

The St. Cloud Metro Bus Rider Advisory Committee (RAC) held a meeting on Tuesday, December 18, 2018 at 10:00 am at the Operations Center, 665 Franklin Ave NE, St. Cloud, MN.

The following individuals were in attendance: Ryan Daniel, Doug Diedrichsen, Jill Justin, Sunny Hesse, Julie Hentges, Bruce Benner, Jenny Svihel, David Williamsen and Aisha Bah. Absent: Alexis Lutgen and Brenda Severson. Visitor: Jerry Schmitz--fixed route operator.

Welcome. Ryan welcomed everyone and read the purpose of the RAC.

Public Open Forum. Open Discussion.

Jerry stated that a customer had informed him that a Fixed Route operator (on two separate occasions) refused to kneel the bus after the customer had requested he do so. Jerry advised the customer to file a complaint, and agreed to bring this issue to the attention of the committee on her behalf. Doug stated that according to ADA regulations, the ramp or lift must be deployed when a customer requests its use. Metro Bus policy states that the bus must be knelt when a customer requests its use. Doug and Ryan will work on a posting for operators regarding this issue.

Old Business.

Jolly Trolley Recap—Ryan Daniel. The Jolly Trolley food drive event occurred the week of December 10 – 14. Ryan thanked all the volunteers for their help. A record high amount of donations were collected, and included cash donations from Royal Tire and North Central Bus Sales. The total collected for this year was 2,573 pounds of food and \$3,159.62 in cash. This brings the total donations collected since the inception of this event to 22,703 pounds of food and \$15,475.94 in cash. The donations were delivered to Catholic Charities, the Salvation Army and the Promise Neighborhood food shelves. Ryan stated that this is a great way to give back to the community, and Metro Bus plans to host this event again in 2019.

Connex Update—Doug Diedrichson. The Connex service is nearing its launch date of January 2, 2019. Bus 207 is wrapped and on site. Two mock runs occurred last week. The bid operators drove the bus and employees acted as passengers calling in to dispatch and receiving rides in real time. The bid operators have been trained, extra board operators are in process, and operators who volunteered to be trained will be next. The updated route 31 schedules are at the printer, and should be back on site by the end of the week. The schedule will be posted on the Metro Bus website later today. This route is 1 hour long, and departs the Transit Center at :15. There is a 3 minute layover at WalMart on both the inbound and outbound, to facilitate those connecting with the Connex bus.

Doug gave a quick ridership report. Dial-a-Ride continues to grow in number of riders and passengers per hour. The SCSU daytime shuttle bus route 91 ridership has grown due to the arrival of colder weather, however the nighttime shuttle routes 92/93 are down a bit. The top performers among the core routes continues to be routes 8, 1, 2 and 6, while the lowest performers continue to be routes 32, 10 and 33. Doug stated that the focus of route restructure this year has been the trial of the Connex service. Metro Bus will be looking at further changes and restructuring of routes next year with the goal of higher ridership on the lowest performing routes. Doug gave a weather reminder that if dangerous or unsafe conditions are present at bus stops, they should be reported to the street supervisors. Metro Bus can then work on those problem areas with either our staff, the homeowner or the city.

New Business.

- 1) RAC email. There was none.
- 2) Human Resources Update—Sunny Hesse and Julie Hentges. Sunny and Julie and the committee introduced themselves to one another. They gave an overview of how new Metro Bus employees are recruited and hired. All job openings are posted on the Metro Bus website, at Minnesota Works and at all of our facilities. There are multiple other places jobs may be posted, and this is dependent on the job type or job requirements. Paper applications are available on the website, or at any of the facilities, and are turned in physically or by email. Julie then screens these for qualified persons. An online application process is in the works for the future. Operator applicants are scheduled for a ride-along before being offered an interview. A minimum of two interviewers are present—usually the department manager and someone from either human resources or the training department. When all interviews are complete, the interviewers come to a consensus on the best applicant. Julie makes the job offer by phone. When an applicant accepts a job offer, Metro Bus conducts a background check and schedules a pre-employment drug and alcohol screening. Bruce asked what kind of background check is done. Julie stated that we do a criminal background check, social security check and a sex offender check. Applicants are disqualified if they have a felony or any record of violence against people. Operator applicants are disqualified if they have a DWI conviction less than 10 years in the past. After the screenings are completed successfully, a formal written offer is made, and the applicant is given a start date. One training class begins each month for all new employees. This is an overview orientation for non-operator positions, with operator training extending for a longer period of time. Operators and dispatchers are represented by the Teamsters union, and the street supervisors are represented by the AFSMA union. Both groups are covered by union contracts until September 30, 2020. Aisha asked how long the hiring process can take. Sunny stated that it is dependent on when the application is

received, but could be up to two months. Applicants with a CDL license, but no passenger endorsement and no air brake restrictions are required to obtain and present a CDL permit before an offer of employment is made. Sunny stated that the FTA requires Metro Bus to randomly drug and alcohol test 50% of safety sensitive employees over the course of the calendar year. These are scheduled monthly, at any time our service is on the street. A computer program randomly generates a list of persons to be tested. Bruce asks what happens if someone fails the test. Sunny stated that we are required to provide counseling to that person. Opioids and other over the counter medications are filtered out by the medical testing facility.

Open discussion:

Jenny stated that she has observed multiple people with regular passes asking for and receiving transfers from operators. Ryan stated that the operators are to avoid getting into a confrontation with customers regarding fare payment. This is for the safety of the operator. If a driver observes a customer not following policy on multiple occasions, an incident report should be submitted.

Jenny stated that the back door is not always staying open long enough for people to exit the bus. Dave Green is addressing this issue. Ryan stated that the new buses have motion activated back doors, so a customer can just push on the door and it will open for them. Jerry stated that there is a toggle switch that can be set for either the operator or the passenger to control the back door. In his experience, he prefers the driver controlled setting. This is because people from larger systems know about the motion activated feature, but local riders do not, despite the posted signs on the doors. Ryan will investigate putting further signage on the doors. It was determined that the enunciator could not be used to announce the operation of the back door, because messages can only be broadcast system wide, not on one specific bus.

Bruce stated that he knows of two people that may be interested in serving on the RAC committee. Jill will get two applications to Bruce. Doug stated that he has tried a few avenues to recruit members, but has not had any luck so far.

Jenny also stated that some of the yellow stop cords in the bus are not working. Ryan will check on this with maintenance.

Adjournment. The meeting adjourned at 10:56 am.