

MINUTES
STARTRAN ADVISORY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING
Aging Partner, 1005 "O" St
July 26, 2011

Members Present: Steve Speicher, Mitch Paine, John Baylor, Debby Brehm, Kim Phelps

Members Absent: Kory George, Beatty Brasch

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

PUBLIC HEARING

A. Mr. Phelps opened the public hearing regarding the proposed four hour Saturday service cut included in the Mayor's F.Y. 2011-12 Budget. Board members and StarTran staff introduced themselves, and Mr. Phelps presented the "ground rules", and welcomed all attendees.

Mr. Worth summarized the StarTran portion of the Mayor's proposed F.Y. 2011-12 Budget.

The following attendees spoke:

- Lois Neuman is against StarTran cuts. Ms. Neuman complimented StarTran bus operators for being understanding and helpful.
- Barb Neuman a bus patron since 1975, wonders why the transit system is part of the budget cuts as the service is a necessity for her. Ms. Neuman works during the week and needs to utilize Saturday service for all of her errands. A Saturday service cut would create a hardship for her.
- Cheryl Senff has depended on StarTran transit service for 40 years. Ms. Senff is employed on Saturday, so any service cuts would create a hardship for her.
- Diane Kimble noted that her concerns were the same as Ms. Senff .
- Jeff Lopez representing ASUN and UNL students, noted that UNL students are a big portion of the StarTran ridership and any Saturday service cuts would affect them negatively, although reducing morning service is better than later in the day.
- Sheryal Slobaszewski suggested cutting route information staff in order to keep Saturday service whole.
- Shiloh Hobelman is against Saturday transit cuts as it would create a hardship for the handicapped that attend learning centers and social activities.
- Tag Jackson is a 12 year resident in Lincoln utilizing StarTran services. He feels the Saturday cuts hurt the disabled and those unable to drive and also noted that there would be less revenue because there would be fewer riders. Mr. Jackson felt that if there are cuts to Saturday service this year that cuts would continue year after year leaving transit dependent patrons with no transportation options.
- Jeff Altman representing the Nebraska Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, stated that the Saturday service cuts would negatively impact the blind community, with many of them working during the week and utilizing transit on Saturday for their social activities, meetings to discuss legislative issues affecting their community, and how to organize effective changes. He indicated that there are no "best" times for service reduction.
- Toni Kent a bus operator is opposed to any StarTran cuts as it would lessen the quality of life for many StarTran patrons. Ms. Kent quoted the StarTran mission statement noting it doesn't match with proposed cuts.

- Bryce Stewart needs Saturday service for work and is opposed to any cuts stating he has a need for more transit services, i.e. evening. Mr. Stewart would be willing to pay more for his low-income pass in order to forego transit cuts.

In response to an Advisory Board question, 'Would you be willing to pay \$10 for the Low-Income bus pass that is currently \$7.50, in order to maintain Saturday service?' The majority responded that they would be willing to pay \$10 to keep Saturday service without cuts.

- Charles Schroeder a bus operator is opposed to any transit cuts, noting a cut in the middle of the day would affect patrons participating in the Matt Talbot lunch program, and a cut at the end of the service day affects the Matt Talbot dinner program. Mr. Schroeder noted that cuts in Saturday service would make transferring nearly impossible. Mr. Schroeder is concerned that Saturday service cuts will force lower ridership causing Saturday service to be a target for cutting the complete day in the coming years' budget process.

In response to an Advisory Board question, 'Would you prefer one 10-hour Saturday service day or two 4-hour service shifts?' The majority responded they would prefer the 10-hour Saturday service.

