

MINUTES
STARTRAN ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
StarTran Conference Room 2
March 31, 2011

Members Present: Beatty Brasch, Mitch Paine (via phone), Debby Brehm, Steve Speicher, Kim Phelps,
John Baylor

Members Absent: Kory George

Staff Present: Larry Worth, Mike Weston, Scott Tharnish, Brian Praeuner, Kitty Elliott,
Connie Thoreson, Glenn Knust, Miki Esposito

I. REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Chairman Kim Phelps, noted the Open Meetings Law and Patron Conduct Notice posted on the north wall.

A. Patrons to be Heard

Paul Houck of Houck Advertising attended for discussion of "Advertising/Bus Wrap Proposal".

B. Collective Vote

The Board voted unanimously in favor of the following items, which had previously been informally approved by the Board by email...

- Free Fare for Bike & Bus Patrons for the Month of April, 2011
- Free Fare for Bike & Bus Patrons for the Week of May 16-20, 2011 in conjunction with the Mayor's "Bike to Work" week
- 2011 Summer Youth Pass, "Star Pass" price of \$15 each
- 2011 Fall UNL Football Shuttle Services, Season Pass price of \$40 each

- January 27, 2011 StarTran Advisory Board meeting minutes were approved by a unanimous vote.

C. Topics for Discussion/Presentation

- Miki Esposito, the Public Works Compliance Administrator, summarized the **Procurement Systems Review** (PSR) conducted by the Federal Transit Administration (FTA). Such review was the result of several procurement-related deficiencies identified during recent FTA triennial reviews, and several technical revisions were indicated to be needed to insure compliance with FTA requirements. Such technical revisions were made to StarTran's procurement procedures by combined staff efforts of StarTran and the City-County Purchasing Division. FTA reviewed the technical revisions, and produced the final PSR report, which was distributed to the Board. The revised procedures are currently in effect, and it is expected that StarTran will be designated by FTA as fully compliant by early summer.

- Kim Phelps inquired as to any known **unmanageable costs and revenue decreases** as related to the F.Y. 2011-12 budget. Scott Tharnish noted that staff was aware of the fuel price increase and a decrease in State funds appropriation. State funds typically go to the rurals first, at 100% of their requests, and with the remainder split between StarTran and Omaha MAT. Last year StarTran received \$300,000 State funding. Scott also noted that there were stimulus funds received for the current budget which will not be available next budget year. Revenue continues to decrease due to the continuing shift in sales of full-price fare devices to the low-income fare devices. Fuel prices to be used in the budget are set by the City Budget Officer and will be \$3.20 for the F.Y. 2011-12 which results in an increased fuel cost of \$100,000.

March 31, 2011 StarTran Advisory Board Meeting Minutes - Page 2

An increase in ridership was acknowledged, from 1.7 million last year to approximately 1.9 million anticipated for this year.

In answer to a question of the outcome of lowering rates being studied, Mr. Tharnish noted StarTran has the highest regular rates among peer cities. Mr. Tharnish also noted that low-income fares are typically ½ of regular fare with StarTran low-income fares being at an 80% discount. There are no federal regulations related to low income fares. The Board was advised that when the low-income bus pass increased from \$5 to \$7.50, there was an initial loss of approximately 100 patrons per month, for a few months and then sales have steadily increased, setting new sales records each month. It was also noted that a couple of years ago eligibility increased to 200% of poverty level and patrons no longer had to prove eligibility for the low-income bus pass program.

A suggestion was made for Larry Worth to inquire about a “check off” donation for StarTran being offered on City water billings. The Board voted unanimously in favor of Mr. Worth inquiring about this potential revenue source. *Mr. Worth agreed to inquire and update the Advisory Board on this possibility.*

- John Baylor discussed **advertising/bus wrap proposal**, noting that some local non-profit agencies have increased advertising lately and should be contacted for advertising with StarTran. Mr. Baylor asked Mr. Houck to increase efforts for more advertising revenue coming to StarTran.

Kitty Elliott noted that the City has contracted with the Active Network in order to generate advertising revenue for City departments including StarTran. StarTran will investigate the possibility of a month-to-month contract with Houck to potentially work in conjunction with the Active Network. *Ms. Elliott will keep the Board updated on the progress of this issue.*

Mr. Speicher noted that audio information/advertisement on buses would be helpful for sight impaired patrons and could be another avenue for marketing. *Ms. Elliott, Paul Houck, and Steve Speicher will investigate the possibility of audio information/advertising on StarTran buses.*

- In response to a question, staff noted that **elimination of Saturday service** would result in StarTran saving \$390,00 annually. Mr. Speicher noted with the loss of service there would be a loss of patronage and cutting this service would greatly affect himself as well as other transit dependent patrons, who work during the week and utilize Saturday transit services for grocery shopping, errands, etc. Mr. Speicher does not believe that cutting service is the answer to making up revenue. Mr. Paine, noted cutting service is a slippery slope, that cuts away further service and reduces ridership little by little. It was noted that there is no “peak” time related to Saturday service but a consistent 150-200 patrons utilizing services throughout the day.

Mr. Houck mentioned the transit system in Ames, Iowa, in which the transit system operates all service, for the city and the University – this may be a suggestion for StarTran. Mr. Phelps indicated that UNL and StarTran are working toward this concept.

March 31, 2011 StarTran Advisory Board Meeting Minutes - Page 3

Larry Worth summarized the budget process noting the StarTran Advisory Board will have access to the StarTran F.Y. 11-12 budget in June, with an Advisory Board Public Hearing to follow and finally with a recommendation to the City Council on the StarTran portion of the Mayor's proposed budget toward the end of July. It was confirmed that all City departments, including StarTran have already submitted a F.Y. 11-12 budget proposal to the Mayor's office.

- Mr. Phelps **summarized the Audit Advisory Board meeting**, in which he, John Baylor, and Beatty Brasch attended. The Audit Board solicited ideas from the subject Advisory Board members as to how to save \$1million in the StarTran budget. There will be a scope developed, with the Audit Board requesting the City Purchasing Department to develop an RFP to have a consultant review specific aspects of StarTran operations.

There was discussion on developing a "family pass" and/or a "student pass" in conjunction with the Low-Income Bus Pass Program.

Ms. Elliott invited the Advisory Board members to the Press Conference scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Monday, April 4th that will kick-off the "Bike and Bus" program, announcing that all StarTran buses are now equipped with bike racks.

- Mr. Worth briefly summarized the Operations Report, pointing out that the new 29' Gillig buses are being delivered, and are being placed into service. He also highlighted that two StarTran drivers are being recognized by the Mayor's Award of Excellence.

D. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned. The next StarTran Advisory Board meeting will be April, 28, 2011.