

The St Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, November 15, 2016 at 12:00 p.m. at the Mobility Training Center, 700 W. St. Germain St., St Cloud, MN

The following individuals were in attendance: Jenny Svihel, Bruce Benner, Karen Maruska, Suzanne Driessen, David Williamsen, Brenda Severson, Debbie Anderson, Tom Cruikshank and Kim Hoff.

1. Welcome and Introductions:

Debbie asked everyone to introduce themselves. Jenny stated it was her second meeting. She uses Fixed Route to get to work uses the Link bus to visit her family in the Twin Cities. Bruce stated that he uses the Fixed Route bus. Karen stated she has been on the committee for a while but doesn't make it to all the meetings due to her work schedule. She works with individuals that are visually impaired in the St. Cloud area as well as other communities in Minnesota. Suzanne represents the Fixed Route system. David stated he has been riding the Dial-a-Ride bus system for over 22 years. Tom welcomed everyone and thanked the new members for joining the committee. Brenda stated she uses the Dial-a-Ride service.

2. Open Discussion:

Debbie asked if there was any open discussion or items that members wanted to bring forward to the group, which could be discussed or investigated for the next meeting.

Bruce commented on Route 33. He lives at Grace McDowall Apartments and asked if it could come by the YMCA from Sauk Rapids. He stated there are a lot of people in the apartment that would like the route to come by there again. He stated he has come up with an idea and has talked with a lot of bus drivers and they feel it would work as well because there is plenty of time in Route 33 to make it work. He suggested that instead of going by the hospital when it leaves Sauk Rapids, is to turn on Northway Drive and go by the YMCA. He mentioned there are some clinics along that route that a lot of people use, especially people in his building. There are older people that don't like to do a lot of transfers. To complete the route, instead of turning off on Division Street, it would go to 2nd Street South and turn there, so it would hit Sav A Lots, Wal-Mart and Shopko. The drivers feel there is plenty of time to do this. Tom stated they looked at Route 33 and also recently made a few adjustments to Routes 5, 11 and 12 but weren't ready to make any adjustments to Route 33. One of the issues with the old route was that it covered too much area and they were constantly coming in late and were perpetually behind on the route and it wasn't reliable. Bruce stated he rides the route a lot and it always gets to Crossroads about five minutes early. Tom stated the part he would be in favor of is using Northway Drive on the return from Sauk Rapids, so it goes by Whitney and the YMCA.

Suzanne asked about changing the RAC meeting times. After some discussion it was determined that most people were open to different meeting times. It was suggested to hold the meeting at 9am. Debbie stated she would check with Janice and Luke to see if that time worked for them. It was decided to table a decision until the next meeting.

Debbie asked everyone to think of new topic ideas for the upcoming year. She also mentioned that maybe we would re-visit the department head presentations due to new members on the committee. There were positive comments made about having different departments present again, even from individuals that have been on the committee for a while.

Bruce mentioned there was an incident on a fixed route bus recently when a young man got on the bus in Sauk Rapids and he didn't pay. Bruce asked the driver about it after he the young man got off the bus and the driver said he does that a lot. Passengers notice when this happens and they want to know why they have to pay and other people don't have to pay. The driver said they write up an incident report when it happens. Tom explained they don't want the driver to have a confrontation with a passenger so the policy is that the driver is supposed to ask for a fare, if the person says they don't have the money, the driver needs to remind the person (loud enough so everyone on the bus can hear it) of the fare and that the next time they ride, they have to pay the fare. The drivers are not allowed to kick anyone off a bus; that is a violation of the person's civil right. If a person doesn't have the ability to pay, we allow them to ride. We ask the driver to write up the incident and they are tracked, so if someone has established a pattern of doing this, it will be addressed with them. We can charge them with fare evasion, which is a misdemeanor in Minnesota, up to 90 days in jail and \$3,000 fine. Tom explained they are in the process of doing that with a couple of individuals because the drivers have been diligent in writing it up. Bruce mentioned in this particular case, there was no conversation between the driver and the passenger. Tom mentioned if anyone sees this happening, they should call the Operations Center with the date and time of the incident, because they can pull the video and it's used as a training tool for the driver. The driver will not be disciplined for it but it is used as a training opportunity. The police department is on our side with any fare evasion – they don't take it lightly. They will make a personal visit to the individual, either on the bus or at their home.

