

**TRANSIT RIDERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
September 11, 2013 - Noon
DART CENTRAL STATION – MULTIMODAL ROOM**

TRAC Members Present:

Randy Anderson, Rod Van Genderen, Greg Boesch, Tonia Crawford, Dina Ricketts, Alexander Grgurich, Daniel Rittel, Cyrilla Gregory, Michael Barber

TRAC Members Absent:

Cyrilla Gregory, Laura Fries, Patrick Karnes, Jay Peterson, Lisa Ryan

TRAC Staff Present:

Gunnar Olson, Jamie Schug, Kirstin Baer-Harding, Jennifer Greiner, Tony Filippini, Ethan Standard, Jennifer Greiner, Tony Lafata, Suzanne Robinson

Others Present:

From CH2M Hill: Cyndy Pollan, David Jackson, Jennifer Largaespada

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Rod Van Genderen at 12:10 pm. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

Notice of the meeting was duly posted.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW MEMBERS

The Chair introduced two new members to the TRAC:

- Michael Barber, from Iowa Department for the Blind
- Daniel Rittel from Stuart, Iowa, who is a RideShare member.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The Chair called for corrections to the July 10, 2013 meeting minutes.

The minutes from the meeting were adopted by unanimous vote.

ACTION ITEMS

None

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Website Redesign

Kirstin introduced Jennifer Greiner who has been working on the website redesign, and who distributed handouts to TRAC members detailing different interface designs for the website. She asked for first impressions from TRAC members on the different design elements. Various TRAC members expressed their preferences after perusing the designs. A question was asked about the possibility of viewing the entire page on the screen, and Jennifer said the designers would be keeping scrolling to a minimum, if any. It was asked if there were to be a mobile version of the site, and Jennifer said there would be, and that it would be very important to have it be user friendly, since many bus customers would be relying on their mobile devices when checking for bus service. She then asked for a vote:

- Design A – 1
- Design B – 0
- Design C – 1
- Design D – 4

Jennifer asked for TRAC members to contact her with any comments or suggestions after members had a chance to do a more comprehensive study of the designs.

Fare Policy

Gunnar introduced David Jackson, Cyndy Pollan and Jennifer Largaespada, consultants from CH2M Hill, who will be working with DART on its new fare collection project. Cyndy began her power point presentation with some background on DART's current fare-collection process, stating that DART's fareboxes were 25 years old, completely out of date, and having major maintenance issues. She said that a new system would greatly expand options for collection of fares, and bring DART into the 21st Century with software and programs to make fare collection easier for both DART and its riders. She commented on the current system's strengths and weaknesses

Strengths of current system:

- Ease of use.
- Contributes to ridership growth and fare revenue.
- Majority of boardings are pre-paid.
- 90% of trips are billed directly.

Weaknesses of current system:

- Slows boarding.
- Age of system.
- Data collection problems.
- Verification of validity questions.

- Relies on driver enforcement.
- Transfer-related fare abuse.
- Fare structure complexity.

She commented on the objectives for a new system:

- Reduce the large costs that are incurred with the current system.
- Reduce the use of cash, tokens and paper transfers.

Following are possible recommendations for inclusion in the new farebox project, and what the new technology is capable of doing:

Account-based smart cards:

1. Cards that are lost or stolen can be disconnected from the account.
2. Tag on boarding.
3. DART can incentivize smart-card use.
4. Cash-only customers will still be accommodated.

David said another option would be a contactless smart card, which would include the sale of limited-use cards. Depending on the system chosen, on the bus there would be a smart-card validator, a farebox and card-reader. Point of sale devices, such as ticket or smart-card vending machines could be placed at DART Central Station and Dahls and HyVee stores.

Mr. Barber asked if there would be a way for blind riders to tell front from back of the cards, and was assured that contactless smart cards work either way, and that regular smart cards have a corner cut. He was also told that vending machines will talk, and that the farebox will flash and beep when giving “low-funds” or “card-denied” messages, etc.

Cyndy said that one major problem DART faces now, is running out of buttons on the farebox to key in the type of pass being used. Smart cards will eliminate that problem; plus the drivers won’t have to be relied on to key in any information.

