

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held an in-person meeting at the Mobility Training Center and streamed simultaneously on Microsoft Teams on Tuesday February 20th, 2024, at 10:02 AM. The meeting was held to discuss ridership updates, hear new updates about Metro Bus's Long Range Transit Plan, as well as various other questions.

The following individuals attended: Michael Kedrowski, Jenny Svihel, David Williamsen, Bruce Benner, Vicki Johnson, and Kelly Carlson. **Absent:** Kiesha Anderson-King, Jan Scott & Paul Thomas.

Welcome. Michael thanked everyone for coming and reviewed the purpose of the RAC.

Public Open Forum.

- 1) None

Old Business:

- 1) RAC Emails - None
- 2) Review of January Minutes - The meeting was held to discuss ridership updates, hear latest updates about Metro Bus's Long Range Transit Plan, discuss attendance for meetings as well as various other questions.

New Business:

- 1) Ridership Update
 - i. January is a month when we often see increases due to the end of the Holiday season, as well as colleges and local schools resuming classes. Fixed route provided 54,448 rides, and Dial-a-Ride provided 12,899.
 - ii. Several routes saw increases of 20% or more. (Routes 8, 11, & 12).
 1. These routes tend to fluctuate whenever school is or is not in session.
 2. Route 22 is dependent upon the number of weekend service days.
 - a. Any increase or decrease drastically changes ridership numbers.
 - b. This month there was a decrease of 24% due to that reason.
 - iii. The NorthStar Link saw an increase of 18% and provided 1,139 rides.
 - iv. Dial-a-Ride saw an increase in ridership from December and provided 12,899 rides.
- 2) Long Range Plan Updates – The Long-Range Transit Plan Update (Metro Bus Forward) initiative continues to move along.
 - a. There is a dedicated space on our website, ridemetrobust.com/forward, in which you can view the project timeline and updates regarding plan are located here:
<https://ridemetrobust.com/forward>
 - b. Michael covered the recently released State of the System report. The following covers the portion discussed at the meeting:
 - i. The goals of the study are to look at ways to build transit ridership, deliver transit to the community efficiently and to support local equity goals.
 - ii. Why is Metro Bus important?
 1. Metro Bus assists with getting people access to a ride to help participate and gain independence due to not driving or being unable to transport themselves.
 2. Metro Bus strives to be affordable to assist those who depend on us to get around. Owning and operating a car is expensive, and additionally there are many who do not have that option at all.

3. Transit also can attract economic development and access to job opportunities.
- iii. What planning has been done in the past?
 1. APO Metropolitan Transportation Plan (2019)
 2. Metro bus Long Range Transit Plan (2016)
 3. St. Cloud Comprehensive Plan (2015)
 4. Downtown Subarea Plan (2015)
- c. What is the State of the System?
 - i. It provides a detailed evaluation of existing Metro Bus services and an understanding of transit markets, demand, and service needs in the Metro Bus service area (St. Cloud, Sauk Rapids, Sartell, and Waite Park). This update also helps understand the strengths and opportunities associated with the existing system, this document provides an overview of:
 1. Existing services, route network and operating characteristics
 2. Existing ridership trends and performance
 3. Transit markets are defined by population, employment, and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as activity centers and travel patterns.
 4. How well existing services are matched with demand and community needs.
 - d. This State of the System report is the first step in evaluating Metro Bus services. The following elements will also be critical as part of Metro Bus Forward and necessary for making future service improvement recommendations. Other steps include:
 - i. Survey of Community Values
 - ii. Detailed Route and Stop Analysis
 - iii. Once information is gathered, Metro Bus will be provided with a future service plan to be evaluated.
 - e. What is transit service like today?
 - i. Metro Bus operates several service types including:
 - ii. Local Fixed Routes:
 1. 16 on weekdays
 2. 15 on Saturday
 3. 14 on Sunday
 - iii. The NorthStar Link route provides connections to the NorthStar Commuter Rail in Big Lake on weekdays.
 - iv. Dial-a-Ride, which offers demand response paratransit service to people with disabilities anywhere within three-quarters of a mile of the fixed route network.
 - f. Fixed Route Ridership
 - i. Comparing trends from October 2020 to September 2022 reveals that ridership is down about 9% overall.
 - ii. The routes with the greatest ridership declines include Routes 6, 22 and 31.
 - iii. Several routes, however, have maintained ridership over the past few years (Routes 2, 5, 9 and 12) and two routes (Route 10 and NorthStar Link) have gained ridership.
 - iv. It is important to note that Metro Bus reduced service in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic and again in January 2021. Fixed Route service levels in FY 2022 are down about 25% compared to FY 2019.

- g. Another way to evaluate the performance of the Fixed Route system is to divide the number of passengers by a unit of service.
 - i. Typically, a vehicle revenue hour (VRH) or vehicle revenue mile (VRM).
 - ii. This allows comparison between routes that may have more, or less, service.
 - iii. This analysis uses passengers per vehicle revenue hour (PPH), also referred to as “productivity.”
 - h. Dial-a-Ride was discussed but is best covered by looking at pages 18-21 within the document. Topics discussed were:
 - i. Ridership numbers and trends
 - ii. Origin and Destination Reports
 - iii. Travel Flow maps detailing origin to destination visual and graphics.
 - i. More information will be covered in oncoming months, only about 1/3 of the report was discussed.
- 3) Open Discussion
- a. It was brought up as a suggestion that Dial-a-Ride should be able to drop off at the food court at Crossroads Center. After some discussion Michael reiterated that the suggestion needs to be made via customer service so it can be properly documented and forwarded to the correct manager to get a drop off location evaluated for approval.
 - i. Customer service is the most efficient way to ensure that the correct department or person is contacted regarding a question or request.
- 4) Next meeting
- a. The next meeting will be Tuesday, March 19th.

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 11:01 AM