

SENATE COMMITTEE ON STUDENT AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF MEETING
NOVEMBER 4, 2005

[In these minutes: Parking and Transportation Services Update, Student Code of Conduct Update, University Athletics/Stadium Statement, Policy on Student Evaluation of Instruction, Strategic Positioning Statement]

[These minutes reflect discussion and debate at a meeting of a committee of the University Senate; none of the comments, conclusions, or actions reported in these minutes represent the view of, nor are they binding on the Senate, the Administration, or the Board of Regents.]

PRESENT: Matt Painschab, chair, Kendre Turonie, Amelious Whyte, Iraj Bashiri, Jennifer Engler, Kim Roufs, Janet Schottel, Jesse Berglund, Nathan Pelzer, Hilary Ploeckelmann, Jeffrey Wencl, Caroline Younts

REGRETS: Jean-Marie Del-Santo, Carolyn Nayematsu, Jenn Funke, Maria McRae, Tina Falkner

ABSENT: Gordon Duke, Samantha Peloquin

GUESTS: Bob Baker, Director of Parking and Transportation and Bill Stahlmann, Transit Manager

I). Matt Painschab called the meeting to order and asked those present to introduce themselves.

II). Mr. Painschab introduced today's guests, Bob Baker and Bill Stahlmann from Parking and Transportation Services. Member's parking and transportation questions had been solicited prior to today's meeting, and shared with Mr. Baker and Mr. Stahlmann as a means to help them prepare. The questions and their responses are below:

Q: Please provide an overview of the history of the Campus Connectors and the University's relationship with Metro Transit relative to the UPass.

A: Mr. Baker noted that the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities campus operates one of the oldest, largest, and finest inter-campus shuttle services in the country. The program began in 1914 using trolley cars, which ran between the Minneapolis and St. Paul campuses. Since the Campus Connector was put in place, several different companies have won the bid to operate this service. First Student Inc. is the current vendor.

Over the years, the University has fine-tuned and streamlined its transportation services. The goal has always been to move passengers as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Examples of mechanisms, which have been put in place to improve campus transportation services include, but are not limited to:

- Articulated buses were added to the Campus Connector route. These buses have a larger passenger capacity and are more efficient to operate than two forty-foot buses.
- Circulator routes.
- Paratransit bus service.

The UPass program was initiated in 1999. It took approximately three years to develop a program that students would support, the University could afford, and President Yudof would endorse. In terms of cost models, the UPass program is a hybrid. It combines features of a "user-fee cost model" and a "mandatory cost model". The UPass program was launched with the assistance of a \$5.8 million federal grant. Since its inception, the program has been very successful with 17,000 students participating as of fall 2005. The UPass currently costs students \$60 per semester.

Q: How much does it cost to operator the Campus Connector? What is the ridership on the Campus Connector?

A: In fiscal year 2004/2005, the University spent \$3.8 million to operate this service of which \$611,000 was funded through the Student Transportation Fee, and the remainder funded through parking revenues. Ridership for FY 04/05, was approximately 3.8 million riders on the Campus Connector and Circulator. The Connector transports, on average, 24,000 people per academic day.

Q: Are any Connector routes in danger of being cut back or are their discussions about expanding the service?

A: There are no major changes have been proposed to the current service. The system is continuously monitored, and buses are added or removed as necessary, based on supply and demand.

Q: How often is the UPass contract renegotiated? How are these negotiations conducted?

A: Currently, the University is in its second year of a four year contract. When the program was launched initially, contract periods were for two years. Only recently was the University able to negotiate a longer contract with Metro Transit.

Negotiations are very difficult/complicated, in part, because this is a costly program to operate given the ever-increasing costs of transportation, and reduced funding from the legislature to Metro Transit. Once a contract is agreed upon it must be approved by the Board of Regents and the Metropolitan Council. Under the most recent contract, the University negotiated:

- Savings of \$925,000 from the initial asking price for this service.
- A 3.4% annual inflation escalator.

Given the rising prices of gasoline over the past year, these two items alone conservatively equates to \$1.5 million in savings.

Q: Are there any other vendors besides Metro Transit that could deliver this service?

A: There are no other vendor besides Metro Transit large enough to provide the level of service and diversity of routes.

Q: How can riders provide feedback to Metro Transit around expanding routes?

A: Metro Transit occasionally conducts surveys and public hearings as a means of soliciting input from riders. Also, riders are encouraged to contact Metro Transit directly to share their feedback.

Q: Can students purchase a UPass during the summer too?

A: Yes, stated Mr. Stahlmann, there are actually three program periods, fall semester through mid January, spring semester, and inter-session through summer. UPass participation last summer was approximately 5,000.

