

Present: Dwight Baker; Andy Bennett; Dick Burkhart; Ray Day, Jr., Chair; Dave Elliott; John Jensen, Vice-Chair; Sandy Paul-Lyle; Holly Plackett; Claire Schary; Joan Sells; Mike Taylor

Excused: Hans Brandal; John Coney; Anirudh Sahni

Staff: Bob Virkelyst, Supervisor, Marketing and Service Information; David Hull, Transit Planner; Barbara de Michele, Community Relations Planner

Ray Day called the meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

Marketing Report

Virkelyst provided members with an overview of Metro marketing. Historically, the annual marketing budget has ranged as high as \$900,000. As a result of I-695 and other tax initiatives, the current annual marketing budget is \$159,000. Virkelyst pointed out that other elements of Metro service, such as “rider alerts” and the production of timetables, maps and signs, could be considered marketing. When those items are combined, plus various fare incentives and staff time, Metro spends approximately \$5 million annually on various aspects that could be called “marketing.”

Most transit agencies in the U.S. spend approximately 1% to 5% of their basic operating budget on marketing. The King County Council has not, especially in the past few years, supported marketing of Metro services. Their rationale has been that funding should be allocated primarily for service hours and maintenance.

Two new approaches have improved Metro’s approach to marketing. Kevin Desmond, Metro’s manager, has been an advocate of integrating marketing activities into the holistic product/service mix that Metro delivers to its customers. To that end, he has encouraged internal Metro groups to work together to deliver complimentary product/service solutions for customers, incorporate a promotional element as part of the total program, and focus the efforts on building ridership.

Secondly, Virkelyst said that the marketing group has strengthened its accountability measures. Although it is difficult to separate marketing from several factors (e.g., the economy, gas prices, employment, convenience of service, cleanliness) that influence ridership, the marketing group is attempting to isolate marketing efforts and measure the results. A recent marketing program, which included free tickets, saw a 30% redemption rate which generated over 25,000 rides on the bus. The annual ridership gain has been projected at over 288,000 rides. Ridership gains have held over time, indicating that getting riders on the bus for a trial run can impact long-term ridership.

Virkelyst also described a program funded by grant dollars that identified five of Metro’s most successful routes. The marketing section has set a goal of increasing annual ridership by 700,000 on these already-successful routes, and the promotional efforts are all underway. Initial results to the promotions appear quite promising (25% redemption rates on the first mailer), yet it is still too early to measure actual ridership totals.

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Following Virkelyst's presentation, the TAC discussed possible responses. Claire Schary moved/Bennett and Paul-Lyle seconded that the TAC draft a letter supporting an enhanced marketing budget for transmittal to the Executive and the King County Council. The motion passed with ten votes in favor and one abstention. Andy Bennett will take the lead on writing the draft letter, with assistance from Dick Burkhart and Ray Day.

Waterborne Transit Study

Hull reviewed preliminary findings with the TAC, and described the process for presenting the materials to the Regional Transit Committee. The TAC will be asked to provide a response to the "decision tree" put forward by Hull. This may occur simultaneously with the RTC deliberations, or after the RTC deliberations. Hull will present to the RTC on August 17 and report back on the preferred approach.

Committee Business

- Day reported on the July Regional Transit Committee meeting, which featured a report on transit security. Day spoke at the meeting as a private citizen, and urged Metro to include security issues in the next update for the Six-Year Plan. He distributed two Metro flyers related to security issues.
- During the RTC discussion, Plackett suggested that security could be enhanced throughout the system by conducting bus exit drills and tunnel exit drills to prepare people for emergency events. De Michele requested that the suggestion be written up for distribution to senior Metro staff.
- De Michele asked for a final count for the state TAC conference on September 20. These members have stated their intention to attend the conference: Baker, Bennett, Brandall, Coney, Day, Jensen, Paul-Lyle, Plackett, Sahni, Sells. De Michele will arrange for Metro to pay attendees' conference fees.
- The date of Monday, November 21, was established for the TAC Legislative Forum.
- De Michele reported on the East and South Sounding Boards that will begin meeting in October. The TAC is required to appoint one or more liaisons to each Sounding Board and, given the locations, potential liaisons include Baker, Elliott or Plackett (East) and Day, Brandall or Paul-Lyle (South).

Adjournment

Day adjourned the meeting at approximately 8:30 p.m.