3) If transfers are good for two hours and the bus is late, the operators should be honoring the transfer but they are not.
- 4) Debbie has been talking with staff about having reduced fares available all the time, not only during off peak hours.
- 5) Bruce asked which radio stations sell the reduced passes.
- 6) Jenny asked about having a holiday light tour again on the bus, like was done many years ago. Debbie stated because that was a long time ago, the rules and regulations may prevent us from doing that type of service now. Brenda mentioned that we had this discussion a year or two ago. Brenda suggested that we talk to the radio stations or the newspaper to partner with Metro Bus and do a contest to help share the expense. Ryan stated he would talk with the Marketing team about this idea.
- 7) Brenda stated that great improvement is needed on Dial-a-Ride hours not meeting the Link bus hours, especially in the morning hours. There is only one time in the morning and one time in the evening. It's very hard to plan doctor appointments around this schedule.
- 8) Bruce asked about Route 33 going to Wal-Mart. Ryan stated he will take it back to the Operations team again.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:06 a.m.