



Meeting Minutes

DES MOINES AREA REGIONAL TRANSIT AUTHORITY TRANSIT RIDERS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MARCH 2, 2016 – NOON

DART Central Station, Multimodal Room
620 Cherry Street, Des Moines, Iowa

TRAC Members Present:

Randy Anderson, Mark Hutchens, Jay Peterson, Teresa Volcheck, Pilar Tromacek, Randy Henriksen, Pam Goehring, Denise Jones, Michele Meadors

TRAC Members Absent:

Mary Walter, Brenda Gill

TRAC Staff Present:

Barbara Finch, Ethan Standard, Jim Tishim, Kat Lewis, Anna Johnson

Others Present:

Melissa & China from TMD

A. ROLL CALL AND ESTABLISHMENT OF QUORUM

The meeting was called to order by Chair, Jay Peterson at 12:03 PM.
Roll call was taken and quorum was met.

B. APPROVAL OF NOVEMBER, 2015 MINUTES

The Chair called for any corrections to the November 11, 2015 and January 13, 2016 meeting minutes. Michele Meadors moved to approve the November 11, 2015 and January 13, 2016 minutes and Mark seconded.
Hearing none, the minutes from the prior meetings were approved by unanimous vote.

C. ACTION ITEMS

1. 2016 TRAC Goals – Ethan Standard, Transit Planner

Ethan stated that there was not a lot of feedback regarding the new goals from the previous meeting. There were five final goals that were decided upon. Michele Meadors moved to approve and Pam Goehring seconded. The 2016 TRAC Goals were approved by unanimous vote.

GOAL 1 – 5 MILLION RIDES

Responsible departments: Operations

Provide 5 million trips with DART services by year-end FY16.

GOAL 2 – DART FORWARD TRANSIT SERVICE PLAN

Responsible departments: Planning, Marketing

Complete the Year Five Update of DART Forward 2035 by November 2016

GOAL 3 – CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY

Responsible departments: Customer Service, Planning, Operations

Conduct biannual Customer Satisfaction Survey in fall of 2016, and achieve a minimum rating of 86% satisfied or very satisfied for the overall quality of service.

GOAL 4 – WORKFORCE WELLBEING

Responsible departments: Human Resources

Establish Framework for employee wellness program in 2016

GOAL 5 – FAREBOX RECOVERY

Responsible departments: Finance

Begin tracking and reporting farebox recovery ratios and ensure that the system-wide rate remains above 20%.

D. DISCUSSION ITEMS

1. DART Forward – China and Melissa, Transportation Management & Design, Inc.

Ethan Standard introduced China and Melissa. China talked about starting the initial DART Forward 2035 project 5 years ago. Many of the recommendations have been implemented over the last 3 years and they wanted to share what the results have been. China gave a PowerPoint presentation that covered some of the following points:

AGENDA

- About Original DART Forward 2035 Project
- About DART Forward 2035 – Year Five Update
 - Objectives
 - Public Outreach
 - Approach
 - Project Timeline
- Changes Since DART Forward 2035
- Discussion & Activities
- Next Steps

DART Forward 2035 Principles, DART Forward 2035 completed in fall 2011 with a goal of creating a better public transit system for the Greater Des Moines region. The plan had four guiding principles:

- **Build a Market-Based Network** where service levels should be consistent with the market demand for transit service and transit is competitive with other travel modes.
- **Refocus Service Network** through simplifying the route structure, focusing service investment, and building a multi-hub system.
- **Enhance the Customer Experience** by creating a faster travel experience and leveraging technology.
- **Build Financial Sustainability** by using resources effectively and growing ridership.

