

MINUTES
STARTRAN ADVISORY BOARD PUBLIC HEARING & MEETING
City Council Chambers
November 19, 2015

Members Present: Don Herz, Jenni Lesoing-Lucs, Linda Carter, Mike DeKalb,
Janet Goodman-Banks, Jason Hellbusch
Members Absent: Stephen Speicher
Staff Present: Mike Davis, Mike Weston, Brian Praeuner, Scott Tharnish, Kitty Elliott
Others: Thomas Wittmann, Nelson-Nygaard

I. PUBLIC HEARING

Notation of the open meetings law and patron conduct notice.

StarTran Advisory Board Chair, Mike DeKalb opened the Public Hearing, noting the ground rules, in which speakers are to comment on the advertised public hearing proposals, and adhere to the three minute time limit for speaking.

Mr. DeKalb noted that we are here to listen to comments from the public on the proposal for the 2015 Transit Development Plan Preferred Alternative. First will be a presentation on this plan by the consultants, Nelson-Nygaard.

Thomas Wittmann, with Nelson-Nygaard introduced himself as the lead consultant on this plan. He explained that a transit development plan is a comprehensive evaluation of existing service characteristics and system performance, and it identifies areas for improvement. It includes a road map for potential growth priorities and where StarTran should look to invest additional resources if they become available. The goals looked at how to balance coverage and productivity, improving directness of service, improving the span of service, how to implement a formal bus stop program and looking at new markets that are not served by StarTran currently.

Three areas looked at to develop this plan were the existing system performance, a market assessment and public input. On the existing system performance, it was noted that StarTran is growing, with the heaviest concentration of ridership at both the downtown and east campuses of UNL. In looking at this plan, on-time performance was a priority for changing any route. Densities were evaluated...where people live, as well as employment centers, to determine how StarTran is or is not meeting those needs. Transit propensity was evaluated, which is how likely someone in a given area is to ride the bus. This evaluation is based upon how many zero vehicle households, how many seniors, how many low income, how many renters, as well as how many younger riders are living in a given area. This helps gauge areas that might support more service or higher levels of service. The neighborhoods surrounding downtown are the areas showing the greatest potential to support more, or higher level service.

Community outreach and open houses were held, an advisory committee was formed, meetings with operators, stakeholders and staff, as well as a 'Build Your Own Bus System' survey were provided to find out the concerns and priorities within the community.

November 19, 2015 StarTran Advisory Board Public Hearing Minutes – Page 2

The top priority was to add later service, add Sunday service and to improve frequency. Some of the other comments were to add crosstown service, improve upon places served, upgrade bus stop amenities, add express service, straighten and streamline the routes and improve passenger information making it easier to access the service.

From this analysis and feedback, three different cost-constrained scenarios were designed. The purpose was to get feedback from the community on what they did and didn't like with each scenario. From the feedback the preferred alternative was designed, which is a combination of all three scenarios. Later evening service, more frequent midday service, service to the new south Target and Walmart, new northeast crosstown service and more direct service were consistently desired, and are features, of the new plan.

Some of the benefits of the Preferred Alternative are:

- Eight routes provide later evening service until 8pm.
- Improved downtown connections with timed transfers occurring every 15 minutes at Gold's.
- More frequent service.
- Crosstown service connecting north Lincoln with Gateway as well as Vet's and St. Elizabeth's Hospitals.
- New destinations have been added, such as the new Target and Walmart near Yankee Hill Road.
- Directness of service.

With these improvements projected ridership increase is 5-10%.

More service is needed than what we can afford right now, so the plan identifies some improvement priorities. Those are identified as follows:

- Phase 1 – Improve midday headway to 30 minutes on 5 routes, and add a second bus on the Star Shuttle route to improve headways.
- Phase 2 – Extend weekday evening service on all TDP routes by 2 hours.
- Phase 3 – Add Sunday service on all TDP routes.
- Phase 4 – Improve the headway on Routes 48 and 54 to 30 minutes, and add express bus service with limited stops to serve key locations.
- Phase 5 – Extend Route 41, and improve Route 51 and 52 headways to 60 minutes.

