

Metro Mobility Community Conversation Meeting

April 17, 2017

Subject: Summary of the comments provided by Metro Mobility customers and their advocates at the Spring Community Conversation on April 17, 2017.

Summary

On Monday, April 17, 60 Metro Mobility riders and a few advocates convened at the Wilder Foundation in Saint Paul to provide feedback on Metro Mobility. There was a presentation about the proposed fare increase and printed information was distributed. There was an opportunity for attendees to ask questions about the process one-on-one with Metropolitan Transit Services staff.

The public comment period for the proposed fare increase is from April 13 to June 26, 2017. The comments collected at this convening will be 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; how a fare increase would impact them, and anything else Metro Mobility staff should know.

The Community Conversation was conducted in groups of six to eight people. There was a note taker at each table who took notes and wrote key highlights on note cards to post on a wall for all to see. These were the key issues that emerged from the conversations at the table.

Key Themes

1. TRAINING OF DRIVERS (29)

Drivers need more training on working with deaf/blind customers and service animals.
(13 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; better understand “hidden disabilities”; read all comments on ride bookings; properly assist passengers with securements; over reliance on GPS, and better listening to customers.

2. IMPACT OF FARE INCREASE (27)

Remember many people are low income; and can't afford to take Uber, taxi, or other transportation.
(8 comments like this)

After a presentation about the fare increase, participants had some questions and provided comments. Customers acknowledged that a fare increase would provide a financial hardship on many riders. It may result in fewer trips for some users. Many commented that a small raise in fares is acceptable but please no cuts to routes or service. Recommendations included a preference of a flat fee increase versus a mileage-based increase. A couple of riders suggested removing the dollar zones from the downtowns.

3. RESERVATIONS: RESERVATION STAFF AND WEBSITE (16)

Metro Mobility needs more smart phone technology, like a live map. (4 comments like this)

Customers stated that at times they struggle to communicate with the reservation staff due to a variety of reasons. They also stated that they would like to use the website and smart phone to make reservations. Customers like the reminder call.

4. IMPROVED ROUTING AND ON-TIME PERFORMANCE (13)

Pick up multiple people in the area to save money and resources e.g., for large venues have a specified pick- up drop- off site. (6 comments like this)

Another common theme was the routing of customer trips. Customers noted that sometimes they feel they are on the bus too long; there are too many add-ons; routing should be more efficient. And driver's work days should be respected without rides being added at the end of the day, which may result in late arrival times. Some suggested that large venues, e.g., Target Field, could have a meeting point for group rides.

5. IMPROVED COMMUNICATIONS WITH RIDERS (12)

More rider education on Metro Mobility and how to use it, e.g., riders' code of ethics. (3 comments like this)

Customers would like to have more frequent communication from Metro Mobility in a variety of formats. Customers expressed interest in a "mobile app" that shows where the bus is in real time; more consistent and regular mailings of rider guides; an updated website where information is readily available, and better signage for visually impaired riders. Two customers suggested that drivers carry tablets that deaf/blind customers can use to communicate like at HyVee grocery store. Participants also felt that there was a need for more customer education on how the service works. Several made positive comments about the meeting format for the spring community conversation.

6. INCREASED SERVICE HOURS (4)

The hours of service affect work plans and independence; could you extend the hours in the summer? (4 comments like this)

Several customers value the independence they get from having access to transit. Some participants commented that they feel safer using Metro Mobility than other sorts of transit options like cabs. They would like Metro Mobility to have extended hours so that they can schedule longer hours at work, and go out in the evenings.

Other Observations

Policies: Customers commented that in a time of financial cuts, customers with drivers' licenses should not be eligible for the service (2). Different regions have different providers and phone numbers, which can get confusing. Customers wondered if the robocall could be done by the driver instead? "They know better than the anyone how close they are." (2) Expand the service to outside the ADA zone. "We have to call another service and we can be denied." (2) Customers saw the Go-To card as a positive move.