



TRU Report on Mayor Duggan's Efforts to Improve DDOT: **Lots of Talk, Some Efforts, Little Change for Bus Riders**

Transportation Riders United (TRU) reviewed Mayor Mike Duggan's efforts to improve Detroit Department of Transportation (DDOT) fixed-bus service during his first term in office and found that despite the Mayor's frequent statements and his Administration's efforts, bus riders still wait hours for buses that are overcrowded or never arrive. Although TRU applauds the Mayor for prioritizing public transit, the thousands of people who rely on DDOT to get them work, school and other daily activities cannot ride on hope. For this reason, **TRU rates Mayor Duggan's results on transit as a C-**.

TRU examined several areas related to efforts to improve DDOT bus service:

1. Prioritizing DDOT Improvements

Since 2012, TRU has advocated that public transit should be considered one of the top five essential city services. TRU launched its I (heart) Good Transit campaign with the message of "Good Transit No Matter What" so that city and state officials would understand the importance of safe, reliable, affordable bus service to the revitalization of the City of Detroit. We recognized that bus service must be a priority.

We are pleased that Mayor Duggan prioritized improving DDOT from his first week in office; throughout the bankruptcy; and during his interactions with regional, state and federal leaders. In his first week in office, Mayor Duggan replaced the contractual person serving as the DDOT Director with Dan Dirks. Mr. Dirks brings 30 years of experience at SMART including serving as General Manager under then SMART CEO Mike Duggan. While this experience has proven invaluable, TRU believes that both men underestimated the depth and complexity of the problems plaguing DDOT.

2. Timeliness

After many requests in 2014, TRU received data regarding DDOT's pull out rates this month. Pull out rates compares the number of buses that left the garages to the number of buses DDOT needs to operate all of the bus routes – 223. Most transit agencies achieve 100% with occasional drops due to severe weather or unexpected traffic problems. The Regional Transit Authority set performance metrics for all fixed bus providers in Southeast Michigan of 100% pull outs and 90% on-time performance. DDOT's pull outs ranged from 60% - low 80% and their on-time performance ranged in the 70-80%. This is unacceptable and must be improved.

3. Access to Bus Information

The lack of regular, timely information about how DDOT is performing is troublesome for several reasons. Without the ability for riders and other community stakeholders to know how DDOT is performing leaves them without hope and unable to effectively advocate for improvements. The previous administration posted weekly performance metrics on the City's website. It is unknown why the Duggan Administration doesn't make this information readily available.

Without knowing when improvements will be made, again leaves riders and others feeling hopeless. Press conferences announcing that new buses have been ordered doesn't help the person waiting for their bus know if new buses are coming during the cold months of winter or the warmer months of summer.

Another example is for riders whose buses are detoured due to the M-1 Rail construction. The information on the DDOT webpage doesn't show the re-routing or the location of the new bus stops. Many times, riders wait at stops that buses no longer go past. Clear information and maps should appear on the old and new bus stop signs, in the buses and at the Rosa Parks and State Fair Transit Center as well as on the webpage.

4. Financial Support for DDOT

Mayor Duggan had been diligent in obtaining financial support for DDOT, even as the City has struggled through the bankruptcy and emergency manager process. The bankruptcy Plan of Adjustment maintains then increases the City's annual investment in DDOT from 2015-16 to 2018-19 fiscal years. On the other hand, the Plan proposes fare increases without detailing that bus service will be improved or what the increased revenue will be used for. Riders shouldn't have to pay more to get less.

Most notable are Mayor Duggan's efforts to secure state and federal funding. Some of the funding announced during 2014 resulted from grant applications submitted before he took office. For example, DDOT and SMART applied for and receive federal grant funding to install security cameras on buses. Nonetheless, the Duggan Administration has been actively seeking and applying for competitive grants which resulted in the US Dept. of Transportation awarding a Ladders of Opportunity grant for the purchase of new buses. More recently, the Mayor and Detroit-area state legislators worked together to give the City the option to use 20% of transportation funding for bus operations.

On the other side, the City didn't seek federal funding for transit funding for seniors and people with disabilities. DDOT officials informed the Regional Transit Authority (RTA), which now coordinates funding for all public transit agencies in Southeast Michigan, that it wasn't seeking Section 5307 funds for fiscal year 2014-15. The reason given was that DDOT hadn't spent previous appropriated Sec. 5307 funds.

Fortunately, the City was able to utilize federal funding to install new bus shelters along Eight Mile Road and at the Northland and Eastland Transit Center. The funds had been sitting unused and federal government threatened to pull the money unless the City spent it.

TRU is thankful that the City followed its advice given in its November 2012 Report Card and Recommendations to maximize all sources of revenue by fixing the fireboxes and protecting collected fares. DDOT reported to TRU that it has begun fixing fireboxes in the field when a driver reports a malfunction. This results in the collection of fares and not having to return the bus to the terminal.

Likewise, the City contracted with a private firm to insure that firebox revenue is properly accounted for.

Lastly, officials with the Detroit People Mover lead the RTA's efforts to develop a universal fare card which would allow riders to load money onto electronic cards and eventually use the cards when riding DDOT, SMART, People Mover, The Ride and M-1 Rail streetcar.