In conclusion of the formal presentation, Mr. Wittmann explained that we are in the finalization stage of the plan.

The public hearing was opened up for public comment.

Richard Schmeling – Mr. Schmeling stated that the board has been assigned a difficult task of recommending to the Mayor and City Council a bus system that will adequately serve the needs of the citizens of Lincoln. His focus was on crosstowns, these are what really make a transportation system work. The 27th Street crosstown recommended by the consultants turns and goes downtown rather than continuing south to Yankee Hill Road. The 48th Street crosstown as proposed ends at "O" Street and then out to the Vet's Hospital, it doesn't go south along 48th Street. For twenty years the bus system has been underfunded and we need money infused into the system to make it work well. The public needs to know about the system and have incentives such as a discount on wheel tax to those presenting their bus pass and a quarter fare to introduce the new system structure.

November 19, 2015 StarTran Advisory Board Public Hearing Minutes – Page 3

Lorrie Gibbons – Ms. Gibbons is very passionate about the bus system, has been a rider for 40 years and she opposes the entire new design as presented. She is now going to have to walk at least 10 blocks to get to a stop. She also expressed displeasure that this plan does not serve the Lancaster Event Center or reflect evening service.

Amy Dickerson – Ms. Dickerson introduced herself as the managing director of the Lancaster Event Center. She has been at the event center about a year and a half and she believes they are the largest facility not served by the bus system. She stated they have about 500,000 people who come out to the event center year-round. They have a large variety of events plus it is a huge employment center. She also stated she would appreciate an updated map as they have been annexed within the city limits.

Sheryl Slobaszewski – Ms. Slobaszewski believes there is money for more service as the drivers have been expressing how much overtime they have been putting in, and she believes the drivers deserve a raise as they have not had one in two years. She is not in favor of the extended service as she would rather see more service so that people can continue to get around town.

Marian Malone – Ms. Malone thanked the consultants as she believes they have done the best they can within the financial constraints given. She believes more money needs to be allotted to StarTran, the City is growing and the services need to keep up with the city, and if we want to have a good city like we have, we need to have a decent bus system. She is glad the alternative includes maintaining Saturday service as she feels it is very important, yet wishes there was Sunday service also. Riding the bus is the sensible thing to do; it saves money and provides a much cleaner living environment.

Tiffany Back – Ms. Back is concerned about taking the bus out of the area that she currently catches the bus with her daughter, on Route 51, they are going to have to walk a minimum of 6 blocks now. She said because the plan is to take Route 54 off of “O” Street, which is where she got off to take her daughter to daycare and then walked the additional 5 blocks to work, will not be available with this new plan. She stated this new plan is not convenient at all.

Pat Hutchinson – Ms. Hutchinson stated that the current bus service she has is excellent; she has excellent service and the drivers are always on time. She rides the bus every day and has since 1999. Her concern is on the 52-Gaslight route with the plans to take out the entire east side of the current route in the new plan as that will leave 18-20 people, without a ride to and from work. She wondered if there was talk about an express service to Kawasaki as the 6:00am trip is packed with patrons.

Amy Eidenmiller – Ms. Eidenmiller has concerns about safety with the new design. She specifically mentioned the Fallbrook area, as well as 7th & Superior areas as being difficult to get to with the busy highway and interstate to cross. She expressed that the service to Doane at 52nd and “R” has not been serviced well. She would like to see service to Devaney and the Lancaster Event Center.

Brad Loos – Mr. Loos stated that they bought their house specifically for the bus service and don't feel the service is improving. He is concerned about the designated bus stops and losing the service in the neighborhoods, especially during the winter weather.

