

TRAC Meeting Minutes
November 10, 2010, 11:30 a.m.
Greater Des Moines Partnership – 1st Floor

TRAC members present: Paul Bice, Helen Boles, Eileen Bradley, Stevie Sue Johnson, Crystal Estabrook, Kelly Henry, Gini Wolf, Jinsong Chen, Rod Van Genderen, Al Root and Linda Urias.

TRAC members absent: Sarah Riley and Greg Boesch.

DART staff present: Elizabeth Presutti, PJ Sass, Gunnar Olson, Jim Tishim, Rebecca Lovig and Kirstin Baer-Harding.

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. ROLL CALL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

- Gini noted that this would be the last meeting for three of the original TRAC members whose terms were ending and who would not seek reappointment – Linda Urias, Sarah Riley and herself.
- DART Public Information Officer Gunnar Olson, who staffs TRAC, said all of the other original TRAC members had indicated they are interested in serving another two-year term. Staff is currently organizing all of the eligible applications, including those of the original members, for consideration for appointment by Commissioners.

3. APPROVAL OF SEPTEMBER 8, 2010, MINUTES

- A. Approved unanimously.

4. ACTION ITEMS

- A. Kelly moved appoint Crystal Estabrook as vice chair of TRAC. Paul seconded. Approved unanimously.

5. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Presentation by DART Advertising Manager Kirstin Baer-Harding on the recently launched new version of DART's website, www.ridedart.com.

- Updated site brings more information to the main page of the site through the use of quick links.
- Updated site adds a search bar on main page.
- Updated site features adjustable font size.
- Updated site links to social media pages.
- Updated site includes added information on the locations of DART's Park and Ride lots.
- Updated site includes a Spanish version that should be complete in a couple of months.
- The email subscription lists will be updated using Constant Contact.
- The site will soon have new pages where visitors can track the progress of the DART Forward 2035 planning study and of the construction of the new Transit.
- Google Maps will be integrated into the site with the launch of a new online Trip Planner.
- Online purchasing of bus passes will also be available.
- Updated site is easier for staff to update without the help of the site developer.
 - Jinsong complimented the new site.
- Main page features scrolling messages.
 - Crystal asked if the scrolling feature will be included on the mobile version of the site.
 - Kirstin said it would not. She added that riders will be able to receive service alerts on their phones.
 - Crystal recommended that the "Explore Greater Des Moines" page of DART's site include links to a Des Moines events calendar.

- Kirstin said that was a good idea.

B. Presentation by DART Chief Development Officer Elizabeth Presutti on the recent announcement of a \$10 million grant for a new Transit Hub.

- DART now has \$21.5 million in state and federal grant money for the project.
- When applying for last grant, DART needed \$9.5 million to complete the project. However, the U.S. Department of Transportation established the minimum grant award amount at \$10 million. So DART added \$500,000 worth of “green” features for the purpose of the grant application.
- DART is now pushing for a LEED certification rating of Platinum. LEED is an internationally recognized green building certification system established by the U.S. Green Building Council.
- Before the grant, DART had half the funding needed for the project and faced the prospect of building the facility in phases. The architects had been struggling to find a feasible way to separate components of the facility into two neat phases.
- Next steps include completing final designs on elements such as platform lampposts, signage and interior finishes; land acquisition; and soliciting proposals for public art displays.
- Elizabeth asked for feedback on how to best label the bus bays with signs. She said the architects decided to use letters, as opposed to numbers, so they’re not confused with route numbers. Each bay would have a letter, in addition to an electronic sign showing arrival and departure times for buses on that that route. In addition, the central walkway would feature signs directing passengers left or right depending on which bay their bus was departing from.

- Linda asked why the bays weren't being labeled with route numbers. Paul said he wondered that, too.
 - Elizabeth said using letters gives DART more flexibility in the future. A route could change numbers, for example, or routes could be added to the system such that each bus bay docked two routes.
- Linda suggested using temporary signage as an alternative way of achieving flexibility in signage.
- Rod said the signage as conceptualized looks good and that he thought people would pick up on it quickly.
- Al said the directional signs in the main walkway could list all of the bays by letter, rather than a series; for example, "E, F, G, H" rather than "E-H." Several TRAC members nodded in agreement.

