

MINUTES
STARTRAN ADVISORY BOARD MEETING
StarTran Conference Room 2
October 28, 2010

Members Present: Beatty Brasch,, Mitch Paine, John Baylor, Debby Brehm

Members Absent: Kory George, Steve Speicher, Kim Phelps

Staff Present: Larry Worth, Mike Weston, Scott Tharnish, Brian Praeuner, Connie Thoreson

REGULAR BOARD MEETING

A. **Patrons to be Heard**

No patrons spoke.

B. **Special Reports**

- **Perimeter Bus Storage Report** - Mr. Baylor complimented StarTran staff on this report. Discussion took place as to the number of bus cleaners and mechanics assumed to be needed at each storage facility. It was acknowledged that the estimated 'capital' costs of approximately \$3 million are substantial, but that more fine-tuning of the resulting ongoing operation bottom line impact is desirable. Mr. Paine stated he would like to see any future additional expenditures be devoted to additional service, i.e. evening service.

Mr. Worth noted that, in general, Federal policies target Federal funds toward capital expenditures - not operations costs. StarTran currently receives \$2.7 million in federal funds. It is not known at this time what the State funding will be for the next fiscal year as statewide transit funding will likely be reduced, and rural transit systems are accommodated first with StarTran and Omaha's MAT sharing the remaining balance.

The Board would like Glenn Knust, Maintenance Superintendent to attend the next Advisory Board meeting, to discuss his opinion of the actual employee and other ongoing expenses associated with implementing a Perimeter Bus Storage plan. These discussions will result in a better understanding of the true ongoing, annual bottom line impact- positive or negative.

- **Bike Sub-Committee Update** - Mr. Paine reported that he, along with Mr. Praeuner and Ms. Elliott, met with Bike Advocacy groups related to the upcoming Bike Racks on Buses Program. Mr. Paine noted advocacy groups are pleased with plans in progress for promoting public awareness and instructional plans for the use of bike racks on buses. However, concerns have been expressed that the bike racks will be removed from buses during the winter months. Board Members inquired as to the reasons for winter removal of the bike racks. Mr. Worth commented that the snow/ice removal materials used in the winter shortens the life of the bike rack and results in corrosion behind the rack on the buses, as is difficult to get the winter debris/solutions cleaned off from this area, causing corrosion on the buses. *The Board would like to see information on the difference in the life of bike racks on buses all winter versus removal in winter.*

It was noted that those expected to utilize the bike racks would most likely be younger persons, low income, and UNL students. Mr. Paine noted bike racks would afford the public another transportation option.

Bike racks will hold two bikes maximum; are very easy to operate, with instructions noted on the racks. Bus Operators will give oral instructions only and not leave the bus to assist. Time to put on/take off bikes is estimated to be approximately two minutes. An instructional video is being made to be linked on our web page. *Mr. Praeuner agreed to email to the Advisory Board a link to an instructional video that is similar to what StarTran will make available to the public this spring.*

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Discussion took place with regard to the possibility of not being able to accommodate more than two bike/bus patrons, noting that the third bike/bus patron would have to wait for the next bus. Such is the same for a third person using a mobility device, or when all seats and standing room is full.

C. **Operations and Planning Report** - The following issues were discussed...

- Ms. Brehm thanked Ms. Brasch for tracking homeless ridership with regard to the Free Fare Day on October 1st.
- In response to a question from Mr. Baylor, it was noted that annual Marketing funds employed by StarTran are divided as such: \$36,000 on printing and \$35,500 for ads/promotions. Additional StarTran marketing results from trade. For example, StarTran's Boo-at-the-Zoo costs will be paid for with \$4,500 worth of radio trade, to be used as negotiated with Three Eagles Broadcasting.*

* These numbers were changed correcting what was said at the meeting.

The Board asked for monthly updates on actual Marketing expenditure purposes and costs.

Discussion took place with regard to free public announcements on public radio promoting StarTran services. Mr. Paine felt that promoting StarTran services to UNL students could possibly generate new patronage and instill lifelong habits of utilizing transit services. *Mr. Paine agreed to contact KRNU to inquire about public announcements promoting StarTran services.*

Mr. Baylor felt that a “cool” StarTran press release to the media every couple of weeks could possibly generate increased interest in transit services.

- Mr. Tharnish reviewed ridership per the current Board Report noting UNL ridership has increased from last year. The new UNL route structure has been well received with Mr. Paine noting he has received many positive comments from students. There has been an additional StarTran bus added to this route, which is reimbursed by UNL. The route also operates slightly longer hours by UNL as well.

Paid ridership has increased, with the Low Income Program resulting in the majority of the increase. There has been a drop in the use of full price 31-day passes, possibly due to 200% of poverty guidelines put into place with riders switching to the Low Income fare device.

In the six-year summary there has been a 75% increase in the cost of cash fare with actual revenue only increasing 7%. So revenue doesn't typically go up proportionate to the cost increases.

- Mr. Worth noted Big Red Express service ridership has increased from the last two years as of the first three games. Boo-At-The-Zoo has also increased from last year, with results from the first two nights.

Digital Recorders, the AVL contractor, has been advised of a November 10, 2010 deadline. The contractor is working through a final checklist of completed items, and performing required training to StarTran and information services staff. It was noted that liquidated damages continue to accrue but resultant proceeds will need to be spent on AVL-related projects.

Liquidated damages and non-completion charges could total up to approximately \$120,000. *The Board asked to be informed of expenditures using this money.*

It was noted that UNL is working on the phone alert portion of AVL, and Google is working on the Trip Planner. *The Board would like to be kept up to date on the progress of these items.*

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In answer to a question, it was confirmed that only phones with JAVA software are able to access the StarTran "Get On Board" website, at this time.

It was acknowledged that an RFP soliciting proposals for the StarTran bus advertising/wrap program is being developed by the City-County Purchasing Division. *The Board asked for a status of the RFP.*

There was discussion with regard to route number stickers being placed on all StarTran bus stop signs. Mr. Weston noted that the priority for placement of route number stickers was at locations where multiple routes intersect. Those were completed prior to or near when the new routes were initiated to reduce the potential of confusion at those locations. Locations where one route is operated have been numbered primarily by StarTran field supervisors on a time-available basis. Mr. Weston noted that the reduction of a field supervisor position through the recent budget process has necessitated reassignments of and re-prioritization of the responsibilities of the remaining field supervisors. However, he affirmed that staff's goal is to continue placing route numbers on the signs, and complete the project by the end of June, 2011. *The Board asked to be informed when the route number stickers have been placed on all bus stop signs.*

The Board agreed to combining the November and December StarTran Advisory Board meetings into one meeting, scheduled for Thursday, December 9, 2010, 8:00 a.m. in StarTran Conference Room #2.

D. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned