

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, July 18, 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, Dave Green, Suzanne Driessen, Karen Maruska, Jenny Svihel, Bruce Benner, David Williamsen, Silas Patrick and Brenda Severson.

Welcome. Debbie welcomed everyone. She asked everyone to introduce themselves, state their affiliation with Metro Bus and give a quick explanation on how they feel being on the RAC committee will benefit themselves as well as the community. Silas stated he is a disabled veteran and uses public transportation everywhere. He moved to St. Cloud one year ago but had lived here previously. He rides public transit all over the country. He is representing the fixed route. Brenda lives in Sauk Rapids and uses Dial-a-Ride. She has been on the committee since the beginning. Jenny rides fixed route which is her only transportation. Bruce lives by the YMCA and uses fixed route. He has a "thing" for Route 33. David is a rider on Dial-a-Ride. Suzanne lives on the north side of St. Cloud and uses fixed route. Karen is a teacher for blind/visually impaired and trains a lot of people on the fixed route bus system.

Public Open Forum.

Debbie explained this has been added to the agenda. She stated that we are now considered an open committee to the general public and are invited to join the meetings. They will be given two minutes to bring up their ideas/concerns and they will be recorded. Any conclusions or discussion will be done at the next meeting.

Old Business.

- 1) RAC email. Debbie mentioned as of Friday, 7/14 there wasn't any email.
- 2) Railing at the Transit Center. Debbie mentioned that it was brought up that visually impaired people have a hard time seeing the gray contrast and will often run into the railings. It was decided that while the Transit Center is closed due to construction, they will be painted yellow.
- 3) SCSU signage. It was brought up that it's hard to know which bus to get on because there are a couple of buses that are both inbound and outbound. She reported there is signage which states the direction that the buses are traveling.
- 4) Shelter cleaning. Debbie mentioned she spoke to Ed, Director of Maintenance, in regard to cleaning the shelters. He stated they are on a regular cleaning rotation. She specifically mentioned the eastside Shopko/Cash Wise shelter as well as Wal-Mart get used more often, so he is aware of that.
- 5) Wal-Mart. At a previous meeting, Bruce mentioned there is a lot of snow and ice that doesn't get properly taken care of in the winter. Debbie stated the shelter is on Wal-Mart property so the cleaning and sidewalk is their responsibility. She suggested that committee members can be an advocate for Metro Bus passengers for any location to keep sidewalks clean, by contacting the city in which you reside.
- 6) Wet seats/soiling bus seats. There has been concern on wet seats in the buses (either someone soiling themselves or spilling something). Debbie has spoken with both operations and maintenance and they told her that the buses should have cleaning kits on the bus, and if they don't, it's the driver's responsibility to write up an incident report. If a committee member is riding a bus and you know there isn't a cleaning kit available, please call customer service or Debbie and report the bus number.

Karen mentioned she was at the mall with a client getting on a bus and people got off the bus and the driver shut the door. It then looked like she (the driver) was calling someone, then she opened the door and she said to the man in front of them, that he needed to turn all the way around, then told him he could get on the bus. Karen mentioned it was a very uncomfortable situation. Dave mentioned it was concerning to him and wanted to know if she could remember the date. Debbie stated when incidents like that happen, it's important to let staff know what route, time of day and location. Silas mentioned that veterans get paid once a month between the 28th and 4th of the next month and that there is a group that abuses alcohol and they could already be wet when they board the bus. He stated that in the past few years of riding the buses in St. Cloud, he has always felt the drivers are professional and very courteous. He felt in this situation there may have been a trigger which created a panic for the driver.

- 7) Bus operators vs. drivers. Dave explained he doesn't want to get anyone in trouble, but they've spent a lot of time recently working with the "operators" to ensure they have the understanding that whether someone is intoxicated or not, it's none of our business. The reality is if they can function and safely get on/off a bus, and we feel comfortable leaving them at a bus stop in extreme temperatures, etc., then they're able to ride. If we don't feel comfortable with a situation, then a supervisor is called and possibly the police will get involved. Dave explained they have changed their title to Operators because the expectation is that they act professional at all times, they are in control of the bus, not just seating in the seat and driving it. Dave explained that we can't turn anyone away, so if someone has wet/soiled pants, it depends on the severity. Drivers/supervisors are provided gloves and if needed, the bus may be changed out. We need to always be respectful of the person. Bruce asked what the dress code is to ride the bus, because a man was on the bus recently with only a towel, nothing else. Dave stated we can't exclude someone from riding if they don't have shirt or shoes, but there is an expectation of appropriateness and respectfulness to other riders.
- 8) Route 33. After thorough investigation, it was decided to keep the route the same due to time constraints. Dave explained that the ideas brought forth will not be forgotten about. They will be looking at some other possible changes in the future due to a new school being built.

Silas talked about the way routes are structured. He suggested there be more east/west and north/south routes which should overlap. He also suggested that we have express buses down Division Street to the west end of town, possibly having several stops on Division Street and have it run every 30 minutes. He felt that Route 3 is excessively long. Debbie suggested that Tom be brought into this conversation in the future.

New Business.

- 1) Transit Center update. Dave explained the move from the Transit Center to the Lady Slipper parking lot has affected transfers. He mentioned he is working with the police at peak time to do traffic control on 6th Ave/Division Street when buses are entering at busy times. He also mentioned there have been minimal safety incidents at the temporary location.

- 2) SCSU. Per SCSU request, Route 91 will be the only route which will be a full day run from 6:50 am to 11pm. All the other routes will be discontinued. Public safety will provide rides during late night for students.
- 3) Bus purchase. Both Fixed Route and Dial-a-Ride buses are on order and there will be six more Fixed Route buses going into production in the future. We also have new MCI coach buses (Link buses) on order to replace the existing buses.
- 4) Alley project by Transit Center. Dave has been working with the police and some area businesses adjacent to the Transit Center to clean up the alley/area by the Transit Center. They are hoping to make the Transit Center a more pleasurable experience and hoping to reduce crime in the area. They will be making changes to the physical area while the Transit Center is closed.
- 5) Open Discussion. Bruce brought up the vinyl wraps and talked about how it blocks the view out of the window, especially for visually impaired people. Karen mentioned that when she works with visually impaired people, they encourage them to sit in the first seat opposite of the driver, as well as to have their white canes out, to remind the driver that they will need assistance with their stops. She also mentioned that some of the buses don't have the stop announcements working which people rely on to help them know when they are supposed to stop. Dave stated he will look into the stop announcements and how well they are working.

Bruce asked why all the drivers won't lower the bus for him when he uses a walker. One driver has an attitude and he won't even ask him to do it anymore.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:05 a.m.