- Jenni Oestmann is a 20 year StarTran patron, utilizing transit service for employment at Bryan/LGH East during the week and on Saturdays. Ms. Oestmann is opposed to any Saturday transit cuts as she cannot afford to take a cab.
- Nancy Carpenter, representing ARC and Action Club is opposed to Saturday service cuts as Saturday mornings are when their meetings take place. Ms. Carpenter feels that more StarTran services would be utilized because of rising gas prices if transit services met their needs.
- Sharon Johnson noted that she would be willing to pay \$10 for the Low-Income bus pass to avoid Saturday service cuts. Ms. Johnson noted that service cuts affects patrons independence. Ms. Johnson suggested salary cuts in lieu of transit cuts.
- Glenn Ledder doesn't utilize transit services but family and friends do and he would be willing to give up his "first hour of free parking" and/or increase taxes to avoid Saturday service cuts.
- Rebecca Ledder is opposed to transit cuts as she already experiences difficulty with coordinating her work schedule with transit service.
- Marian Malone is opposed to Saturday service cuts, suggesting raising low-income fare, or cutting some of the Arapahoe route service. Ms. Malone stated that StarTran services are not a luxury for patrons, but instead a necessity.
- Patrick Helwig suggested cutting salaries instead of transit cuts. Mr. Helwig also suggested that since the City Council makes budget cut decision, they should utilize transit service in order to better understand the decisions they are making. Mr. Helwig opposes Saturday service cuts as he is employed on Saturday and also feels that with rising gas prices, many more would utilize transit services.
- Pat Schreurs stated she is visually impaired and is opposed to transit cuts. Ms. Schreurs suggested that the Advisory Board and City Council ride StarTran Saturday service with a disabled patron in order to fully comprehend the difficulties transit cuts would impose.
- Marilyn Kruger, Vice President of the ATU Union and an eight year bus operator is against any StarTran budget cuts. Ms. Kruger noted that many patrons are transit dependent and any cuts to Saturday service would lead to more service cuts in coming budget years. Mr. Kruger suggested deadheading buses to avoid service cuts.

Ms. Kruger read a letter to the Advisory Board from the ATU President, Mike Foreman, in which he is opposed to service cuts and suggest cuts in management instead.

- Randy Martinez asked that budget cuts not be passed on to the low income bus patrons. Opposing transit service cuts, Mr. Martinez suggest cutting other expenses.
- Moe (didn't give last name) is homeless and transit dependent so is opposed to transit service cuts.
- Nolan Roland would be willing to pay more for fare and taxes in order to avoid Saturday service cuts, as he is employed on Saturday.
- Steve Craft is opposed to Saturday service cuts as he utilizes Saturday service for shopping, library, and other personal needs, but did indicate that a 9:30am-5:30pm service period would be best if cuts are made. Mr. Craft would like for the Advisory Board and Larry Worth to recommend no StarTran service cuts.
- Abbie Clark is opposed to Saturday service cuts.
- Kyle (did not give last name) depend on the bus and Saturday service cuts would cause a hardship for him, suggesting that shuttle services could be reduced to reduce costs.
- Garry DeFreece, a handicapped patron, thanked the bus operators for supporting the transit dependent patrons wishes for no service cuts.
- Tim Suer is employed at WalMart on Saturday and service cuts will be a hardship for him to maintain employment on Saturdays.
- Dawn Bruns has been employed downtown for 7 years utilizing StarTran transit services for transportation back and forth. Ms. Bruns is transit dependent so any service cuts would create a hardship for her.
- Tag Jackson stated that StarTran transit services are safer for him than utilizing taxi cab service. Mr. Jackson believes the cab companies to be unreliable with too long of wait times. Mr. Jackson would be willing to pay a higher fare to avoid service cuts.
- Patrick Helwig suggested budget cuts to be focused on road maintenance instead of transit.
- Stephanie Wiegel is transit dependent and does not feel that the transit service meets all of her needs as it is (i.e. night classes, Sunday worship services), so she is opposed to any transit service cuts. Ms. Wiegel is aware that she could experience better transit services in other cities, but would like to remain in Lincoln. The transit service is not a luxury to her, but a necessity.

Mr. Phelps thanked all those in attendance and closed the public hearing.