

MINUTES
STARTRAN ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
StarTran Conference Room 2
March 25, 2010

Members Present: Beatty Brasch, Karen Moritz, John Baylor, Mitch Paine

Members Absent: Kory George, Kim Phelps

Staff Present: Larry Worth, Mike Weston, Scott Tharnish, Kitty Miller, Brian Praeuner, Connie Thoreson

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

A. **Review/Accept Minutes of February 25, 2010 Board Meeting**

The minutes were accepted as submitted. Mr. Baylor, serving as chairperson in the physical absence of Mr. Brasch, expressed appreciation for the formatting of the minutes, with the Board requests being italicized and underlined.

Ms. Moritz noted the Journal Star listing of the StarTran Advisory Board meeting location being incorrect. StarTran staff will get this corrected.

B. **Patrons to be Heard**

Ms. Nancy McClelland, a HandiVan patron, expressed concern that many HandiVan riders schedule several HandiVan trip appointments each day, but cancel many of their appointments the day of. She felt that doing so reduced people's opportunities to secure appointments. Mr. Worth agreed, but indicated that ADA requirements allow for cancellations up to 30 minutes before the appointment. However, there is a process for addressing "no shows", by requiring a patron to verify scheduled pickup time thirty minutes prior to that pickup time. Mr. Weston noted that "no shows" and cancellations are being tracked, in order to bring any issues/trends to staff's attention.

Kurt Meyer felt that high ridership is event driven as in the case of Big Red Shuttle services for UNL home football games, suggesting StarTran expand this service to include service between Omaha and Lincoln. Mr. Worth stated StarTran is authorized to operate only within the Lincoln city limits. Mr. Meyer was encouraged to contact Omaha MAT to discuss their legal ability and interest in providing some type of service for UNL football games as they are a regional Transit Authority.

It was noted that StarTran is not a separate Transit Authority but a City government division, and that a Transit Authority is a taxing entity. In order for StarTran to become a Transit Authority, State Law would need to be changed through the Legislature, as well as approvals by the Mayor and City Council.

Other issues mentioned by Mr. Meyer included expanded Saturday and Sunday service, big bus versus small bus, and all-route map availability. Expanded service is a budget issue and bus size was addressed preceding the current order of three 25' buses and thirteen 30' buses (all smaller than the current 35' buses). All-route maps tend to be popular therefore outlets run out fast. Mr. Meyer was encouraged to call StarTran and staff will mail all-route maps to him and others requesting them.

C. **Special Reports**

- **Quarter Fare** – Discussion took place with regard to making quarter fare permanent. It was noted that there is the issue of ridership versus revenue and which is the priority of the Mayor and City Council. Fare is currently set to meet budget and to lower the fare to a quarter StarTran would need to increase revenue or reduce costs to cover the loss.

Mitch Paine expressed the need to make transit functional to ride, rather than lowering the fare and the need for the Mayor and City Council to make a commitment to transit in order to make any lasting changes.

Brian Praeuner noted the internal factors that influence ridership are lowering fares, increasing service, while the external factors are high cost of parking and congestion.

The StarTran Advisory Board agreed that the City of Lincoln needs to make transit a priority in order to implement lasting changes and increase ridership. The automobile is generally the priority and mind set of the majority of citizens today. A sub-committee of the Advisory Board will develop strategies to make transit a priority and to increase ridership. The Advisory Board is a Mayor's appointed Board, therefore recommendations would need to be presented to the Mayor.

- **HandiVan Procedures** – The topic of lowering the cost of contracted Transport Plus expense was discussed. Staff noted that StarTran has been increasing the amount of special services accommodated by the HandiVan program, and reducing Transport Plus service requests, with Transport Plus costs having now exceeded HandiVan direct costs. It was also noted that demand for special services continues to grow, so further reductions in contracted transportation is not an available option. *Scott Tharnish was asked to determine the most effective/efficient number of HandiVan vehicles/operators versus contracting for supplemental services from Transport Plus.*

The Advisory Board inquired as to if any cuts could be made within the budget. Mr. Worth responded that StarTran was directed to submit a proposed F.Y. 2010 budget at 100% of the current budget, and that the proposed budget has been developed and submitted. He reminded that the department proposals are not public, and that the Mayor will release his budget in June.

- **Bus Wrap Proposal** – Mr. Baylor updated the Board noting that the sub-committee and staff are making calls to pitch bus wrap proposals and the City Law Department is addressing contractual and other legal issues.
- **HandiVan Morning Reservation Lines & Possible Solutions** – Staff continues to investigate the issue, with a software upgrade scheduled in the near future. *Staff will report to the Board with any new information, dates, etc, when available.*

D. **Operations & Planning Report**

Mr. Worth noted the new hybrid HandiVans and three small buses are expected to be delivered to StarTran in April.

Ridership for the first two weeks in March is up 4% indicating possibly retaining some choice riders from the February quarter fare promotion.

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StarTran continues to work with FTA on the Charter Regulations as they relate to Big Red Express services for the 2010 UNL football season.

Ms. Miller noted there were no ads to share with the Board for the previous month and she will be working on promoting the UNL Spring Game express services next. Future promotions will include the summer youth pass and AVL completion. Ms. Miller indicated that she will continue to update the Board of marketing events.

The next StarTran Advisory Board meeting will be held at 8:00 a.m., Wednesday, April 28, 2010, in the StarTran Conference Room 2.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.