Q: What is being done to deal with overcrowding on the buses, which can be very dangerous?

A: It was acknowledged that there are times when the Connector/Circulator are overcrowded. Generally, overcrowded buses can be attributed to class break periods. Drivers are trained to not operate the bus if an individual/individuals are over the white line although this can be difficult to control at times. Parking and Transportation tries to operate a consistent service by monitoring ridership levels on a daily basis.

Q: Does Parking and Transportation operate the bus service that takes people to/from the Metrodome for football games?

A: The Athletic Department contracts with outside vendors to provide this service. Parking and Transportation does not have anything to do with this service.

Q: For scheduling purposes, does Parking and Transportation consult with the Office of the Registrar to determine peak class times?

A: Yes, there is communication with the Office of the Registrar around peak class times. Additionally, as mentioned earlier, ridership is monitored on a daily basis.

Q: What is being done to ensure that lighting around bus stops is adequate? Recently, the bus stop near the corner of Gortner and Buford on the St. Paul campus was in total darkness. These are unsafe conditions for students who need to travel between the campuses after dark.

A: It is unclear why this location was in total darkness recently. Parking and Transportation's Maintenance and Projects division will look into this matter. All shelters, except for two, which are well lit already, have lights inside the shelters. Members were encouraged to report other instances of inadequate lighting to Parking and Transportation.

Before closing, Director of Parking and Transportation Bob Baker reported that a proposal to fund the UPass under a strictly mandatory fee model has been brought forward. Parking and Transportation is open to discussing this proposal, but not until the current contract period is over. Mr. Baker noted that several schools that have moved from a user-fee model to a mandatory fee model have experienced an increase in ridership.

A member asked about UMD's transit program. Kim Roufs, a Duluth representative on the committee, agreed to find out more about the program in terms of how it is funded, and report back to the committee.

Another member complimented Parking and Transportation on its services. Mr. Baker acknowledged the comment, and noted that Parking and Transportation spends a great deal of time making sure its service is user-friendly. He added that the department has won national awards, which recognize the program.

III). Amelious Whyte reported that few years ago a major review of the Conduct Code was conducted. While there were some classroom behavior/management issues that were added, for the most part the Code was not changed significantly. During this review, however, discussions of whether the Code should extend off-campus were debated. After much discussion, a decision was made to maintain the Code's on-campus jurisdiction only. However, he noted that at the time the revised Code was brought before the Board of Regents for approval, the University had just had its second riot following a hockey victory. As a result, an administrative policy was created, which stipulated that students, who engage in riotous behavior in connection with a University event that occurs off-campus, can be charged under the Student Code of Conduct.

Within the last year, a committee was formed comprised of representatives from the Office of Student Affairs, the coordinate campuses, and a couple student members from the Student Behavior Committee to again discuss whether the Code should be extended off-campus. After serious consideration, the committee has recommended that there could be some merit to extending the Code off-campus under specified circumstances. To date, however, senior administration has not given approval to pursue this matter further. If senior administration decides this recommendation should be explored further, there would be University-wide consultation on the issue.

IV). Jesse Berglund distributed talking points for a resolution/statement he intends to draft relative to a Gopher Stadium. He noted that MSA and GPA have taken quite different positions on this issue. MSA takes the position is that it will support a Gopher Stadium up to a certain amount of money, while GAPSA takes the position that fees to

fund a Gopher Stadium should be assessed only as a last resort, and that if fees are assessed, graduate and professional students should be given the opportunity to opt out.

In Mr. Berglund's opinion, the Senate Committee on Student Affairs should play a role in the Gopher Stadium debate. He believes, however, that the committee's position should go beyond the stadium debate, and consider taking a broader position by expressing extreme reservations on the use of mandatory student fees in support of University Athletics.

In light of time, members briefly debated the pros and cons of supporting a Gopher Stadium/University Athletics statement, and decided to discuss this idea further at its December meeting.

V). Other business: Matt Painschab reported that he was unable to obtain a draft of the Policy on Student Evaluation of Instruction crafted by SCEP prior to today's meeting. He will continue to try to get a copy and distribute it to members via email.

Mr. Painschab distributed a copy of the Resolution on Strategic Planning, which passed the University Senate on April 28, 2005, and a rough draft of a statement he crafted addressing the importance of student involvement and public openness as it relates to the strategic planning process. The primary motivation behind this statement has to do with the fact that the administration has only a handful of students serving on the various task forces. Because the meeting was scheduled to end, Mr. Painschab indicated that this discussion would either be continued over email or brought back as an agenda item for the December meeting. Mr. Painschab agreed to email this rough draft resolution to all members following today's meeting.

VI). Hearing no further business, Matt Painschab adjourned the meeting.

Renee Dempsey
University Senate