

### Metro Mobility Fall 2017 Community Conversation Meeting

October 6, 2017

**Subject:** Summary of the comments provided by Metro Mobility customers and their advocates at the Fall Community Conversation on October 6, 2017.

#### Summary

On Friday, October 6, 35 Metro Mobility riders plus a few advocates convened at the Creekside Community Center in Bloomington to provide feedback on Metro Mobility (MM). The event began with a staff presentation about the fare increase that went into effect October first; Premium Same Day Service; the driver wage rate increase; and lastly, an update was provided on a forthcoming new MM webpage. There was an opportunity for attendees to engage in small group conversations staffed by facilitators and note takers. There was also time allotted for participant to talk one-on-one with transit services staff and contracted providers.

The prior community conversation took place six months ago during the official public comment period for the proposed fare increase (April 13 to June 26, 2017). The comments collected at the Spring 2017 were included in the public record.

During the small group discussion, customers were asked to provide feedback on what aspects of the service are working well; what they would like to change; a question about clarifying language used to identify contracted service providers; and anything else MM staff should know.

The Community Conversation was conducted in groups of approximately 4-6 people. These were the key issues that emerged from the conversations at the table.

#### Key Themes

##### 1. TRAINING OF DRIVERS (37)

*Educate drivers to assist the blind customers when going on/off the bus, e.g., grabbing the cane. Drivers should ask first. (4 comments like this)*

The top topic noted was the need for better training for Metro Mobility drivers. Some of the areas customers highlighted were making sure all drivers are aware of how to work with deaf/blind customers and their service animals; more sensitivity toward persons with “hidden disabilities”; read all comments on ride bookings; properly assist passengers with securements; over reliance on GPS, and better listening to customers.

##### 2. IMPROVED ROUTING AND ON-TIME PERFORMANCE (26)

*If I am coming out of Target Field and going home to Robbinsdale, why do I have to go through South Minneapolis?” (4 comments like this)*

IDEA: Feature a mini-presentation on the WHY routing works this way.

Customers repeatedly stated that they do not understand the routing of trips. Customers noted that at times they feel they are on the bus too long, and that routing could be made more efficient if one person would be allowed to book a ride for multiple riders on one card. Many customers suggested that large venues, e.g., the State Fair, airport, could have a meeting point for group rides.

### 3. IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS WITH RIDERS (17)

*Visits outside the ADA are the most difficult trips, not only for Metro Transit but customers as well. (3)*

Participants also felt that there was a need for more customer education on how the service works. They also stated that there should be more communication about change in a variety of formats. One suggestion was to use rider's hold time (on the phone) to have recorded announcements instead of music (2). There were also comments regarding frustration with not being able to get answers from MM about how the system works and why it takes so long. (2) Several made positive comments about the meeting format for the MM conversations; and that they would like a summary from the meeting as well. (5)

### 4. RESERVATIONS: RESERVATION STAFF AND WEBSITE (13)

*When I made the reservation, I added a comment, the driver told me that the comment wasn't mentioned by the dispatcher. The dispatcher did not see the comment but it was there.*

Customers stated that at times they struggle to communicate with the reservation staff due to a variety of reasons such as the 5pm closing time. They also stated that they would like to use the website and smart phone to make reservations.

### 5. IMPACT OF FARE INCREASE (5)

**Note: Fare increase was discussed in the prior convening (April 2017).**

*Drivers go through so much—construction, weather, etc. Glad they are getting a raise.”.(2)*

*Fare hike isn't just if service doesn't get better.*

Customers acknowledged that a fare increase would provide a financial hardship on some riders. They also made additional comments that the technology for paying fares needed improvement so that they would know what they are being charged.

### 6. INCREASED SERVICE HOURS (3)

*I would like longer hours of service. (3)*

Customers often wish to attend evening events but cannot due to the hours of service in some areas.

### 7. RECOMMENDATION FOR LANGUAGE TO DESCRIBE WHO PICKS UP THE CUSTOMER:

*People don't know who their provider is. Driver should ID who they drive for. This should be made clear during the application/approval process. (2)*

The term “Ride Providers” received the most votes (4). Others stated “Service providers or ride providers”. One said, “Just call them Drivers.” Another suggested that, “Maybe make the provider's name more visible with each ride.”

## **OTHER OBSERVATIONS:**

Customers made suggestions and provided commentary on a range of relevant items.

### **Advantages of Metro Mobility:**

*Drivers and personnel with MM are awesome and kind. I have always had a good experience with customer service. (3)*

“Mostly on time” (5)

“Dependable/Reliable” (4)

“We really appreciate the drivers and would like to say thank you.” (2)

“Kind, compassionate drivers” (2)

“Trust them more than a taxi.”

“Happy to have the service, despite shortcomings.”

“MM buses are clean and in good repair. They don’t breakdown.”

“Like the new lift on buses” (two people disagreed with this comment)

“New bus design has cozy seats”

“Disability service provider (PCA or companion) is allowed to ride along. Especially important for first time riders.”

### **Ideas for Metro Mobility staff:**

“Premium Same Day: The cab doesn’t work with Go-To Card; County Card doesn’t register with MM. (Need for) coordination between County and MM for greater use of Premium Same Day.”

“Give MM drivers flashlights so they can locate addresses in dark hours.”

“MM Employees should ride MM to experience (it) undercover.”

“Perhaps have staff come out to large volume facilities, e.g., apartment building, and have a meeting there?” (K. Sheldon suggested this given that her neighbors won’t go to a meeting offsite)

“Will taxis ever be able to accept the Go To card?”