November 19, 2015 StarTran Advisory Board Public Hearing Minutes – Page 4

Alan Stenvers – Mr. Stenvers said that he moved to the location he is living currently for the bus service. He further expressed disappointment that this plan does not serve the Northeast Walmart or the Lancaster Event Center. Mr. Stenvers did, however, note that Route 56 will take him directly to other places such as SouthPointe Pavilions which is near his doctor's office, to Super Saver, Walmart and Target.

Jerome Spears – Mr. Spears introduced himself and stated he does have a car but he has made a conscious decision to lower the carbon footprint and he only drives on Sunday when there is no bus service. He utilizes his bike since we implemented bike racks. He believes the service focuses a great deal on UNL, which he feels is a seasonal service and that UNL is only one of many college campuses in Lincoln, others include Union and Wesleyan. He stated there are cultural events in different neighborhood parks if service is eliminated you prevent people the ability to frequent these areas and events. He believes maintaining ridership is important but it is also important to market to those who hopefully would continue riding into the future, such as prep students and high school students.

Ronald Theasmeyer – Mr. Theasmeyer's main concern is the elimination of a segment on the Bethany route, this being the area between 27th and 33rd and Vine & Holdrege. He stated that in 1993 he moved to the house he currently resides in because there was bus service, actually three different routes served him within a short walking distance. Then in 2008, one route was changed and one was eliminated, so now only one route serves his area. He wanted it noted that service is not improving, rather we have gone from good service through the years to no service. He also stated that when the scenarios were brought to the public, service to 33rd & Vine was provided in each, however, with this preferred alternative that location is not served at all.

Joselyn Luedtke – Ms. Luedtke stated she has been riding the bus for twelve years and she bought her house near 76th & Holdrege because of the bus service. Now she will have to walk nine blocks, something she is not willing to do, especially in the winter. She further stated that the 84th and Holdrege area is booming and she feels continuing service to 84th rather than stopping at 70th should occur. Lastly she is not in favor of the designated stops.

Jeff Altman – Mr. Altman introduced himself as the orientation mobility instructor, representing the Nebraska Commission for the Blind. He also said he has had the privilege of serving on the Transit Development Plan Advisory Committee. He stated everyone on the committee was very concerned about the quality of life for all whose lives may be impacted as a result of these changes, and everyone was also determined to find ways to improve the system so that more would be able to utilize transit and get where they need to go. Unfortunately, with change, comes pain and confusion. As difficult as some of these changes are, he believes this is our path to the future and that there is a bigger picture to look at, not just today but 10-20 years down the road. He, too, bought his house based on bus service and it makes it difficult to adjust to the changes, but he feels we need to give it a chance.

November 19, 2015 StarTran Advisory Board Public Hearing Minutes – Page 5

Charlie Schroeder – Mr. Schroeder introduced himself as the president of the ATU, the driver's union. He stated he is not speaking on behalf of all, just some. He wanted to clarify that someone mentioned driver overtime and the reason the drivers are working overtime is because we are supposed to have 87 drivers and we currently only have 79. He commented on the direction of the South 13th Street and North 27th Street routes as he would like to see them operate the reverse direction of what is shown on the maps. He feels the 40 Heart Hospital route as shown does not get close enough to Walmart for those folks and the Heart Hospital patrons will have to cross the street. He wants the 42 route to be named Bethany and the 49 to be University Place, as they have been named currently. He would like to see the extension out to 84th. He is in favor of designated stops, it is more efficient and there is no question about where a stop is. He is in favor of running the 49 University Place route to 33rd & Vine to serve that area eliminated.

He would like to see clarification of direction on the 52 Gaslight. Would like to see 53 SouthPointe serving the SouthPointe area rather than Sheridan, again to eliminate any confusion. Lastly, he believes we should move the 54 Vets off of Randolph south to "A" Street, utilizing 16th/17th Streets.