Karen asked a question about a PCA riding for free with someone who has a disability, on the Fixed Route buses. Kim explained that if a person is approved for Dial-a-Ride, and they would like to ride the fixed route system, they are given a red PCA card to show the driver, which will allow their PCA to ride for free. This is only done for someone who has been approved for Dial-a-Ride but would be unable to ride Fixed Route without the assistance of someone.

3. Old Business:

- a) RAC Email. There were none.
- b) Voicemail after hours. Debbie stated she looked into this with Transit Center dispatch and they said if someone were to call after 10:30 pm, there is a way to leave a message and staff will return the call the next morning. This also applies to Dial-a-Ride – if you need to cancel a ride or have a question, you can leave a message. A ride can't be scheduled or pick up time changed, but cancellations can be made by leaving a message.
- c) RAC Business cards. Debbie mentioned in the past there has been discussion about communication and how everyone gets the word out about the RAC committee. She had RAC business cards and suggested everyone take a few to hand out when talking with people about their comments and concerns. The card has the email address and phone number to call.

Bruce asked when schedule signage was going to be put back in the shelters as well as No Smoking signs. Tom stated that the Marketing department is working on it and hopefully there will be some proofs to look at in a few weeks.

Debbie mentioned she will follow up on ID badges for the new committee members.

Tom mentioned if the December meeting is going to be held on 12/20; that is the date of the company holiday potluck. He made the suggestion that the December meeting be held at the Operations Center and the committee could be part of the company potluck. After some further discussion, it was decided

those riding Fixed Route should meet at the Transit Center and a Dial-a-Ride bus will pick them up at 11:45 am and bring them to the Operations Center. Tom stated after the meeting, there will be a bus tour and the driver can take everyone home.

Karen commented she tried the trip planner on her phone and it worked really well. She tried practicing the voice over for blind individuals but she had some problems getting to the origin/destination part. Tom stated he didn't know how that was tested. He suggested that Berta (in Marketing) would be very interested in hearing about it so she could pass it along to the website consultants.

4. New Business:

Tom stated that on October 30th, changes were made to Routes 5 and 11. Route 5 needed to have some time built in so it now doesn't pull into SCSU at the beginning of the route but instead turns right on to 7th Street (across from the Miller Center). In order to reduce the number of people crossing 5th Avenue, students are encouraged to ride Route 8, 11 or 12 to SCSU. After Route 5 leaves Crossroads, instead of going back to serve Goodwill a second time, it travels on Waite Avenue in front of Cash Wise. He stated this didn't really save any time but people are happy that it is serving Cash Wise again.

Route 11 – Students that are living at Washington Place/Garden Square Apartments were getting to campus 1 hour early so this route was changed to travel on Washington Memorial Drive instead of going by Coborn's Cooper a second time and then gets students to campus in less time.

Tom commented on what can be done next in the Long Range Plan. He stated there are a couple of challenges – 1) finding enough employees to run additional service, 2) the fleet is maxed out and nothing is proposed for at least one year. The lead time to build a new bus is 6 months so it will be about 1 ½ years.

Tom shared how ridership is recorded. When someone rides a route, and their fare is paid with cash or a pass or ID is swiped, it's recorded in the farebox. At the end of the day, the farebox is probed and the data is ultimately put into a spreadsheet which shows by route, the different fares that were collected. This information is also used to help verify cash counts. In the past the bank would count our cash but now it is done internally with a cash counting machine and is sent to the bank by a courier.

Suzanne asked about the destination signs changing. Tom explained how the scrolling will work with cellular information but not all buses have it yet. It is very costly to convert.

5. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 1:06 p.m.