

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, September 17, 2019 at 10:00 am at the Mobility Training Center, 700 W St Germain, Cloud, MN.

The following individuals were present: Ryan Daniel, Doug Diedrichsen, Jill Justin, Berta Hartig, Bruce Benner, Jan Scott, Kelly Carlson, Paul Thomas and David Williamsen. Absent: Aisha Bah, Alexis Lutgen and Jenny Svihel. Visitors: none.

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

Public Open Forum. Open Discussion.

No one was present to speak.

Old Business.

- 1) Missing stop at 22<sup>nd</sup> St S & Red Fox Road—Doug contacted maintenance to replace this bus stop.
- 2) Clarification of DAR door-thru-door policy—Berta explained that the operator will pick up and drop off riders at the first door of a building. When a vestibule area is present, the operator will assist the customer through the vestibule door as needed, but will not enter the building. At personal homes, the operator can meet the rider at a garage door, but would not be able to enter a garage to get to the door into the house. Bruce stated that he has seen operators go into buildings to find riders. Berta asked that these issues be reported to either customer service or her. This is so that operator schedules stay on time, everyone is able to get the same level of service and any potential liability issues are avoided.
- 3) October event transportation—Ryan checked with members to see if they had arranged for personal transportation to the event. It appeared everyone had an option for transportation. Paul mentioned that Elite Taxi accommodates wheelchairs.

New Business.

- 1) RAC email. There was none.
- 2) Ridership—Doug Diedrichson. Although the rides per hour were down slightly, Routes 1 and 2 were the top performing routes in August, followed by route 6. The lowest performing route was again the ConneX service, but a 'milestone' was reached—over 2000 rides provided during the month. Routes 10 and 33 continue to be at the bottom as well. Dial-a-Ride ridership was up on the weekends, but had a very slight decline on weekdays. Doug explained that most important statistic is the rides per hour, as this is adjusted when there is a reduction in service hours.
- 3) Dial-a-Ride Update—Berta Hartig. Berta Hartig, Dial-a-Ride Operations Manager, gave an update on the service. She showed us a ridership graph covering the last 5 fiscal years. This shows a fairly consistent increase until the larger increase of 10% FY2018 versus FY 2019. The busiest times for Dial-a-Ride is from 7 am to 4 pm weekdays, 10 am to 5 pm Saturdays and 9 am to 1 pm Sundays. Berta uses this type of information to determine Operator work schedules.  
Fixed Route is now servicing the new Sartell High School and the new Tech High School. This necessitated an update to the Dial-a-Ride service area, as service is provided  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile from the Fixed Route service.

Five new Dial-a-Ride buses will be on the road in FY 2019, 2 of which are already in service. There will be 9 buses replaced in FY 2019, and 5 in FY 2020.

Our Dial-a-Ride scheduling software was updated to use 'street routing' when creating operator schedules, which will improve accuracy and efficiency. All Call Center dispatchers had refresher training on scheduling rides in August. In September, the software company will be providing training for Berta, supervisors and dispatchers. Software settings are being tweaked to increase efficiency.

#### Open discussion:

Via email, Jenny mentioned that since Route 21 has been on detour, she has been missed at her stop on the 11:15 am run. It appears there is confusion regarding the path this bus takes when servicing the high school. Doug has brought this to Fixed Route Operations Manager Shawn's attention. Jenny also mentioned that she has noticed a lot of trash and vandalism at some shelters (specifically, St Cloud Surgical Center, Coborns—Sauk Rapids, Cashwise East, Crossroads Mall and Good Shepherd Apartments). Doug stated that maintenance is aware of the shelters that experience a lot of trash and vandalism, and they do their best to address these shelters, along with all the others in town. Bruce mentioned that the glass is still broken out of the shelter at the St Cloud Surgical Center. Doug stated that it is on the list for repair, but there is an issue with getting the materials needed to do so. He will check with Maintenance Specialist Gene on the progress of this repair. Bruce suggested changing the paving blocks (which are used to break the glass) to wood slabs.

Bruce mentioned that some Dial-a-Ride operators don't like the new buses, as they can only comfortably load 3 wheelchairs at a time and loading 4 is very tight. Berta mentioned that the seat configuration may be changed on future buses. Ryan explained that when new buses are ordered, Metro Bus uses input from senior operators, the training department and operations staff throughout the process.

Jan mentioned that she had a scheduled ride on a Saturday. Her bus was approximately an hour late. When she called dispatch to ask on the status of her ride, she was told that they were looking for a bus for her. Her return ride was also very late. She suggested that we have an operator on call so that we have someone available to cover for a sick operator.

Ryan asked that RAC members be mindful of conversations they are having with employees on the buses regarding policies and personnel matters. Their role as ambassadors is to focus on the positive things Metro Bus has to offer the public, and bring feedback from the public to the committee meetings.

Kelly mentioned that she recently had some trouble trying to find a time schedule for Route 31 on the website. Berta displayed the website for the group, and showed that you can click on a bus stop to display the time of the next bus, or scroll to the bottom of the page to find the PDF version of the schedules. Kelly stated that it would be helpful if some direction regarding this were on the page. Doug will share this feedback with Marketing.

Bruce stated that he recently had a ride that was scheduled at the wrong time, and Jan had one scheduled to the wrong location. Berta asked that these errors be reported to customer service, so that they can be investigated and addressed as needed. Bruce stated that he does not want to get anyone into trouble, and Berta explained that is not about getting anyone in trouble, it is about watching for patterns and improving our service. We are unable to fix issues if we do not know about them. Jan mentioned that the operator noticed that her ride was scheduled to the wrong place, and had it updated with dispatch. Kelly has also experienced operators helping her and others getting to the correct place. Both of them appreciated this very much as riders.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:51 am.