Champaigne Gallagher – Ms. Gallagher stated her mother is a bus driver and she has ridden the bus her entire life. She likes a lot of the new plan, but believes there needs to be a bus on Vine Street as there are a lot of people who get on at 84th and Vine who work downtown. She determines where she lives and works based upon bus service, which is why she is living at 84th & Vine and works downtown. She currently walks about 2 blocks, but if this area is eliminated she would have to walk approximately one mile, to "O" Street and getting a car ride to the bus stop defeats the purpose of riding the bus.

Marilyn Kruger – Ms. Kruger introduced herself as representing CFIT (Citizens for Improved Transit). She stated she is also a driver, but is not representing StarTran, however she has been a driver for 12-1/2 years. She said everyone's hands are tied by the financial constraints and she believes that although the board members cannot approve more funding, they could put some pressure on the city to provide more funding to StarTran. Ms. Kruger stated that expanded hours of service is the number one request she has heard over the years, however she does not feel that extending until 8pm, which is essentially only one hour later will fulfill the needs and expectations people have. She would like to see 11pm but realizes that is not likely possible at this time, but stated that 9pm is something we should push for currently. She stated if you are fortunate to live right along one of these corridors the service would be convenient and cost effective. Lastly she felt the 51 West A route direction should be changed as it is not safe to cross A or Coddington to get to the bus.

Richard Burton – Mr. Burton stated there are about 15 people who ride the 44 Vine Street that live along Vine between 66th to 84th with the majority being elderly who cannot walk down Vine Street to "O" Street to catch a bus. It is important that this part of the route not be changed. He is glad to see no Sunday service added as he feels the drivers need at least one day off. Lastly he wanted to encourage everyone to listen to the recommendations provided by the drivers as they have good input.

November 19, 2015 StarTran Advisory Board Public Hearing Minutes – Page 6

Brenda Walker – Ms. Walker stated she appreciated the presentation given and feels that the transit propensity report addressed the concern she had about Route 53. This route is the only one that isn't served on Saturday, so she appreciates this being looked at to also operate on Saturdays. She also stated she appreciates the extended hours but if this route only operates until 6, she doesn't know how she would get home.

Becky McCullough – Ms. McCullough said her concern is the big hole on 3143 S. 17th Street and the question if the Arapahoe would still be at 17th & High Street. Lastly she hopes we can operate later hours.

Catherine Johnston – Ms. Johnston's concern was if the tail end of the Havelock route would still be at 69th & Burlington. Mr. Praeuner indicated it most likely would turn around at that location. She also is glad the service will be extended until 9pm.

Ted Glaser – Mr. Glaser introduced himself as a real estate broker with Home Real Estate and he would be more than happy to help those who need to sell and buy new homes. He currently rides the College View route which is to be replaced with the SouthPointe route. He noticed that the "A" Street corridor has been abandoned with this plan and that is a high density corridor, so it would be nice if Route 54 or 56 could cover "A" Street.

Pat Schreuers – Ms. Schreuers has concern about the bus not going to the Walter Apartments and concerned about the transfer needed for her to get to Edgewood.

Justin Hertzler – Mr. Hertzler has a concern about the Arapahoe area as it basically being abandoned. He does have a vehicle but has chosen not to drive. He believes that taking the buses out of the neighborhoods will reflect negatively on young professionals, like himself, from taking the bus. He doesn't believe all the facts should be based on low income families, but if we want Lincoln to be a growing city then we should want people to ride the bus. He has young kids, which adds to his concern in this area because there are very few sidewalks which would make the kids walk in the streets and cross 13th or VanDorn Streets, which he will not allow. He feels neighborhoods are where people are and he does not like the idea of making them walk a great distance, especially in bad weather, and then also make them stand at the curb or in the street to catch the bus.

