

MINUTES
STARTRAN ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
StarTran Conference Room 2
April 25, 2013

Members Present: Kim Phelps, Mike DeKalb, John Baylor, Beatty Brasch, Don Herz, Linda Carter, Stephen Speicher

Members Absent: N/A

Staff Present: Mike Weston, Brian Praeuner, Scott Tharnish, Glenn Knust, Connie Thoreson
Miki Esposito, Doug McDaniel

I. REGULAR BOARD MEETING

Chairman Mike DeKalb noted the Open Meetings Act and Patron Conduct Notice posted on the north wall.

A. Patrons to be Heard

None

B. Review/Action Items

- March 28, 2013 StarTran Advisory Board Meeting Minutes – A motion for approval was voiced by Ms. Carter and seconded by Mr. Herz. The 3/28/13 StarTran Advisory Board Minutes were approved 6-0 (Speicher, Phelps, Carter, DeKalb, Brasch and Herz all voted “aye” with Mr. Baylor abstaining).

C. Discussion Item

- Recent Personnel Issue – Miki Esposito, PW/U Director, reviewed the March 23, 2013 incident in which bus operator Troy Fischer did not follow a supervisor directive with regard to an unruly patron but instead took matters into his own hands. Mr. Fischer repeatedly struck the patron and placed him off the bus onto “O’ Street. Upon notifying the StarTran Dispatcher of the incident, Mr. Fischer was suspended from employment. After Lincoln Police Department investigated the incident, and made contact with the victim, Mr. Fischer was issued a citation for 3rd degree assault. On April 11, 2013 a pre-disciplinary hearing was held, which resulted in the termination of Mr. Fischer’s employment with the City of Lincoln, PW/U - StarTran. An indictment was scheduled which was turned over to the County Prosecutor.

Mr. Weston indicated that since Mr. Fischer’s suspension, he has not operated a bus for StarTran.

Director Esposito noted that there had been no indications or “red flags”, during Mr. Fischer’s employment with the City of Lincoln, that this type of thing would happen.

Director Esposito stated that staff will be reminded of resources available for stress relief, counseling, etc. Training will be held for all StarTran staff beginning today with Ms. Esposito presenting helpful, encouraging information and with the new Transit Manager proposed to implement ongoing training.

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Mr. Weston indicated that part of the initial bus operator training is a 2 ½ hour diversity video. It was noted that recently training budgets have been cut, but there will be a second look at increasing them. Future training in which situations that may occur on buses will be simulated or role played for better understanding and handling of such situations. Ms. Esposito will begin by encouraging that a trust be built between the StarTran Dispatcher/Field Supervisors and the Bus Operators.

Mr. Doug McDaniel, Personnel Director indicated that as part of the hiring process criminal history checks are done. In answer to a question of screening for biases it was indicated that it would be a difficult task but Ms. Esposito and Mr. McDaniel are willing to look at trainings brought to them in this area of expertise.

Ms. Brasch asked what the process is for an employee heard making biased comments while on a break or their own time but still on the StarTran grounds. Mr. Weston indicated that they would meet with a Supervisor to be counseled, and due process could lead to being referred to outside counseling, and/or sensitivity training.

Mr. Steve Speicher offered an approach that could be a means to “blow off steam” in which bus operators could be part of a team in order to vent frustrations. Mr. McDaniel noted the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) is available with employee stewards to listen to employee issues. Ms. Marilyn Kruger, ATU Vice President, mentioned that drivers do bring issues and frustrations to her and other ATU board members/stewards. She also noted that there are gatherings off work time to “blow off steam”. Ms. Kruger indicated that Mr. Troy Fischer was part of the ATU gatherings, and she felt that the incident was not a representation of who Mr. Fischer really is, but instead, with personal frustrations and issues, he simply “snapped”.

Mr. McDaniel indicated that the City of Lincoln routinely makes all employees aware of counseling and training available to them. Ms. Esposito indicated that she will be working with the new Transit Manager, Michael Davis, to implement employee incentive programs.

There was discussion with regard to possible civil action on the part of the victim, to which it was determined that the City is somewhat protected and that the “assault” is outside of the scope for insurance coverage.

The discussion ended with the thought that Mr. Fischer is responsible for his personal actions. Mr. Weston indicated that all bus operators deal with intoxicated or unruly patrons on a daily basis and this unfortunate incident is an isolated instance. Mr. Weston also shared a compliment recently received in which a patron thanked StarTran for a friendly, courteous bus operator that brightened patrons moods.

In final thoughts Ms. Esposito felt that staff would learn from the unfortunate event and move forward to make patrons feel safe on StarTran buses. Mr. DeKalb noted that he is a long-time patron of StarTran services and feels that most bus operators are great employees.

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Ms. Esposito noted that bus operators would continue to be supported and positive attitudes would be reemphasized. Although PW/U is not always viewed by the public positively, she is working to change this viewpoint and add value by empowering and encouraging employees to have good interactions with the public and fellow employees. Ms. Kruger noted that most bus operators are making an extra effort to make patrons feel comfortable on StarTran buses. She also indicated that bus operators have been reassured by loyal patrons with their compliments and statements of appreciation.

Mr. Baylor and Ms. Brasch indicated that they were impressed with the leadership of staff and resultant actions taken by staff since the unfortunate March 23, 2013 incident. Remaining Board Members concurred.

Mr. Phelps agreed to put together a statement of support to be distributed to all StarTran bus operators upon review and input from all StarTran Advisory Board members.

D. Patrons to be Heard

None

E. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting is scheduled for May 30, 2013, 8:00 a.m. in the StarTran Conference Room #2.