

**DES MOINES AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY
COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES**

**1100 DART Way – Des Moines, IA 50309
September 27, 2011**

ROLL CALL

Commissioners Present: Bob Mahaffey, Gaye Johnson, Christine Hensley, Skip Conkling, Tom Gayman, Angela Connolly, Ted Boesen; Steve Brody, Steve Van Oort

Commissioners Absent:

Alternates Present: Paula Dierenfeld, Ruth Randleman

Staff Present: Elizabeth Presutti, General Manager; Tom Reynolds, Chief Operating Officer; Rebecca Lovig, RideShare Manager; Jamie Schug, Chief Financial Officer; Randy Ross, HR Director; Kirstin Baer-Harding, Advertising Manager; Randy McKern, Transportation Manager; Teresa Cashman, Scheduling Manager; Gunnar Olson, Public Information Officer; Jim Tishim, Planning Director; Chet Bor, Paratransit Director; P.J. Sass, Customer Service Manager; Nolden Gentry, Legal Counsel; Suzanne Robinson, Clerk to the Commission;

Others Present: Dana Conn, TMA; Mark Trost; Dylan Mullenix, MPO; Rox Laird and Todd Erzen, Des Moines Register; Greg Boeschen, TRAC, Nathan Goldberg, MPO; Nick Wuertz, Lutheran Services in Iowa; Greg Schmitt, DART Supervisor; John Halsband, DART customer; Gretchen Tegeler, Taxpayers Assoc. of Central Iowa

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Chair Angela Connolly at 5:01 p.m. Roll call was taken and a quorum was present.

Notice of the meeting was duly published.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Chair Connolly called for corrections to the August 2, 2011, meeting minutes. There being no comments on the minutes, it was moved by Mr. Boesen and seconded by Ms. Hensley that the minutes be approved. The minutes were approved as written.

TRAC UPDATE

TRAC member Greg Boeschen described the September meeting of the TRAC. He said members were advised of the 5 year anniversary of DART's beginning, and the festivities planned to celebrate. He said they also heard an update on DART Central Station, the State Fair ridership figures, and a rundown of the new service plan. He said that members were concerned about those areas that will be losing service, but were very pleased with the plans for increases in service frequency, more service to the western suburbs, possible crosstown service and other provisions

that are taking DART in the right direction. He said the committee approved the service changes by a unanimous vote.

PUBLIC COMMENTS SECTION

Steve Balderson of the Waterbury neighborhood spoke in favor of the proposed Ingersoll/University loop, but suggested that the west edge of the loop be moved to Polk Boulevard instead of 42nd Street to encompass more of the neighborhood.

Gretchen Tegeler, of the Taxpayers Association of Central Iowa thanked the commissioners for their work on the DART Forward 2035 Transit Services Plan, saying that the outreach by DART and the commission to the community in presenting the plan has been extraordinary, and adding that the Association understands the need for a thriving public transit system. The questions the Taxpayers Association have are to do with how much the plan will cost and who will be paying. She asked if the commission had an alternative scenario if the Plan couldn't be implemented, and asked that the commission keep in mind the tax capacity of the community, stating that Des Moines was fourth in the nation in the level of property taxation (check this figure – doesn't seem right to me).

Chair Connolly thanked Mr. Balderson and Ms. Tegeler for their input, adding that she is glad the Taxpayers Association realizes that the region needs good public transit. The Chair stated that the DART Forward 2035 plan gives a framework for needed changes, and added that a survey taken for research purposes by the consultants showed that 80% of 1,400 people in the community who were interviewed (half of whom were not DART riders) said that the region needs more and better public transit. Chair Connolly reminded those present that the changes will be implemented gradually, and that there will be plenty of opportunity for public input. She said that the commission is committed to the task of making DART a better transit system in the future.

Ms. Hensley stated that there is agreement from the City of Des Moines that it is time to take public transit to the next level in the community. She said that there were some areas that would be losing their closest transit option, but that in a meeting with Katecho, which is in her district and is losing bus service, after seeing the ridership figures they understand why service could not be continued. She added that it will be exciting to see DART increasing its regional activities.