Nicole Green – Ms. Green wanted to thank everyone for the great care in which the language and ridership was handled, i.e. the low income, disabled, and elderly, etc. She thanked the drivers and believe they should have a strong say in these changes. Unfortunately with the financial constraint it is hard, especially when the people who have money are not generally the ones who ride the bus and it is hard to convince them to give money to the unwashed masses. The concerns she has is with the near south neighborhood, they all depend upon the bus system; not just by choice but by necessity. No route connects to the Haymarket and Haymarket Park. Finally, everyone deserves a whole life, not just a partial life. They deserve to hold jobs, recreation and shopping. Lobby to the Mayor to give their whole lives back.

November 19, 2015 StarTran Advisory Board Public Hearing Minutes – Page 7

Ann Moraczewski - Ms. Moraczewski advocates for the Arapahoe route because if taken out it would be basically seven blocks in any direction for her to catch the bus. She believes a big delay on the routes are holding them for transfers and would like those eliminated during high peak periods when there is another bus coming in 30 minutes. She chose to start taking the bus because there was one in her neighborhood but if the Arapahoe is taken out she will most likely go back to driving and doesn't really want to do that. Think of not only the riders you had but the ones you might have attracted and that might not happen when you take these routes out of the neighborhoods.

Chairman, Mr. DeKalb, thanked everyone for coming and for their input and closed the public hearing.

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Chairman, DeKalb noted the open meetings law.

A. Review/Action Items:

- **September 24, 2015 StarTran Advisory Board Meeting Minutes** – A motion was made by Ms. Lesoing-Lucs and seconded by Ms. Carter to approve the 9/24/15 minutes as submitted. The minutes were approved 6-0.

- **Route #52-Gaslight (Weekday)** - Mike Weston stated we have been requested by Kawasaki management to synchronize our trips with their shifts and we are proposing to add a stop at Kawasaki on the 2:45 trip outbound. This would provide 3 trips in the afternoon, at no additional cost. He is requesting approval for this additional trip. He added that we need a week's notice to post this change notice on the buses with service to begin on November 30th. Ms. Lesoing-Lucs made the motion and Mr. Herz seconded to approve this trip change to Route #52-Gaslight to serve Kawasaki. Motion passed 6-0.

- **Transit Development Plan** - Mr. Davis wanted to clarify the following:
 - We realize it will take additional marketing when we roll out this new plan and we are currently working on that aspect.
 - Saturday service under the new plan will more closely match the weekday service than what we have today.
 - Northeast Walmart and Lancaster Event Center are in our expansion list even though they are not able to happen in year one.
 - We can, and will, move Route 54 from Randolph to "A" Street to allow coverage in that area.

DeKalb queried what our next step is. Davis explained that summer is the best time to make a change, prior to school starting. We need at least six months for implementation, so we are in good shape currently. He added that the board does have the opportunity to make decisions regarding services changes and the decisions by this board can then be appealed by City Council, which would take this plan to City Council for a second public hearing and final approval from that point.

Ms. Lesoing-Lucs asked if the goal was to get the board to vote today and DeKalb said that was his understanding. Ms. Lesoing-Lucs asked how we make the adjustments to the routes, such as the Randolph and "A" Street route, and the decision of how far northeast we are going. Mr. Wittmann, with confirmation from Davis, said as part of the final plan, Route 54 will be moved off of Randolph Street to "A" Street, with it traversing to and from downtown on 16th & 17th Streets, running east on "A" Street to 70th.

11.19.15 StarTran Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – Page 2

Ms. Lesoing-Lucs asked about the other areas mentioned during the public hearing, such as the 13th/17th corridor and to the northeast around Vine and 84th. Mr. Wittmann responded that the Arapahoe area, south of VanDorn, has extremely low ridership so no change is recommended; and the area north and east of 84th & Vine was considered but, unfortunately, it cannot be accomplished within an hour and then it is just not feasible because the buses are not running on time.

Mr. Herz mentioned changes suggested by the Union President and wanted to know about addressing those. Mr. Davis said the consultant has had six or seven meetings with the drivers, they have met one on one as well as given presentations to them and changes have been made as a result of their input.