DART Forward 2035 Service Improvements, New Route/ Expanded Route

- Introduced new Route 60 – University/Ingersoll loop lays that the groundwork for future BRT service along the area's most productive corridors.
- Introduced new crosstown service (Route 52) to allow for regional travel without having to transfer downtown at DART Central Station.
- Introduced new Flex Routes (Route 72, 73, 74) to create market tailored services that promote improved community circulation.
- Major route restructuring that split long routes at DART Central Station to better match markets to transit demand and facilitate regional travel.
- Improved service frequency (Rt. 1, 6, 16, 60, 92, 93, 98, 99)
- Frequency improved on high ridership routes such as Route 1, 6, 16, and 60 to provide more trip options and improve the customer experience.
- Additional trips added to express routes 92, 93, 98, 99 to create faster connections to both downtown and suburban jobs.
- Expanded Service Hours. Span expanded on several key corridors to 11:00 PM on weekdays, Saturday service extended from 5:30 PM to 10:15 PM.

Objectives

- First, we want to engage riders and the public throughout the entire process to ensure the updated service plan is representative of the community needs.
- Second, population and development patterns are constantly changing. We will be reviewing current and forecasted market conditions to identify any unmet needs.
- We will also be reviewing ridership and service performance to determine how riders responded to the original DART Forward 2035 service changes and identify opportunities for improvement.
- Finally, we want to develop a plan that is consistent with helping the Greater Des Moines region realize The Tomorrow Plan's vision for being a livable and sustainable region.

Public Outreach Approach, To ensure we are engaging riders and the general public throughout the entire process we've developed a multi-phased process that includes surveys, public meetings throughout the region, pop-up meetings at key hubs, and presentations at pre-standing meetings. In addition, we have developed a project website that includes information about the project and upcoming events.

- DART Forward 2035 Advisory Committee
- Surveys – Online Survey, Random Sample Survey, Human Services Sector Survey, Employer Survey
- Project website
- Online engagement tools
- DART staff involvement
- Social Media
- Public meetings
- Stakeholder presentations
- Pop-up meetings

Project Timeline, Over the last several months we have done an extensive amount of data collection and are currently in the process of completing our market analysis and service evaluation. We will use this data analysis along with feedback collected through the outreach process to develop the updated plan. -City and downtown businesses are considering looking at the walkability study and a potential change from one-way streets to two-way streets. We will be revisiting how to operate downtown if that were to occur.

- Data Assembly: Oct-Dec 2015
- Market Analysis: Jan-Feb 2016
- Service Evaluation: Jan-Feb 2016
- DART Forward Plan Draft: Mar-Jun 2016
- DART Forward Plan: Fall 2016

Greater Des Moines Has Changed, The region is growing faster than expected - DMAMPO has recently updated population and employment projections, and growth now expected to exceed original 2035 projections around 2020. As we move forward with the plan update, it will be important to keep this in mind and identify where growth is occurring. The following two maps illustrate population and employment densities for 2010 and 2030. Green represents population. Red/orange represents employment. The darker the color the higher concentration of people or jobs.

- Area is getting denser.
- Existing transit network serves current concentrations of people and jobs.
- Dense population neighborhoods include downtown Des Moines and West Des Moines with other pockets distributed throughout the region.
- Highest concentrations of employment density found in downtown Des Moines, along Ingersoll Ave, and along University Ave in both Des Moines and West Des Moines.

Changing Demographics, Youth, senior, and low-income are growing fastest and are the most dependent on transit. Low-income increased by nearly 1/3 in four years (note that research has identified mobility as a key element in reducing poverty. Access to schools and jobs is biggest determinant for people getting out of poverty). It is clear that the need for and benefit of transit will grow in the future. Seniors want to stay in their homes; dispersed population that is increasingly reliant on transit for mobility is difficult for transit to serve efficiently.

How DART Ridership Has Changed,

- There have been some variations in the route ridership. We have seen a greater increase in local routes and a decline in Express routes. We are working to identify what we can do to change that trend on the Express routes.
- Low gas prices may be a factor in declining Express ridership.
- Showed a map that illustrates where in the region we are seeing changes in ridership.
- You see a shift and growth in ridership downtown due to the opening of DART Central Station. Increased activity at key hubs such as Jordan Creek, Merle Hay, and Valley West Mall.

