

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 April 16th, 2024, at 10:00 AM. The meeting was held to discuss ridership updates, hear the latest 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, Jan Scott, and Kelly Carlson. **Absent:** Kiesha Anderson-King, Vicki Johnson, and 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 February Minutes - The meeting was held to discuss ridership updates, hear latest updates about Metro Bus's Long Range Transit Plan, as well as various other questions.

New Business:

- 1) Ridership Update - Overall system wide ridership was up 2% over last month, or 1,000 more rides.
  - a. Route 22 saw an increase of 22%, routes 8 and 9 saw decreases of at least 10%, and routes 11 and 12 saw some decreases over last month as well.
  - b. The NorthStar Link saw a decrease of 11.5% over February, and recorded 1067 rides.
  - c. Dial a Ride recorded 12,866 rides and has remained very steady over the last few months.
  
- 2) Long Range Plan Updates – The Long-Range Transit Plan Update (Metro Bus Forward) initiative continues to move along. Michael continued to cover the State of the System from previous meetings.
  - a. How does Metro bus compare to its peers?
    - i. The project team worked to identify communities that had similar characteristics to St. Cloud, Sartell, Sauk Rapids and Waite Park. Most of the peer regions that were identified are in the upper Midwest, primarily due to similar urban form, geography, and climate.
      1. Based on population, urban pattern and growth, and the presence of a university the following were selected for this evaluation: Duluth (MN), Grand Forks and Fargo (ND), Greeley (CO) and Eau Claire (WI).
    - ii. Utilizing the performance data, as well as other NTD data organized by mode (demand response and fixed route) for the past three available years (2019, 2020 and 2021), a dozen performance metrics were calculated and evaluated.
    - iii. Based on this evaluation, the following metrics that are most used in the transit industry have been evaluated further to compare Metro Bus with the peer communities.
      1. Productivity – productivity measures how well the service is being used in relation to the amount of service available. The more boardings per hour, the more effective.

- a. The findings indicated that Metro Bus, like all peers, struggled to attract passengers back to fixed route transit while being stable at serving riders on demand response services.
  - 2. Revenue Hours - Revenue hours are the overall investment in transfer within each community. A higher measure indicates a higher transit investment.
  - 3. Operating cost per revenue hour - Operating cost per revenue hour measures how efficiently resources are provided by the transit provider.
  - 4. Operating cost per capita is another measure of the investment in transit service, but this time compared to the population rather than per hour of service provided. A higher operating cost per capita indicates a higher investment in transit.
  - 5. Operating cost per passenger is a provider's total operating cost divided by the total number of passengers carried per year and is a basic measure of cost effectiveness.
- iv. This portion of the State of the System report is best represented by the graphics and visuals provided. The document can be viewed here: <https://ridemetrobust.com/forward/>
- b. Where is the Long-Range Plan currently?
  - i. At the beginning of April, the consultants were in town going through alternative service scenarios for Metro Bus based on previous meetings and recent ridership data.
    - 1. This is an internal process for Metro Bus employees, and once a preferred service scenario is completed it will be shared publicly for input.
    - 2. Alternative scenarios should be ready by mid-May to early June.
    - 3. The project team will work to draft a final service plan during the summer and into early fall.
    - 4. Final revisions will be presented to the Board in October when the latest changes may be adopted.
    - 5. Afterward adoption, implementation and scheduling will begin, and changes will roll out once ready.
      - a. No date for that will be known for quite some time.

### 3) Open Discussion

- a. It was discussed whether passengers on Dial a Ride can be dropped off at the Food Court at Crossroads Center.
  - 1. Michael requested that customer service be contacted with this suggestion. Drop off locations are selected for a reason.
  - 2. Crossroads has directed where we can pick up and drop off. DAR only picks up at the entrance between Macy's and Target.
- b. It was brought up that there can be challenges getting around the area outside of fixed route services. Connex was a great option for Sartell residents, and it was questioned why the service was discontinued, and if something similar may come back after the Long-Range Plan.
  - i. The Connex service was discontinued as it was a pilot service. Those are typically not permitted to run more than a year or so, and the Board of

Commissioners voted to discontinue the service when the pilot ended. It was requested to return to a fixed route, like the previous route 32.

- ii. More data was to be collected on fixed route services in the area before the long-range plan would assist with alternatives for the area.
- c. Michael addressed concerns with taxi service and getting around outside normal service hours or scheduled routes.
  - i. The long-range plan is underway to address some of those concerns, and unfortunately taxi service and on demand rides outside of Dial a Ride eligible customers are out of Metro Bus's control.
- d. The Committee heard about Jenny's Day for advocacy at the Capital. She described her day and how she mentioned to several State Officials that transit funding in the region is vital for people with disabilities. She makes this trip with her advocacy group each year.

The meeting adjourned at 10:59