

**DES MOINES AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY  
TRANSIT RIDERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**

**Des Moines Area Regional Transit Authority - 1100 DART Way  
January 14, 2008**

**ROLL CALL**

Committee Members Present: Paul Bice, Helen Boles, Eileen Bradley, Jinsong Chen, Jill Clothier, Crystal Estabrook, Kelly Henry, Mary McGee, Sarah Riley, Linda Urias, Gini Wolf, Audra Zimmerman

Committee Member Absent: Jade Howser

Staff Present: Elizabeth Presutti, Chief Development Officer; Michelle Orfield-Koranda, Program Development Manager; Kirstin Baer-Harding, Marketing Manager; PJ Sass, Customer Service Manager; Rebecca Lovig, RideShare Manager; Peg Hadley, Customer Service Supervisor/Minutes;

Others Present: None

**CALL TO ORDER**

Elizabeth Presutti opened the meeting at 11:30 a.m. At our next meeting, it will be formally called to order by the Chair we select today.

**DART OVERVIEW BY STAFF**

Ms. Presutti asked that the committee take a few minutes to review the DART Public Comment Policy while Staff members outlined their roles at DART. She explained that she oversees Program Development, Customer Service, Planning, Marketing and RideShare and works with staff and the General Manager to develop and implement projects in these areas.

PJ Sass then explained the different aspects of her job which includes overseeing the Customer Service Department consisting of Customer Service Supervisor, two Customer Service Specialists (who handle the bulk of the Schedule Information calls) and the front desk. She also gives informational presentations to companies, social service agencies, and others upon request regarding DART's services. Her department also coordinates the Reduced Fare Program (for seniors and persons with disabilities) and the Opportunities Through Transit (OTT) program (for lower income households). Ms. Sass manages the distribution of DART passes to the Pass Sales Outlets (PSO) and the Employer Support Program (ESP) participants. The ESP program allows local companies to provide bus passes for their employees. The customer service department also coordinates all Lost & Found items.

Rebecca Lovig, RideShare Manager, gave a brief history of RideShare, and shared how it has changed over the years. DART has expanded the RideShare program to allow vanpools whose origination and destination are within the metro area. Previously, the origination or destination had to be beyond the metro area. Currently, DART has six vans that are outbound from the metro. There are ninety-seven current vanpools that carry about 900 commuters. Interested persons can register on-line to see if they match up with an existing vanpool. Rates are based on mileage and the number of people in the vanpool.

The committee then had several questions which included how DART determines who drives, what training is provided, and how the vans are serviced/maintained.

Kirstin Baer-Harding, Marketing Manager, detailed the parameters of her position. Ms. Baer-Harding sells the advertising that appears on the outside and the inside of the buses and shelters; designs all in-house promotional items; and assists in all aspects of marketing for DART – promotions, presentations, new rider information, media contacts, and the website. New and exciting items to look forward to this year include: a hybrid bus to arrive summer 2009; a Rider Appreciation promotion; a DART Annual Report; and an on-line trip planner.

Committee members had questions including who to contact to get shelters installed, and questions regarding the website update. They were also interested in the recent public meetings DART held. DART staff responded that dates and times are being solidified for additional metro neighborhoods.

Discussion was held on the need for more and better notification for public meetings (or any type of public notice for riders), especially the need for more signs on the buses with better placement so they can be read easily.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **Chair and Vice-Chair**

At this time, Ms. Orfield-Koranda asked that each committee member introduce themselves and identify the route(s) they use the most. She then announced the four candidates for Chair and Vice-Chair of TRAC: Mary McGee, Gini Wolf, Jade Howser, and Jill Clothier. Each candidate was asked to say a few words about why they wanted to Chair the committee and what qualifications they would bring to the table. Ms. McGee, Ms. Wolf, and Ms. Clothier provided brief orations, and Ms. Orfield-Koranda provided additional background on Ms. Howser who was unable to attend the meeting. The committee was then asked to fill out their ballots.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Public Comment Policy**

Ms Presutti then went over the DART Public Comment Policy in detail adding that any comments or input from TRAC would go to the Commission. She explained that DART uses our Annual Fall Count as a guide for percentages needed to alter routes.

Ms. Presutti asked for input from the committee prior to approving the policy. There was discussion again regarding the need for much improved notification methods for public hearings. Ms. Baer-Harding will look into costs to post items in the Des Moines Register and/or a better way to let the public know

when and where to look in the paper for upcoming meetings/hearings. The Committee approved the Public Comment Policy as written.

### **Mission and Goals**

Ms. Orfield-Koranda then went over the Mission of TRAC. There was some discussion on the wording, but there was a consensus to approve as written with the option to change at a later date.

Ms. Orfield-Koranda presented the Goals of TRAC. Many TRAC members wanted to know what DART's expectations were regarding how the committee would function on an individual basis. Discussion followed, concluding that each member could be as involved and outgoing as was comfortable for them. For example, if a member wants to remain anonymous and just be "ears" for the committee on the bus and in the community, that is acceptable. It is also acceptable to identify oneself as a member of TRAC and ask riders for their input. Ms. Orfield-Koranda asked that members let her know if they come up with additional feedback on the TRAC goals. TRAC approved the Goals as written.

### **Review of DART Suggested Agenda Topics**

Ms. Presutti went through a timeline for upcoming projects and asked for input from the committee to take to the Commission for review.

### **Review of TRAC Suggested Agenda Topics**

Ms. Presutti outlined the list of suggested agenda topics submitted by TRAC members. Discussion followed on the need for by-laws for the committee; expectations of the committee; and the committee's top priorities.

There was more discussion and one of the committee's top priorities appeared to be more service in the West Des Moines area. Ms. Presutti let the committee know that DART was planning on holding several public meetings in February and March regarding western suburb transportation and noted that the biggest hurdle was funding/budget constraints.

There was some discussion regarding what type of rules/regulations drivers must adhere to, whether they were predominately DART-directed or union directed. The committee decided that another priority is to have uniform driver training to avoid rider confusion (for example: Driver A will let passengers off at a corner with no sign, while Driver B insists on the "No Sign, No Stop" rule). There was also some discussion on stops, etc. It was suggested that either Randy McKern (Transportation Manager) or Bobbi Gutierrez (Planning Specialist) talk to the committee about stops – how they are determined; who to ask about getting a new stop or replacing an old one; who to contact regarding shelters; etc.

Committee members were supplied with generic DART business cards (that list all important phone numbers). It will be up to each individual to decide if they want to put their personal contact information on these cards when handing them out to the public.

It was suggested that a "Comment Box" on each bus might be helpful and/or short surveys available on the buses for riders to fill out and return to the drivers.

Ms. Orfield-Koranda then announced that Gini Wolf had been elected TRAC Chair and Jill Clothier was elected Vice-Chair.

It was announced that the next meeting would be on March 11, 2009, location to be determined. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.