MINUTES
BUS SERVICE CITIZENS ADVISORY COMMITTEE
March 11, 2019
Lower Conference Room, City Hall
25 Cottage Road, South Portland, ME 04106

By consensus, City Councilor Kate Lewis was appointed Chairman of the Committee. She then convened the Meeting of the Bus Service Citizens Advisory Committee at 9:00 a.m. In addition to Councilor Lewis, the following persons were in attendance: City Councilor Maxine Beecher; Joshua René, Assistant City Manager; Greg L’Heureux, Finance Director; Kathleen Babeu, Social Services Director; Art Handman, Transportation Director; and Rick Sargent, Bus Service Operations and Maintenance Supervisor.

Councilor Lewis asked if any members of the public wished to address the Committee. There were none.

Mr. Handman then reviewed the specific components of the proposal from Greg Jordan, General Manager of Metro, dealing with fare changes and methods of fare collection. He explained that riders who did not participate in the electronic fare increase technology, particularly the elderly and persons with disabilities, would be financially disadvantaged. Further, the proposal does not deal with collecting fares from students at SMCC. Handman related that SMCC’s Security Director, Jay Manhardt, communicated to him that he had problems with the use of smart cards or other electronic means due to security and enrollment eligibility issues. Handman also related that Mr. Jordan agreed at the February 14, 2018 meeting of all transit general managers to allow South Portland to continue to use its paper fare media if it chose not to join the Metro program. Unfortunately, that concession was not included in the proposal sent by Metro to the City.

Ms. Babeu reported that hundreds of 10-ride tickets are given out to economically disadvantaged clients of her Department. 10-Ride tickets are the best way for her to provide the rides in that most of her clients do not own smart phones and would find it difficult to acquire and refill smart cards.

Mr. L’Heureux commented that the mechanics of using smartphones and smart cards was possible but he emphasized the importance of continued use of the 10-Ride tickets in the Social Services area.

Mr. René suggested that the magnitude of the fare increases warrants a global discussion with Metro, other transit providers, and GPCG/PACTS. He agreed to prepare a response from the City to Metro to include the following identified issues:
- The continuation of 10-Ride tickets by South Portland
- Possible financial consideration to Metro for 10-Ride tickets issued by South Portland
- Retention of the current means of identifying and billing SMCC for its students’ rides
- Mitigation of the disparity between cash fare payers and those using electronic means
- Raise full fare to $1.75 and phase in further increases over the next five years
Mr. Rene will share a draft of the letter with the Committee for comments.

Councilor Lewis next suggest two service improvements. The first was to explore 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 will review the ridership at the affected bus stops and report on the passenger and financial impacts of the suggested changes. Her second suggestion was 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 he will calculate the costs involved and report back to the Committee.

Mr. L’Heureux related that there is a Reserve Account which is used to fund bus repairs and provide local or additional match for FTA grants for purchases such as two-way radios now up for procurement.

Mr. Sargent reported that there are four new bus shelters acquired. One has already been installed on Evans Street adjacent to the Community Center. Other proposed sites are at B Street on Waterman Drive, Soule Street at Cottage Road, and South Main Street at the Housing Authority’s proposed apartment complex. He solicited suggestions for a site for the fourth shelter.

It was decided by general consent to schedule the next Committee Meeting on March 18, 2019 to review the response to the Metro proposal prepared by Mr. Rene.

There being no further business brought before the Committee, the Meeting adjourned at 10:20 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Art Handman, Director
Transportation Department
Committee Staff Support