

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, December 19, 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: Debbie Anderson, Kim Hoff, Ryan Daniel, Jim Perez, Jenny Svihel, Bruce Benner, David Williamsen, Suzanne Driessen, Alexis Lutgen and Oyinlola Adeyemi. Visitors: Jerry Schmitz, Christine Montage

Welcome. Debbie welcomed everyone. She announced the new member – Oyinlola Adeyemi, and asked everyone to go around the table and introduce themselves and give a little information about themselves in regard to their involvement with the RAC or if they were attending the meeting as a general public guest. There was some discussion between Ryan and Debbie as to whether or not the RAC members were able to ride the bus free with their ID. Debbie explained in the past, if someone has a 31-day pass they would use that but if not, they were given a 10 ride card to use if they rode the bus to the committee meetings. Staff will have a discussion on this and an update will be given in the future.

Public Open Forum.

- 1) Open Discussion. There was no discussion.

Old Business.

- 1) RAC email. Debbie mentioned there weren't any emails.
- 2) Updates on November Open Discussion. Debbie mentioned she went through the minutes from last month and reached out to departments to get some answers regarding topics that were brought up at the meeting during open discussion.
 - a) 2 hour transfers -when buses run late and the transfer has expired, drivers aren't accepting them. Dave Green will post a notice that transfers should be accepted. Ryan suggested a threshold of extending a grace period after the transfer expires. He stated he will work with the Operations department on this.
 - b) Reduced bus passes sold at local radio stations. Debbie checked and there are three stations that sell the bus passes: Tri-County Broadcasting, Townsquare Media, and Leighton Broadcasting, and the Value Connection. Bruce mentioned that the Value Connection sells passes at Crossroads and they will take his debit/credit card and then mail the pass to him. However he was told by other people that they aren't able to do that. Debbie said she will call them and find out more information on how they handle the passes.
 - c) Holiday Light Tour. Debbie spoke with Berta Hartig (Marketing Manager) about the idea and she thanked us for the idea but there would need to be a sponsor that would have to pay for it, so she will put it on the idea list.
 - d) Dial-a-Ride hours don't meet the Link bus in the early morning. Debbie talked with Operations about this. It comes down to the amount of resources that are available and Dial-a-Ride has to start at comparable times with the fixed route service. We are unable to provide earlier service at this time.
 - e) No Smoking signs. Debbie talked with Dave Green and also Berta in Marketing about the signs but unfortunately it's just something that is going to occur in the community, no matter how big the signs are. Berta said she will look at the placement of the signs, to make sure they are visible. Bruce suggested a sign that says No

smoking within so many feet of the shelter. Ryan agreed that 10 feet from a shelter would be appropriate.

f) Route 33 to Wal-Mart. Debbie mentioned that the Operations team is looking at the complete route system. Jim mentioned they will be looking at everything. He did say that they won't necessarily be changing everything but they are looking at bits and pieces to make things more efficient. Jerry Schmitz (Fixed route driver) added as far as service to Wal-Mart, he felt it would be helpful to have another route that serves Wal-Mart.

g) Suzanne suggested putting on Facebook or the website, something like "did you know if you get off the Sauk Rapids route at Coborns, you can go to Crossroads or the YMCA instead of going all the way to the Transit Center." Debbie thought that was a good idea – offering examples the "savvy bus riders already know".

h) Bruce asked if there will be service to the new Tech H.S. Ryan stated it is part of the route study; it had been part of the long range plan, but now that the school is being built, it is being looked at it sooner.

New Business.

- 1) Jolly Trolley. Debbie announced the fundraiser collected \$2,657.32 in cash (which set a new record) and 2,052 pounds of food were collected. Since 2011 Metro Bus has raised a total of \$12,650 and collected 25,300 pounds of food.

There was also a suggestion made that maybe we should do "Christmas in July" and have a food drive then. Alexis mentioned that food drives are better in the summer because of the increase of need is greater because children aren't in school.

Open Discussion.

- 1) Ryan explained that he had asked Jerry Schmitz to come to the meeting and talk about the Driver Trainer program. Jerry was volunteering his time on his regular day off to attend the meeting. Jerry explained he is a Driver Trainer and a lot of people think they just drive the bus but there is a lot more than that. He explained that he was an over the road truck driver and drove the whole US and Canada and he feels that the St. Cloud area is the worst city for bad driver habits. He constantly sees people run blow through a four way stop and red lights. He said it can be very hazardous because there are a lot of conversations happening on the bus but at all times, the operator is focused straight ahead and focused on the roads. He encouraged everyone to let the Operator's know if there is something going on in the bus that is disturbing to passengers. Ryan mentioned the training program. He stated if an operator comes that doesn't have a license, they are put through a 10 day program and each day the person has to demonstrate the skills to successfully operator a bus. They then take their permit test. Metro Bus has a CDL tester on site now so we train the drivers for their CDL license. Once the Operator has their CDL license, they receive approximately 80 hours of route training. Ryan reminded everyone on the committee that we appreciate their comments/ideas on how we can do things differently and improve our service.
- 2) Ryan announced there is a new Safety and Training Department. They will be focused on Customer Service and De-escalation in the 1st Quarter of 2018.

- 3) Trip Planner. Jerry mentioned it has some bugs in it. It doesn't give accurate time points, especially going to Crossroads. Ryan gave a homework assignment for next month: he asked everyone to look at five destinations and see if the trip planner works. The information will be taken back to the Marketing department then.
- 4) Bruce mentioned that a lot of operators are telling him that the lights in the bus shelters aren't working and it's really hard to see people in the shelters. Jerry has noticed that several haven't been working lately. The shelters by Grace McDowall and UVT apartments have not been working. The lights are connected to the courtyard and they won't come on early enough. Bruce suggested a letter be sent to the HRA letting them know. He also mentioned a lot of operators have suggested that a shelter be installed by the Riverside Apartments because a lot of people who live in the apartments as well as volunteers who go to Salem Lutheran Church use that bus stop.
- 5) Jerry asked if Metro Bus maintains the shelters. Ryan stated we have an in-house shelter cleaner, etc. that should be checking the lights.
- 6) Bruce asked about the Crossroads heat lamps. Debbie stated that the question had been brought up to either put new bulbs in or remove the fixture. She talked with Ed in Maintenance and he said they will all have the heating bulbs in them, but not the full 3 because the cost is too high, but there will be one or two bulbs. The shelter cleaner should periodically check that the lights are working.
- 7) Suzanne asked if the marquee on the buses could show what the upcoming destinations are. Jim stated he talked with the IT department and he will have a list to look at next month. He didn't feel it will be a hard fix. He thought there would be a problem with the destination sign and the stop annunciator getting confused but Steve in IT said it shouldn't be a problem. Debbie asked what the procedure was for changing the destination sign when the buses are coming into the Transit Center. Jerry mentioned there is a Free Zone downtown (which is about the last two bus stops before the Transit Center) and when he is training he tells the Operators they can change the destination sign once they've entered the Free Zone.
- 8) Jenny brought up that she is working later at her job on the Eastside (until 7pm) and sometimes she has to wait downtown for one hour because there's a three minute difference between the time points of her incoming bus and Route 22 at the old Holiday station on E. St. Germain. Some nights she has to take a cab home because she missed the transfer. Jerry didn't feel at this time of night, that waiting would be a problem, however not every operator is doing this.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:00 a.m.