

TRAC Meeting Minutes
July 11, 2012, at 12 p.m.
Greater Des Moines Partnership – 2nd Floor

TRAC members present: Crystal Estabrook, Helen Boles, Eileen Bradley, Kelly Henry, Rod Van Genderen, Greg Boesch, Alexander Grgurich, Peggy Chong, Randy Anderson and Cyrilla Gregory.

TRAC members absent: Jinsong Chen, Al Root, Matthew Ott.

DART staff present: Kirstin Baer-Harding, Paula Covington, Jim Tishim, Gunnar Olson.

A. ROLL CALL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

Roll call was taken and a quorum was established.

B. INTRODUCE NEW TRAC MEMBER

Public Information Officer Gunnar Olson introduced TRAC's newest TRAC member, Randy Anderson, who was recently appointed to the position by Commissioner Gaye Johnson. Randy has ridden fixed-route service for 32 years and Paratransit for four years. He is visually challenged and cannot drive. He also can help share the perspective of his wife, who uses a mobility device.

Randy will represent Paratransit on the committee. He replaces T. Anthony Welch.

C. APPROVAL OF MAY 9, 2012, MINUTES

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. June Service Changes Update – Gunnar Olson, Public Information Officer

Gunnar shared early ridership numbers on all of the Express Routes, the Flex Routes, and the D-Line Downtown Shuttle since the service

changes on June 10. He stressed there weren't enough ridership figures yet to clearly identify trends and that it was too early to render final judgment. He said he wanted the TRAC members to see what staff was looking at. Overall, ridership dipped slightly following the service changes, which he said is to be expected with service changes of this magnitude. He said that, following the expected initial dip, ridership should begin building again on the routes.

Peggy Chong said she loved the new Flex Route 72 in West Des Moines and Clive.

Greg Boeschen said he knew one reason why the ridership was down on the new Flex Route 73 in Urbandale and Windsor Heights. He said passengers had to wait on the bus too long as the operators waited behind time points so as to not get ahead of schedule. He said that the more time points you live behind, the more inconvenient it is to use the service due to the waiting.

Helen Boles suggested routing changes for the Flex Route 72 in West Des Moines. Planning Director Jim Tishim took note of her suggestions.

2. RideShare Overview – Paula Covington, Interim RideShare Manager
Paula gave an overview of the RideShare operations, including the total number of vans currently in operation (96), the required qualifications of and benefits for vanpool drivers, and who the typical passengers are.

Eileen Bradley asked if vanpool drivers received first-aid training from DART.

Paula said no, they didn't receive first-aid training from DART. The drivers' training was focused on driving safely and responsibly.

Rod Van Genderen, who represents RideShare on TRAC and is himself a vanpool driver, said that keeping a strict schedule is key to keeping passengers happy. He said that, as a driver, you want to help out passengers when they need help by picking them up early or late or by picking them up at a different location. However, once you make an exception for one passenger, more passengers want you to make exceptions. And if you do this too often, the van schedule is more sporadic and less reliable. He said it is better to hold fast to a strict schedule and clearly communicate the vanpool's expectations to passengers at the outside. That has been a recipe for keeping passengers content in his experience.

Crystal Estabrook, also a RideShare user, asked if there was a database through which potential riders could search for vans.

Paula said yes, DART did have a ride-matching database, and users could find info on vans with available seats.

3. Events – Kirstin Baer-Harding, Advertising Manager

Kirstin provided an overview of the many this summer's marketing events, including some that already occurred and others that were coming up. Recently held events include "Kiss the Bus," a food ride for Yankee Doodle Pops, and D-Line Service to the 80/35 Music Festival. Upcoming events include marketing campaigns targeted at specific new services, the launch of the online trip planner, and the grand opening of DART Central Station.

Greg asked if DART had set a date for launching the trip planner.

Kirstin said DART had been targeting early August before the Iowa State Fair for the launch date, but that there was still more work to do cleaning the data. She said it could be September before the service launches.

Jim Tishim said thank you to all of the TRAC members who provided feedback for the trip planner. He said they were very helpful in identifying issues to fix.

Alexander Grgurich asked how long it would take once DART was done with its data for the information to be available for search on Google Maps.

Kirstin said the data feed will be opened as soon as it's ready and that the information should be available to access via Google Maps soon afterward.

E. TRAC MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Cyrilla Gregory noted that the one issue she's heard about stemming from the June service changes is the timing of the D-Line.

Jim said the issues is the timing of the other buses, because the other routes can't all be perfectly timed with the D-Line.

Kelly Henry said she has heard many complaints about the D-Line being unreliable, that people say that "can't count on it." She said this was in part due to people's perceptions.

Greg asked if AVL would help.

Jim said part of the problem right now is the detours through downtown.

Kirstin said that, once the AVL information is publicly available and people have access to the real-time whereabouts of the D-Line shuttles, the service will feel a lot more reliable because they will be able to plan for it.

Kelly suggested routing the D-Line to go to more cultural destinations.

F. STAFF COMMUNICATIONS

1. Highlights from new federal transportation bill

Gunnar said that the proposed new bus-rapid transit project was still alive under the new transportation authorization bill that was recently signed into law by President Obama.

2. TRAC Goals Update

Gunnar said staff was on track to meet the goals.

3. Update on DART Commission members

Gunnar briefed the committee on the redistricting of DART's Commission seats, the retirement of Ted Boesen from the Commission, and the new officers on the Commission.

G. PUBLIC COMMENT

No one from the public was present.

H. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

1. Customer-Satisfaction Survey

2. Federal and State Transit Issues

I. Next DART Commission Meeting: 5 p.m. Tuesday, July 31, 2012

J. Next TRAC Meeting: Wednesday, September 12, 2012