

**MINUTES**  
**STARTRAN ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**  
**StarTran Conference Room 2**  
**January 26, 2012**

Members Present: Kim Phelps, Beatty Brasch, John Baylor, Steve Speicher, Mike DeKalb,  
Debby Brehm

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Larry Worth, Mike Weston, Kitty Elliott, Mark Stevens, Connie Thoreson,  
Miki Esposito

**I. REGULAR BOARD MEETING**

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

Debby Brehm indicated she had been notified that she is ineligible to vote on StarTran action items due to the fact that she lives outside of the City of Lincoln limits. Ms. Brehm therefore resigned from the StarTran Advisory Board.

**A. Patrons to be Heard**

None

**B. Review/Action Items**

- The **December 15, 2011 minutes** were approved with a correction on page 1, section B. The date December 12, 2011 was changed to December 6, 2011. (Brasch, Speicher, Phelps, Baylor, and DeKalb voted “aye”)
- Ms. Elliott reviewed the success of the Holiday Sale as noted in the January 2012 Board Report. She also indicated that StarTran ridership has increased 20% over the last two years and that Mr. Baylor had gone on-air at KFOR radio that morning to promote the increased ridership information.

Ms. Elliott indicated that the Marketing Sub-Committee met with regard to the **Star Pass**. It was noted in the minutes of the December 15<sup>th</sup> meeting that the vote to increase the Star Pass from \$15 to \$16 was invalid due to lack of majority affirmative votes. Staff and the Marketing Subcommittee recommend the Star Pass be increased from \$15 to \$20 as this is a program to keep youth riders during the summer months while school is out of session. It was reiterated that this is a deeply discounted pass and has many sponsors offering “extras” to youth who present the pass at their place of business. More passes will be ordered this year as they sold out last year. Many daycares and youth service agencies purchase the Star Pass for their clients. This increase is a revenue generator that would help defray other costs for StarTran. The Board voted unanimously in favor of increasing the Star Pass from \$15 to \$20. (Brasch, Speicher, Phelps, Baylor, and DeKalb voted “aye”)

- Mr. DeKalb nominated Mr. Phelps to continue as Chairman of the StarTran Advisory Board. The Board voted unanimously in favor of Mr. Phelps as Chairman. (Brasch, Speicher, Phelps, Baylor, and DeKalb voted “aye”) Ms. Brasch nominated Mr. Baylor to continue as Vice Chair of the StarTran Advisory Board. The Board voted unanimously in favor of Mr. Baylor as Vice Chair. (Brasch, Speicher, Phelps, Baylor, and DeKalb voted “aye”)

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### C. Staff Reports

- Chairman Phelps opened discussion with regard to the Advisory Board Structure options included in the January 2012 Board Report.

Mr. DeKalb felt that the Board's duties are somewhat restricted and there is frustration due to unclear goals regarding increased revenue versus increased ridership. He would like for discussions to continue between the Board members and StarTran staff in order to establish a common goal.

Mr. Baylor indicated he would like for the Board's authority to be expanded to include involvement in budget issues. He also felt that the number of Board members could be less, i.e. five and with three being a quorum, especially for minor route change issues.

Mr. Speicher felt the Board should be advocates for increased transit services and funding. He felt that if there isn't a "fight" for increased services/funding there would be a continued erosion. He noted there are conflicting goals among Board members and would like to have members work toward all being on the same page in order to accomplish improvement in transit services.

Ms. Brasch felt that disagreements are healthy, but felt that priorities need to be established. She felt the Advisory Board doesn't need to be the ultimate authority but should question staff and potentially present a different viewpoint on issues.

Mr. DeKalb indicated a few questions that would need to be answered in order to move forward on this issue, as follows... How does staff want to use the Advisory Board? What is the role of StarTran in the City? Which is a priority, revenue or ridership? Mr. DeKalb feels that seven is the right number of Board members.

Mr. Speicher and Mr. DeKalb would like to be made aware of how StarTran fits in with the City of Lincoln future planning.

PW/U Director Esposito indicated that StarTran is part of the City of Lincoln future transportation planning through the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO). Director Esposito also noted that the Mayor's office staff is aware of and working toward defining the StarTran Advisory Board's responsibilities and direction.

Director Esposito indicated the StarTran Advisory Board should continue discussions on defining their role to bring forward to her and the Mayor's office staff.

Chairman Phelps indicated he would like input from StarTran staff and more Board discussion on how they depict the transit need. He believes the "empty" bus perception needs to be changed by educating the public on more of StarTran "truths" and statistics.

