MINUTES
BUS SERVICE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
March 18, 2019
Lower Conference Room, City Hall
25 Cottage Road, South Portland, ME 04106

City Councilor Kate Lewis, Chair of the Committee, convened the Meeting of the Bus Service Citizens Advisory Committee at 9:04 a.m. In addition to Councilor Lewis, the following persons were in attendance: Joshua Reny, Assistant City Manager; Greg L’Heureux, Finance Director; Art Handman, Transportation Director; and Rick Sargent, Bus Service Operations and Maintenance Supervisor. Also present were three bus service riders: Desirée Scott, Mary Lee M’Kenna, and Stephen Kittredge.

Councilor Lewis asked if any members of the public wished to address the Committee. Mr. Kittredge inquired as to what the fare increase would be. Councilor Lewis responded that the amount of the increase, if any, was yet to be determined. Ms. Scott reported that she was also a METRO rider and attended the Public Meeting that METRO held in Portland last week. She indicated that there was a lot of opposition to the fare increase expressed by the public at that Meeting. All three riders indicated that they use 10-ride tickets to pay their fares and utilize transfers on occasion in response to a question by Mr. Handman. Mr. Handman also indicated that Notices of all future Committee Meetings would be posted on all South Portland Buses and in the Mill Creek Transit Hub.

Councilor Lewis then inquired whether there are any corrections or additions to the draft Minutes of the March 11, 2019 Committee Meeting. There were none from the other attendees. She then offered the following corrections: 1) The spelling of Mr. Reny’s name needs to be corrected throughout the document. 2) She suggested that the word “Unfortunately” be stricken from the beginning of the last sentence in the third paragraph. 3) She further commented that the following sentence be added after Mr. L’Heureux’ comments in the fifth paragraph: “The group discussed the credit card service fee and wondered whether that fee would be absorbed by the City or by bus riders.” There were no objections to Councilor Lewis’ corrections and additions. Accordingly, the Minutes of the March 11, 2019 Meeting of the Committee, as amended, were adopted by consensus.

Mr. Reny reported that he and Mr. Handman composed a draft letter of response to the METRO Proposal (also provided to Committee members) and forwarded it on to the City Manager for his review and subsequent approval by the full Committee. However, the City Manager emailed the letter (with a minor deletion) to Mr. Jordan, the General Manager of METRO. So no specific discussion of the letter’s contents ensued. Councilor Lewis asked if there were any other items that were not included in the letter that would be brought to METRO’s attention during a discussion with them. Mr. Handman reported that he inquired of the staff of Region 1 of the Federal Transit Administration (FTA) whether the METRO proposed fare structure was in compliance with FTA half-fare regulations and whether the fare structure was equitable to the elderly and persons with disabilities. He indicated he will keep the Committee informed of FTA’s response. Mr. Handman next reported that METRO issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a consultant to help them implement the fare changes using language that would indicate a fait
accompli in terms of approval of the changes. The RFP did not mention South Portland and its Bus Service in spite of the fact that METRO operates two routes in parts of South Portland. After some further discussion, Mr. Reny proposed that no further action be taken by the Committee until a response from METRO is received.

Councilor Lewis next requested a status report on the two service improvements she suggested at the March 11th Meeting. Mr. Sargent reported that ridership counts were being taken at the bus stops affected by having Route 21 operate in two separate routes – One route bi-directionally via Ocean and Sawyer Streets to SMCC; the other bi-directionally on Broadway to and from SMCC. Mr. Handman indicated that staff is reviewing the ridership at the affected bus stops and will evaluate the passenger and financial impacts of the suggested changes. Concerning her second suggestion to extend the hours of operation of Route 21 on Saturday nights to accommodate riders who wish to spend the evening in Portland, Mr. Handman responded that there would not be any large increase in cost. He suggested that Councilor Lewis with another Councilor request a Council Workshop to discuss the proposal and other minor schedule adjustments being prepared by Mr. Sargent. In response to a query by Councilor Lewis, Mr. Handman related that he had been in contact with Superintendent Kunin concerning the Bus Service providing rides to High School students. School and bus schedules would have to be coordinated of such service were to be implemented.

It was decided by general consent to tentatively schedule the next Committee Meeting on April 1, 2019 to review METRO’s response to the City’s list of the questions and issues developed by the Committee as emailed to METRO by the City Manager.

There being no further business brought before the Committee, the Meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Art Handman, Director
Transportation Department
Committee Staff Support