

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, February 21, 2017 at 9:00 a.m. at the Mobility Training Center, 700 W. St. Germain St, St. Cloud, MN

The following individuals were in attendance: Kim Hoff, Debbie Anderson, Tom Cruikshank, Suzanne Driessen, Karen Maruska, Jenny Svihel, David Williamsen, Jon Mason - MnDOT, Joseph Mueller - St. Cloud APO.

Welcome. Debbie welcomed everyone and introductions were made.

Old Business.

- 1) RAC Email. There were none the past two months.
- 2) Concerns from last month's meeting. Debbie mentioned that a few operational concerns were brought up last month which she wanted to let everyone know what her findings were on the issues. One concern that was reported is when people are exiting the back door of the bus, there will be people boarding in the back door and they don't pay a fare. She stated this was brought to the Operations Manager's attention and he was going to communicate this with the street supervisors to make sure the drivers were aware of this.

The other question that was brought up was if someone had clearly soiled themselves prior to boarding the bus, are they allowed to ride. Debbie explained there are variables to this question. She stated depending on where the individual is boarding the bus, such as a senior living site, the VA or somewhere they may be redirected to go back inside and change clothes, which the driver would ask them in a discreet manner. We are not allowed to refuse a ride, it is a person's civil right to ride the bus. We also can't leave a rider stranded, so if they're on their way home, we have to give them a ride. If a person sits in a seat, the driver has a biohazard kit on the bus which they can put a large plastic cover on the seat. If the driver is just starting a shift, they will probably switch the bus out but if they are at the end of their shift, then would just finish with that bus. The driver is also asked to write up an incident report with any identifying information about the person, so if there is a pattern of this happening, the person can be talked to about the situation.

3) Route update. Tom provided an update on two upcoming route changes. He explained that Route 33 will be changing from the current route which goes from Coborn's in Sauk Rapids back to Crossroads. Riders as well as some RAC members have asked if there could be service on Northway Drive. The solution that has been discussed is when the bus is on its way to Sauk Rapids, it will go down 15th Street, 12th Ave, 13th St. and 9th Avenue into Sauk Rapids but on the way back from Coborn's, it will continue to pass by the hospital, 13th St. and 12th Ave, but will then take a right turn and will come back up 9th Ave to Northway Drive (which will go by Whitney Center and Grace McDowall Apartments.) Tom explained there wasn't an exact timeline on implementation but would probably happen sometime in the spring, probably in May with the new driver bid.

The second route change will be on Route 32. Currently it travels east on County Road 29 to Highway 15 and then goes south. The change will be by Alltran Health (which used to be Array Services and Care Call). The stop is on Cty Rd 29 which is a tough spot to serve because the road has a very narrow, gravel shoulder. The change will be that the bus will turn right on 14th Ave to 18th St No, and then south on Hwy 15. Anyone that works in the Industrial Park now won't have to wait on Cty Rd 29. Route 21/22 also serve the same area but they will continue on the current route and cross Hwy 15.

He said there may be some confusion for riders and therefore we will need good, clear communication to riders with the changes.

Karen asked if route changes are voted on by the Board of Commissioners and how are they implemented? Tom explained that if a change impacts 25% or more of a route, then a public hearing is needed. He stated these are minor changes and a 30 day notice will be given to riders.

4) RAC Term limits. Debbie thanked everyone for their commitment to continue serving on the committee. She reported that Luke has resigned due to starting a new job. She mentioned that there will now be an open position on the committee representing the fixed route. She mentioned that this next year, we will start over with presentations from the different departments.

New Business.

1) Human Service Transit Coordination Survey. Debbie welcomed Jon Mason to the meeting. He is the Senior Planner at MnDOT for District 3. Jon presented an update on the Region 7W/APO Human Service Public Transit Coordination plan. Region 7W consists of Stearns, Benton, Sherburne, and Wright counties. It also includes the St. Cloud Area Planning Organization, which Joseph Mueller works for. The Coordination Plan is trying to coordinate the local transportation (Metro Bus) and strategize with local human service agencies such as Stearns County and the aging providers as well as agencies that work with people with disabilities, to see if there are any projects that can help improve ways to allow people to get around. He mentioned again that the purpose of the coordination plan is to improve services for all but there is a special focus on people with disabilities, older adults and individuals with low income. This is a federally required plan and updates are done every five years. In general it's a nice way to collaborate and get all transportation providers at the table.

He covered the Scope of Work and presented a handout to everyone. He explained there is a steering committee that will be meeting for the second time later in the day. They will review some of the data which was collected through surveys and questionnaires. The third task under Scope of Work involves a transportation service assessment which is a more detailed analysis of the data. Next will be review previous efforts - the last plan was updated in 2011. Task 5 is a planning workshop. He mentioned if the RAC would be interested in attending, it will be held on April 3rd at the MnDOT office in St. Cloud in the morning. He is hoping to get a lot of riders and people who are utilizing transportation services to attend. To date most of the information they have received is from organizations and transportation providers but feel they can get a lot of valuable information from the riders themselves. Another thing that everyone will be asked is to identify trends, issues, and barriers that they see to help improve the coordination and also there will be an exercise done so the group can identify specific projects that they feel will help improve coordination in the area. If someone has something they feel uncomfortable voicing at the meeting, they can contact Jon directly through email or a phone call.

He mentioned after the workshop there will be another steering committee meeting to review the information received at the workshop. After that there will be a plan adoption. He is hoping that everything will be completed by June 2017.

Tom asked about the April 3rd meeting at MnDOT. He felt it wasn't the best location for transit users in regard to accessibility. He wondered if they would consider an alternate location. He also felt the time of day wasn't the best because people are working. He also voiced concern about transit users outside of the St. Cloud area. There was discussion regarding promotion of the event: it was suggested to have Behind the Driver posters on all Metro Buses, as well as social media and email.

Joseph from the APO stated they will be starting work on their next Long Range Plan for the year 2045. They will also be doing a public outreach campaign which includes public transportation. They will be asking people what do people like about St. Cloud and its current transportation services and what would they like to see changed or improved? He mentioned they also have an online survey on their website which he encouraged everyone to participate in. The website is www.stcloudapo.org.

Open Discussion. Jenny asked if there was going to be extra service available during the weekend of the fishing opener. Joseph provided some information on the event and where things were going to be held.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 9:57 a.m.