Ms. Carter wanted clarification about where Route 54 would traverse on "A" Street. Mr. Wittmann said it would operate on "A" Street east to 70th Street while utilizing 16th & 17th Streets to downtown.

Ms. Goodman-Banks asked if any of the individuals who expressed their concerns regarding the area of Arapahoe and the Lancaster Event Center were involved in the development of this plan. Again Mr. Wittmann stated that the Arapahoe area ridership numbers south of VanDorn are just extremely low, so no change in that area would be recommended. Mr. Wittman said, in regard to the Lancaster Event Center, no one was directly invited from the center, but that area was involved heavily in the plan discussion, but within their cost constrained goals, were just not able to efficiently make that happen. He stated that the previous TDP had the same alignment as it does now with an hour goal, and it became clear that it was impossible to keep that route on schedule. What has been seen industry-wide is a bus that comes every 30 minutes versus every 35 minutes or 60 minutes versus 70 minutes, from a ridership impact not being able to make transfers consistently during the day, makes a 20-25% swing in ridership.

Ms. Goodman-Banks asked whether this plan basically neglects service to Wesleyan and Union College, which was a concern of some during the public hearing. Mr. Wittman said Wesleyan would continue to have service from the Uni Place route and Union College still has service on 48th Street with the proposed Route 56.

Mr. Davis reminded the board that there are five expansion option priorities and they could recommend those be changed in order, if they wanted to do so.

Mr. DeKalb said he has been a rider for 36 years, every day, and his major issue is that we are trying to optimize the system with no increases. This is a failure in the process. He understands some of these areas may be fewer or poor but feels we have shifted priorities from having very good coverage of the city at a cost where many people are going to be walking 5-8 blocks in winter weather rather than 1-2 blocks as today. This is a typical scenario that is imbedded within the process when you have no additional resources but trying to provide additional services.

Ms. Goodman-Banks agreed with Mr. DeKalb, and said she does appreciate the work everyone has done with what they had to work with. She is very concerned about how we are changing these people's lives who have taken the time to speak here.

Mr. Hellbusch agrees with what everyone has said. He fully understands that this will change some people's lives.

11.19.15 StarTran Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – Page 3

Mr. Davis stated he would like a recommendation that staff move ahead with the plan as proposed, with the recommendation of moving the Randolph route to "A" Street. There may be an interest to move the Lancaster Event Center/Havelock expansion option to priority 1 or 2. He said staff will continue to update the advisory board as we move along in this process, but notes that to realize our ridership potential, we need to implement a plan and allow it to operate for 2-3 years to reach that goal.

Ms. Lesoing-Lucs made a motion, seconded by Mr. Herz, that we accept the TDP as presented with the three adjustments identified by Mr. Davis.

These adjustments were clarified by Mr. Wittmann as:

- 1) The "A" street corridor can now be covered by Route 54, taking it off Randolph. It will operate on 16th/17th Streets onto "A" Street east to 70th Street.
- 2) Route 49 will travel south on 33rd Street from Holdrege to Vine, then west to 27th.
- 3) Sheridan route will operate on Saturdays.

Mr. Davis stated he is excited to move forward with the plan with these adjustments, and feels this plan gives us the momentum to do some really great things in the future. The motion passed 4-2. (Ms. Lesoing-Lucs - yes, Ms. Carter - yes, Mr. Herz - yes, Mr. Hellbusch – yes, Mr. DeKalb – no; to make the point that we are robbing peter to pay paul; Ms. Goodman-Banks – no.)

B. Next Advisory Board Meeting Date

Decision to be made whether the board wanted to skip the December meeting because of the holidays. There were no objections, so the next meeting will be in January 2016.

C. Other Business

Mr. Schmeling gave the Chairman, Mr. DeKalb a new magazine that he hopes he will share with the rest of the board members.

D. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.