Mr. Worth noted that the Audit Consultant will be presenting Draft Recommendations in early February and a Final Report in March. This report will include the issue of the StarTran Advisory Board's structure.

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Director Esposito would like the Advisory Board to be stakeholders in the transit services and feels that advocacy is very important. She also cautioned the Board on budget involvement as this would involve significantly increased commitment and the Board would be held accountable. Ms. Esposito encouraged the Board to listen to and respect StarTran staff as she feels they are closest to the transit system and know how it operates.

Mr. Speicher inquired as to what the proper timing would be for the Advisory Board to find out where transit fits in with City priorities. Ms. Esposito noted that a direction would be coming in 2012.

Mr. DeKalb would like to know how the Audit Consultants measured ridership as they indicated it was low.

Mr. Baylor feels that one Advisory Board member should be involved in the MPO and other bigger picture meetings.

Chairman Phelps indicated discussion on the issue of Advisory Board Structure will continue as an agenda item for the next few meetings.

- Mr. Worth summarized the **Social Service Agency participation in the Low-Income Bus Pass Program**. Meetings and discussions have been held to encourage social service agencies to submit grant requests for their clients in a coordinated manner in order to use resultant funding for monthly bus passes. The City Grant Coordinator is involved and is researching potential funding.

Coordinated securement of such funding would enable all 31-day bus passes to be the same price. Social service agencies could use grant money to purchase these passes for their clients, distributing and charging to fit their needs. The \$45 passes could be significantly reduced in price, likely increasing utilization of those fare devices. StarTran feels that this would increase revenue and ridership for StarTran.

Ms. Brasch feels this funding is very hard to find but thought that any such funding ought to be used toward a “free” fare system.

Mr. Baylor commended Scott Tharnish for his work on this issue and encouraged Ms. Brasch to participate in this process. Mr. Speicher applauded Scott Tharnish for his initiative on this issue.

Chairman Phelps indicated this will continue to be on the February Board meeting agenda.

### D. **Operations Report**

- Ms. Elliott indicated that StarTran staff care about transit patrons and work hard for them and StarTran. She asked the Board to support the staff and StarTran and to focus on positive issues. It is felt that the Advisory Board is focused on finding fault with StarTran and StarTran staff and it would accomplish more by being supportive.

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Mr. DeKalb noted that the StarTran staff does an outstanding job and asked the PW/U Director to implement a recognition program for staff. Director Esposito indicated she has implemented a department-wide monthly Strong Linc Award and that Larry utilizes a “You Are A Star” recognition program within the StarTran division. Ms. Elliott thanked the Director for the Strong Linc program. Mr. Speicher recognized that staff are doing good for and right by the patrons.

A suggestion was made to include recognition of positive events in the monthly Board Reports as well as on the StarTran website.

Chairman Phelps, thanked everyone for the discussion.

- It was clarified that StarTran would be replacing the building elevator with stimulus money, after 2012.
- In answer to an inquiry about the AVL phone applications, Ms. Elliott indicated StarTran is working with UNL faculty and students to implement the applications as well as a trip planner. The Advisory Board will continue to be updated on the status of this project.
- Mr. Worth noted the replacement fencing at the Gold’s main transfer area has been priced at approximately \$28,000 which would include reimbursing federal funds. Mr. Worth met with the PW/U Director and it was decided it was too costly to replace this fencing.

Mr. DeKalb indicated he would like more investigation into replacing the fencing.

- Mr. Speicher expressed interest in the UNL contract negotiations. Mr. Worth indicated that negotiations are underway for StarTran to take over UNL service (evening, summer and off times). It was noted that the contracted amount will cover the operation of the service and the capital cost of additional buses.

Chairman Phelps clarified that UNL fees are paid by all faculty, staff and students whether they use the bus services or not. Mr. Speicher was under the impression that student bus fees were much lower than even the low-income fare. Clarification was made that the contracted amount UNL pays StarTran covers the operation of the service and that UNL decides the costs of activity fees and distribution of the passes.

- Mr. Weston asked for the Advisory Board approval on a minor change to the #55, Star Shuttle route. The change would remove R St service between 8<sup>th</sup> & 9<sup>th</sup> St and move north utilizing Arena Drive. There would be no change to the schedule and the change would add new service to the INS building. The vote was unanimously in favor of this change. (Speicher, Phelps, Baylor, and DeKalb voted “aye” and Brasch was absent)

### **E. Patrons to be Heard**

No patrons requested to speak.

### **E. Adjournment**

Chairman Phelps adjourned the meeting.

The next StarTran Advisory Board Meeting is scheduled for February 23, 2012, 8:00 a.m. in the StarTran Conference Room..