EMPLOYEE RECOGNITION

General Manager Elizabeth Presutti announced that Bobbi Jo Fellenz, DART's Customer Service Coordinator, receives the Employee Recognition award for her tireless effort and her cheerful energy in putting in long hours as manager of this year's State Fair service. This required scheduling hundreds of hours of staff time by DART volunteers, who always do such great work on the State Fair service.

CONSENT ITEMS

8A – July 2011 and August 2011 Financial Reports

It was moved by Mr. Van Oort and seconded by Mr. Boesen that the consent item 8A be approved.

The motion carried unanimously.

ACTION ITEMS

Action Item 9A – Adoption of DART Forward 2035 Transit Services Plan

Ms. Presutti brought the commission and guests up to date with a presentation (attached) that explains in detail the new service plan. She added that DART now provides approximately 3.5 million rides a year, and that after implementation of all phases of the service plan it is expected that ridership will double to 6-7 million rides. She told the commissioners that when all the plan details are finalized, a final plan and report will be provided to everyone. She added that the first of the services changes will be implemented in autumn of 2012, with the installation of the new AVL system to take place in the summer, and DART Central Station grand opening in the fall as well – all huge changes taking place in a short time span.

It was moved by Ms. Hensley and seconded by Mr. Conkling that the Commission adopt the DART Forward 2035 Transit Services Plan as outlined in the Executive Summary (attached), and upon approval, staff will proceed with the assembly of the 2035 Transit Services Plan Final Report to reflect the plan as adopted by the Commission.

Mr. Conkling stated that even with the adoption by the Commission, the plan wasn't written in stone and changes will be considered as the plan goes forward. He said that everyone should keep in mind that transit is still a very small portion of the tax rolls, and improved service is vital for the region.

Mr. Brody called the Plan an important milestone for the region which will add jobs, spur economic development and add quality of life improvements. He congratulated Ms. Presutti and DART staff for providing exceptional and very thorough information and planning reporting for member cities to study, stating that the report received favorable comment by the Clive City Council members.

Mr. Gayman commented that it is a great project for the region, and he presented a challenge to DART staff to have a detailed short-and-long-term marketing plan for the roll-out of the service improvements and changes. He said the challenge includes working on a plan to finance the changes with a public-private partnership for DART that includes the business community investing in public transit.

Mr. Boesen stated that his hat goes off to the elected officials on the DART Commission, who worked hard and worked together to make the Plan a truly regional effort that garnered everyone's approval, and he encourages the Commission to keep to the vision for the future of public transit in the region.

Mr. Van Oort said that for the past five years he has spoken in favor of a detailed Strategic Plan to move DART forward, and with the adoption of this Plan, he now is making a commitment to do everything he can to help move it forward. He said that his goal is that in two years he can ride the bus from Ankeny to the monthly DART Commission meetings. He thanked Ms. Tegeler and the Taxpayers Association for their concerns and input, and said that the Commission is resolved to look at different ways of funding DART. He added that DART's needs must be incorporated into the grand plans for the future of the region, such as the Capital Crossroads and other plans, and that all the communities in the region need to support the vision for public transit.

Ms. Johnson added her appreciation for the hard work that the DART staff and Commission have done, with input from the public and private sectors as well as the citizens of the community and DART's loyal ridership.

Mr. Mahaffey thanked the consultants and the member city managers, and stated that the DART Commission will address cost issues by looking at other revenue sources. He added that he thinks the plan is an excellent start and fully supports its implementation.

Chair Connolly congratulated DART staff, stating that it has been a long time coming, and it's a great day for public transit!

The motion carried unanimously.

Action Item 9B – Transit Advertising Rate Increase

Ms. Baer-Harding said that every two years, advertising rates are reviewed to make sure that rates are comparable with those in other transit markets. She said that a rate increase of 5% will bring the Des Moines market into line with the industry.