C. Presentation by DART Chief Development Officer Elizabeth Presutti on the goals for DART established by TRAC for 2010.

- To increase ridership among seniors, this summer DART staff gave presentations at six senior centers on how to use DART services.
- DART is planning promotions targeting seniors for spring 2011.
 - Helen asked which senior centers the presentations were given at.
 - DART Customer Service Manager PJ Sass named a few but could not recall all of them off the top of her head. She added that she's heard of a couple of ladies who have since started riding regularly together.
 - Al noted that there was a large senior center in Pleasant Hill that was near a bus route. However, he said the route has no service during the day, when seniors might be more likely to use the service.

- PJ acknowledged his point and pointed out that there was a possible alternative. She said many people don't know it, but anyone who's qualified to use DART's paratransit services can bring guests with them, even if the guests aren't themselves qualified for paratransit services. This is one way seniors can travel together in groups.
- To increase ridership among students, DART staff offered training to Des Moines Public School officials on how to use DART services so they could train students. Two schools took advantage of the training.
 - Al asked if the website included information targeting students? He said students might easily get confused about what kind of service is available to them. A web page on DART's site dedicated to students would offer parents a resource so they can help their kids take advantage of the services offered to them.
- To increase outreach to human service agencies whose clients utilize the bus, DART staff gave a presentation to Lutheran Services of Iowa. DART staff also trained staff at Lutheran Services so they can train clients on how to use DART services.
- As part of an effort to promote DART's Unlimited Access program, DART held a "Tell Your Transit Story" this fall to collect stories for use in marketing materials.
 - Al asked if there was a way to "put something on the news" regarding the program. He said many employees don't know their employer pays DART so they can ride for free.
 - PJ said staff visit businesses that participate in the program to remind employees there that riding the bus is an option.
 - Al said many communities don't promote the program.

- To bring awareness to DART's RideShare program, DART staff presented the program to Wells Fargo, Aviva and Allied Nationwide. A new flier was also developed. Most recently, DART offered to waive the \$75 rider deposit for riders who joined the program from October to November 15. To date, 51 people have taken advantage of the special. DART also offered early payment of the \$50 referral bonus to existing riders who successfully refer new riders to the program. To date, 15 existing riders have received the bonus.
- DART installed three new bus shelters in 2010.
 - Jinsong asked about the bus shelter at Dahl's at 86th in Clive.
 - Elizabeth said a bus shelter was not included in the new streetscape there.
 - Speaking of shelters, Al said he heard that the Younkers building on Walnut Street will no longer have the canopy over the sidewalk after the building is refurbished by its new owners.

D. Presentation by DART Public Information Officer Gunnar Olson on the Tell Your Transit Story contest.

- DART solicited stories from riders on why they ride the bus, offering prizes to the best entries. DART received 60 entries, which were scored by a panel of TRAC members and then judged by DART staff along with DART Commissioner Skip Conkling and Dana Conn of the Transportation Management Association. Five winners were selected and they were awarded their prizes at the September Commission meeting. The Grand Prize went to the creator of a video about how she uses the money she saves by riding transit to help pay for international vacations.

- Rod said the video was played at Principal – where the creator works – and stated: “If Principal employees do not know about DART they are not very perceptive.”
- Elizabeth said many contest entrants identified their employers, so DART could use their particular stories in creating marketing materials tailored to individual businesses.

6. TRAC MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

- None.

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

- None.

8. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- A. Introduction of Chief Operating Officer Tom Reynolds.
- B. TRAC 2011 Goals
- C. DART Forward 2035 Planning Study.

9. OTHER COMMUNICATIONS

- A. Next DART Commission meeting: 5 p.m. Tuesday, November 30, 2010
- B. Next TRAC meeting: 11:30 a.m. Wednesday, January 12, 2011.