Incentives:

Cyndy said that bonuses could be built into the system, such as “Take 10 trips and get one free.” She said DART could issue a rolling-period pass – instead of having to buy weekly or monthly passes by the 1st day of the week or month, passes could be issued good for the next 7 days or next 31 days, no matter what the date. Or, DART might wish to issue a “day-pass” which would be good for any number of rides in one day, and cost perhaps \$5 or \$6.

Transfer Alternatives:

1. Smart cards could have an automatic transfer built in.
2. Transfers could be limited only to smart-card purchasers – no transfers if rider pays cash.
3. Transfers could be eliminated altogether.
4. Price caps could be offered – the system keeps track of a day’s use to a maximum of, say, \$5 and then all rides after that are free.

Dave brought up additional policy decisions that DART will need to make, such as:

1. Card registration.

2. How to handle reduced-fare riders.
3. Allow automatic refills on cards.
4. Pass-Backs – allowing card holder to pay with their cards for someone with them, such as their children.
5. Decide on the minimum/maximum value allowed on the cards.
6. Ability to carry a negative balance on the card.
7. What to charge for replacement for a lost or damaged card.

Timeline:

Steps in the timeline, which ends with installation in early 2015, include:

- Focus Group meetings
- Public input
- Recommendations
- Presentation to DART Commission
- Presentation to TRAC in November
- Marketing to customers

Alexander asked about the process for finding a vendor. Dave said that after the RFP is issued, and after extensive research by DART and the consultant, a vendor's bid will be accepted. Alexander then asked if there would be an Open Source initiative. Dave replied that farebox systems were mostly proprietary systems. He said that sometimes the smart cards can be obtained from multiple vendors after the initial procurement is over. Alexander asked if mobile devices can be used as readers and Cyndy replied that BART in San Francisco had done some testing, and that there were other systems that might have mobile ticketing. Alexander asked if a system could link to a checking account, and Dave replied that they were looking for a model that works.

Gunnar asked for comments from TRAC members on the various possible add-ons such as "Ride 10 times and get one ride free." Rod asked what other transit systems have experienced with as far as its impact on revenue. Cyndy replied that there are no statistics on revenue specific to that promotion. She added that regarding the rolling-period pass, transit systems are apprehensive about the possibility of losing revenue, and also concerned about riders gaming the system. Alexander asked if the new system would be able to do promo cards just on some routes but not others, and Dave responded that certain routes, or special events, or only downtown routes, or only certain days could all be accommodated. He added that data collection would be enhanced because the new systems don't just tell how many people ride the bus each day, which is done partially by the bus operator with DART's current system, the new systems can tell date of ride, time of ride, and what stop the rider is waiting at, which will be very useful in route planning.

Gunnar explained that the function of a day pass is to replace token use. All TRAC members agreed that this makes sense. Problems with transfers were discussed, with the consensus being that commuters mostly don't need them or use them, but that people who do use them are those who can least afford other, more expensive options. David explained that a goal was to minimize the use of cash, and Gunnar added that an additional goal was to get all riders incentivized to buy smart cards.

TRAC COMMUNICATIONS

STAFF UPDATES

Gunnar announced that DART's new COO, Tony Lafata, comes to us from St. Louis and has started work at DART.

Gunnar listed projects tht DART staff is currently working on:

- Updated goals.
- Going live with the trip planner on October 1, and sharing trip-planner info with Google.
- Bus bench ads situation: Gunnar explained that the bus benches are owned by a private company that contracts with the City of Des Moines for their placement. He said that the anti-transit advertising which was installed on the bus benches has been removed.
- Small-scale planning study of Route 73 – the flex route in Urbandale that is experiencing low ridership.

Alexander asked about DART's current advertising policy, which allows ads that he thinks do not represent a good image for DART. He asked for a briefing on DART's expenses and revenue from sales of ads on the buses.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

None

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Shelter locations
2. Snow removal

NEXT MEETING DATE

November 13 – DART Multimodal Room

MOTION TO ADJOURN – 1:30 PM

It was moved and seconded that the TRAC meeting adjourn. The motion carried unanimously.