

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, December 17, 2019 at 10:00 am at the Metro Bus Operations Center, 665 Franklin Avenue NE, Cloud, MN.

The following individuals were present: Doug Diedrichsen, Ryan Daniel, Kim Hoff, Bruce Benner, Jan Scott, Jenny Svihel, David Williamsen, Paul Thomas and Vicki Johnson. Absent: Kelly Carlson and Aisha Bah.

Welcome. Ryan thanked everyone for coming and read the purpose of the RAC. He announced that Vicki has taken Alexis Lutgen's place on the Committee and also that Aisha has resigned from the committee. Ryan is looking at a replacement person from CentraCare for Aisha.

Public Open Forum.

- 1) Open Discussion. There was no one.

Old Business.

- 1) Vicki mentioned that she followed up on Bruce's comments about the smoking issue in the bus shelters. The response she received was from Wayne, the Sartell Chief of Police. He stated he would have to look at the statutes but Metro Bus needs to post No Smoking signs in an attempt to enforce it themselves; first asking the person to stop smoking or leave and then local law enforcement could be called. He did not feel there was a law that stated you had to be a certain distance from the shelter. Doug stated we will need to work with the local member jurisdictions to get an ordinance for bus stops/shelters. He gave the example of the St. Cloud Library which has an ordinance that says you have to be 50 feet from the doors. Since Metro Bus serves all four cities, we will need an ordinance from each city. He stated they have an ordinance for their public buildings, so we might need to just get an amendment to that ordinance to include bus stops. Doug will look into this.
- 2) Doug reminded everyone the Respectful Workplace/Confidentiality training has been scheduled for next month after the RAC meeting. He asked that everyone try to be present for the meeting and to figure the training to last 60-90 minutes. The training will be held in the same room following the RAC meeting at the Mobility Training Center.
- 3) Doug gave an example of something that should not be shared by committee members with the public until a final decision has been made. He stated that staff will be recommending to the Board of Directors later in the day, to continue ConneX with modified service hours, but that the final decision will be one that the Board will make. Ryan mentioned that the Board meetings are open to the public and anyone is welcome to attend.
- 4) Jenny asked if anyone had looked into a crosswalk by Country Manor. Vicki mentioned it is a county owned road which will make it a harder sell for them to put in a crosswalk. It will be part of the Active Transportation Plan, along with a crossing by the VA Hospital/apartments.
- 5) Name tags: Ryan mentioned the management team met and discussed this item and they decided to not pursue additional name plates because all employees already have ID's. If an operator doesn't wish to show their ID with their name, a customer has

the option to file a complaint with the date, time and bus number. Jan said whenever she asks the operators name, they always tell her.

- 6) Jan brought up that something needs to be done for the Dial-a-Ride users who are waiting too long for their already previously scheduled rides. They have had to wait almost two hours sometimes. She gave the example of last Saturday, Dec. 14th. She had called on December 11th and scheduled a ride for 10:30 am pick up to go to an 11am appointment. She was downstairs at 10:15 waiting for the bus. Finally at 11:30, she called asking when her bus was coming and the dispatcher said, "Jan, I'm going to be very honest with you but we don't even have a bus for you yet. Every bus is busy and doing double time." Jan said, "if you can't give me a time, then I'm going to have to call a cab because my appointment was for 11." She called a cab and it cost her \$10 to go there and \$10 to go home. She has heard girls crying (dispatchers) in the background because they are so stressed out and threatening to quit because they can't stand the stress. The operators are also stressed out and they're asking Jan to please bring this up at the RAC meeting, to speak for them. She told them to be patient and she would bring it up at the meeting. Because there was a driver that called in sick on Saturday, is what threw everybody off. She suggested that maybe some of the newer operators could be called in or be on call when they're needed. She is worried that people are going to quit. It wasn't just one operator that has brought this up to her. She stated there was another time where she had been waiting 45 minutes and they called out over the radio can someone please pick up Jan Scott and only then did someone come to get her.

Ryan apologized for this happening. He wasn't in town that day but asked if it was a bad weather day. Jan said no, it was a regular day but everyone was running an hour late. Ryan asked her what the operators are stressed about. Jan stated it is stressful for them when they can't be there on time to pick up people. They try so hard to keep the appointments that are scheduled and if there are too many people that they have to pick up, they end up being late for some and they complain to the operator.

Ryan mentioned they train the operators to be safe first, then service, and then the schedule. If an operator is twenty minutes late, and they took their time and followed the rules and regulations of the authority to make sure they're safe to pick up their passenger, then they are doing their job well. If the operator is saying they are stressed because there's traffic and they're late for a pick up, that is not a reason to be stressed. That is something that needs to be worked on internally because the operators are trained safety, service and then the schedule. If an operator is worried about being late because they were supposed to pick up someone at a certain time, and they rush and cut corners to be on time, then they're putting the passenger at risk. Jan understood what he was saying but she didn't feel that an hour and a half late was acceptable. He stated that manpower is an issue and we can't control how many people are going to call in sick. Ryan asked Jan if this was the first time that she had to wait an hour and a half. She said no, this wasn't the first time that this had happened to her. This was not an isolated situation. Ryan explained that we need to work on customer service and how the dispatchers respond to situations like this. Even though the news may not be something the customer wants to hear, it needs to be positive.

Bruce thinks the stress that operators are referring to is because they build a rapport with a lot of their customers and when they're late in picking them up, they really feel sorry that they are late.

New Business.

- 1) RAC email. There was no email.
- 2) Ridership. Route 8 is again the top performing route in November followed by Routes 1 and 2. The lowest performing route was again the ConneX service, but it has been gaining ridership. The biggest concern is the base system of fixed route is down 15,000 rides from last year. He mentioned there was a slight drop in ridership for Dial-a-Ride.
- 3) Radio spots. Doug mentioned the radio spots are being broadcast on Tri-County Broadcasting: AM 540, AM 800 and AM 1010.

Open discussion: a) Bruce said the Route #33 schedule is still not in the shelter by Grace McDowall apartments and the light still isn't fixed. b) Jenny asked on Route 33 which way are they supposed to enter Crossroads? She said different drivers do it different ways. Doug stated it depends on the amount of snow and condition of the parking lot. c) Jan thanked staff for asking the dispatchers to say their names. Bruce mentioned that one dispatcher is really soft and he has asked her to speak louder. d) Jenny asked if we could do a reminder to the operators that sometimes people stand in a driveway or street if the bus stop has a lot of snow by it.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:50 am.

The employee appreciation lunch followed the meeting out in the garage.