

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, March 19, 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, Bruce Benner, David Williamsen and Jenny Svihel. Absent: Alexis Lutgen and Aisha Bah. Visitor: Vicki Williams--St Cloud APO.

Welcome. Ryan welcomed everyone and read the purpose of the RAC.

Public Open Forum. Open Discussion.  
There was none.

Old Business.

Open Committee Positions. Dial-a-Ride rider Janet Scott submitted an application to join the committee. Doug will reach out to her and conduct a short interview by phone, and a background check will be conducted. Two open positions for fixed route representatives still remain. Bruce suggested a campaign, or letting people know of the free bus pass provided for committee members. Ryan stated that Metro Bus wants people to serve on the committee because of an interest in public transit, not for the benefit of a bus pass. Ryan and Doug will continue to try to recruit members from the community.

New Business.

- 1) RAC email. A new fixed route customer, Jenny Benson, sent an email thanking RAC member Jenny for helping her as a new rider on our service. Thank you, Jenny! Ryan reminded members to refer customers to the call center or transit center for additional help when they are unsure or unaware of the answers to customer questions.
- 2) Ridership—Doug Diedrichson. There was a change in the top performing routes for February. Route 8 moved to the top position with an average of 28 riders per hour, followed by route 11, averaging 21 riders per hour and route 1 averaging 20 riders per hour. This is a new trend we have not seen in the past. The lowest performing routes are again the Connex (but trending upward), followed by routes 33 and 10. The top SCSU route continues to be route 91. Dial-a-Ride continues to grow in all areas. Vicky asked if there was evidence that the weather impacted ridership in February. Doug stated that ridership was down significantly compared to February 2018, and we could safely assume that much of this was due to significant snowfall, extremely cold temperatures and business/school closures.

Open discussion:

Bruce mentioned that he observed a bus at the Transit Center parked in the correct slot, but the marquee had not been changed to reflect the correct route number. Riders had to switch buses at Skylight Gardens when they realized the error. Ryan stated that there can be a delay when the marquee is changed.

Ryan asked if any members had a chance to use the new Connex service. Jenny stated she has, and asked if riders could tell dispatch they had to get to work versus a leisure trip in order to ensure they can get to work on time. Doug stated that we currently do not prioritize rides and advised that people allow ample time when they need to get to work. If the service continues, Metro Bus would like to develop an app for ride scheduling. Doug also noted that the peak times have not been consistent, and it has been difficult at times for operators to

take breaks as scheduled. Metro Bus will continue to collect this type of data so that the service may be improved if it becomes permanent. Doug will be presenting a report on the first three months of Connex service performance to the Board of Commissioners. An article will appear in the St Cloud Times in the near future as well. Jill asked whether Doug had a gut feeling as to whether the service would become permanent or not. He stated that it is too early to speculate, but did note that the ridership is trending upward. Once the demand appears to plateau, we will be able to plan for actual demand. If the pilot is deemed a success and the service becomes permanent, Metro Bus will then look to use this model in other underserved or unserved areas.

David suggested that Dial-a-Ride Sunday service be extended by an hour both at the beginning and end of the current service day. He suggested conducting a survey to determine if rider demand exists. Bruce also suggested extending Saturday service to match the current weekday service. Ryan explained that on weekday evenings, ridership is very light. Metro Bus would need to justify adding service by showing a ridership need. He also noted that any added service hours would have to be for both services to comply with ADA requirements, which makes it quite costly to add service.

Bruce stated that at the Burlington stop on the route 3 is confusing to riders. At peak times, the inbound and outbound routes cross paths, so it is very easy for riders to board the bus going in the wrong direction. He asked if the direction of travel could be displayed on the marquee in addition to the route number. Doug will check with Steve Williams in IT to see if this is a possibility. It was also suggested that the enunciator be expanded to announce the current stop and the next stop.

Bruce also questioned the possibility of eliminating the bus stop on Division Street, next to Midtown Square. This stop poses a safety concern for riders, who tend to cross Division Street in the middle of the block and the difficulty operators have getting back into traffic from this stop. Doug stated that this is a very heavily used bus stop and there are no other viable bus stop options in that area, so for now, this is the best option. Vicky suggested the possibility of installing a mid-block crosswalk, but Doug felt it would be unlikely that MNDot would agree to another thing that would slow down traffic in that area.

Bruce stated that the entrance to Costco is a long walk from the bus stop. Doug stated that traditionally, Costco has not been particularly transit friendly, as their customers are rarely transit users. Once the road to the entrance has been completed, it will become a city street, and Metro Bus can then approach the city regarding installing a bus stop closer to the entrance. Doug also stated that the skate park and the history museum are in need of bus service, so we will be looking at that area when we work on restructure and enhancements during the next fiscal year.

Bruce asked if there were plans to move the Shopko east bus shelter now that Shopko is closing. Doug stated that we will wait and see what happens to the building before making any decisions.

Bruce also noted that the bus shelter at Coborn's in Sauk Rapids is often very dirty, which could be a deterrent to bus ridership. Ryan stated that we have two shelter cleaners, and they were both very busy with excessive snow removal this winter. Snow removal has to be a priority due to safety concerns. Metro Bus will keep an eye on this, and may ask for assistance from Coborn's in the future.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:47 am.