Next Steps

- Continue to gather feedback from Stakeholders, Current Riders, DART Staff, General Public
- Develop service updates to the DART Forward 2035 Transit Services Plan.

Questions or Comment?

Michele Meadors says she was surprised that no one was more concerned about the shelters and people getting rained on.

Denise Jones wanted to address the connection issue between 52 and 74. She mentioned that every now and then, the bus is late in the afternoon and then people miss their connection and there is not any correspondence or notification.

Denise Jones also wanted to say that the driver was courteous when there was snow; he pulled ahead where there was not snow to make it easier for the passengers.

China asked what kind of changes did the committee think that DART needed to make them ride more often.

Teresa Volcheck said she recently started taking classes downtown. She said she usually rides the bus every day, but cannot ride the bus on those days because the class gets out too late. Class is at the Papajohn Center, she does not want to walk all the way down to DART Central Station at that time, and there is no service that late. Denise Jones agreed and stated that she also had classes at DMACC and the bus connections were not very good that late at night.

Anna Johnson voiced concern about rideshare vans where some of the times do not work well for the Urbandale area and the 63rd and Park area, where they drop riders off in those areas but there is not bus service there.

Denise Jones asked about the bus service to and from the airport. Ethan stated that there is limited service. China mentioned that the airport is a challenging location due to times and luggage. Ethan asked what kind of service committee members would like to see to the airport, and how often or where it would run. Jay mentioned possibly adding it as a flex service. Michele agreed with the flex idea. China said there were also challenges related to employment levels at the airport, because over the years they have cut down on staffing levels due to improved efficiencies in airport operations across the country. With the number of workers being down, the airport is not as big of an employment destination as it used to be.

Michele talked about the timing of service, and how jobs that have people working late at night are not well served.

Mark said if they had expanded regional coverage that would help him. He currently does rideshare from Indianola. The down side to rideshare is that they are tied to certain times. If there were buses running to Indianola, he might have a chance to catch a different time. In addition, if the van drivers are on vacation, you may be stuck driving because the van is not running.

Jay asked about the BRT going downtown. He imagined it to be more for his family to go downtown and eat or other events on the weekend and thought it would be a great option.

Randy said that it would be beneficial if they can improve the customer service from the drivers. Knowledge of the system, politeness, and overall customer interaction. Michele mentioned that it has been a long time since she has gotten a nice driver.

Jay said he would like the fare box item to get resolved and implemented. He feels it would be a great idea to purchase passes. Michele asked about a mobile app for the fare box purchases.

Teresa said she would like to see additional state fair service and talked about adding a new park and ride location further to the west.

Next Steps

China talked about the next steps and helped put stickers on a regional map to show where people live and ride to. There are more public meetings to come, and surveys are still open.

E. OTHER BUSINESS

1. Snow removal at bus stops

Jay Peterson said that we want to do something about the snow removal at bus stops. He was thinking maybe we needed to call for a sub-committee, but in the meantime, we were going to talk to other cities and see what they are doing about snow removal issues.

F. TRAC MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Michele talked about the Merle Hay Mall bus stop. She stated that it is a bad situation. She suggested if the weather was bad that we should at least have a bench. She also talked about the training of new paratransit drivers and her negative experience with some drivers and their poor customer service. Ethan mentioned that staff is actively working with the property owner at the new stop location and a shelter should be installed in the near future.

G. STAFF UPDATES

None mentioned

H. PUBLIC COMMENT

None mentioned

I. FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

None mentioned

J. UPCOMING MEETINGS

1. DART Commission – Noon Tuesday, April 5, 2016, DART Central Station
2. TRAC – Noon Wednesday, May 11, 2016, DART Central Station

K. ADJOURN

Randy Anderson motioned, Mark Hutchens seconded. Voted and hearing none, the meeting adjourned at 1:07 pm.