Ms. Hensley asked how much in additional funding will the increase add to DART revenues. Ms. Presutti said that staff will do an analysis and report the findings to the commission.

It was moved by Mr. Boesen and seconded by Mr. Mahaffey that the Commission approve a transit advertising rate increase of 5 percent effective January 1, 2012.

The motion carried unanimously.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Discussion Item 10A – DART Central Station Construction Update

Mark Trost, DART's Owner Representative for the construction project, gave a brief update on DART Central Station. He said that the pile of rubble has now been removed from the property and the old buildings have been demolished. Existing utilities have been uncovered, and installation of the geothermal system has begun. He said that next month the footings for the basement will be laid. He stated that there are currently no safety issues to be addressed, and that there is one change order to be approved for Mid-American. He added that the selection of artists for the public art portion of the space has been made and that a real estate company has been picked for managing the rental of the retail space in the Station. Ms. Presutti said that she must submit a report to the FTA monthly, and she will share that report with the Commission.

Discussion Item 10B – DART's Fifth Birthday

Ms. Baer-Harding provided information on the activities that will take place to celebrate DART's fifth year in operation.

Discussion Item 10C – Refugee and School Student Pass Program

Ms. Sass gave a presentation (attached) explaining the new reduced-fare pass program for refugees and for students in DART's member cities. She said that there has been support for many years for these services, and it is now time to offer them. Mr. Nick Wuertz from Lutheran Social Services

spoke in support of the program for refugees, and he presented letters of support from other social service agencies in the community.

Mr. Brody asked if all schools, including private school students, are a part of the program. Ms. Presutti said they were included. Ms. Hensley asked if there were any reason not to move the start time for these programs from January 1st 2012 to the current month. Ms. Sass stated that staff will get to work to implement the programs to start right away after Commission action at the October meeting.

9C – Performance Reports

Ms. Presutti reminded the Commission that the August figures differ significantly from other months because of the State Fair, which added 30,000 more riders this summer. She thanked the City of Des Moines for helping increase ridership to the State Fair by allowing free parking at the Center Street Park and Ride for the whole duration of the Fair. She said that the promotion for fairgoers to ride for half fare if they bought their tickets in advance was very successful as well. Mr. Mahaffey added that the Southeast Polk parking lot was filled most days, and cars had to be turned away. Mr. Brody asked what the DART revenue stream looked like for the rest of the year, and Ms. Presutti said that the end of September would show a better view. She said that it is encouraging that the Ankeny Express ridership is back to its original levels even though we cut service.

MONTHLY REPORTS

Ms. Presutti announced that Ms. Baer-Harding's entries in the prestigious APTA Adwheel Awards received two first place prizes, and are now eligible for the Grand Prize to be presented at the APTA Annual Meeting in New Orleans in October. She stated that Chair Connolly will accept the prizes in New Orleans.

Ms. Presutti described some changes to the DART Organizational Chart, with the addition of a Director of Marketing position taking the place of the Chief Development Officer. She said that this change will greatly enhance the ability of DART to move the 2035 Plan forward effectively. She also announced that dispatcher Ron Cheatom is leaving DART to pursue his education, and he will be missed. She reminded the Commission that negotiations on the ATU contract will begin next month.

COMMISSION ITEMS

Legal Counsel Nolden Gentry asked for feedback from the Commission on the changing of the DART districts to follow the changes due to redistricting of the Iowa Senate Districts in Polk County. Mr. Boesen asked about the timeline to introduce the changes. Mr. Gentry replied that we have until spring, but since the process to get approval from all the DART communities is a long and tedious one, it needs to begin soon.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 6:27 p.m.

2011 Meeting Dates

Oct 25, Nov 29, Dec 20

2012 Meeting Dates

Jan 31, Feb 28, Mar 27, Apr 24, May 22, Jun 26, Jul 31, no meeting in August
Sep 25, Oct 23, Nov 27, Dec 18

Date: _____

Chair: _____

Secretary: _____