

Bus Riders of Saskatoon
Meeting with City of Saskatoon Utility Services Department
March 11, 2015

4:00pm - 5:00pm

301 - 24th Street West, Saskatoon

Bus Riders of Saskatoon Members: Sarina, Samuel, Robert

City of Saskatoon Representatives: Tim Bushman (Interim Assistant Director Saskatoon Transit), Trevor Bell (Interim Director for Saskatoon Transit , Director of Saskatoon Light &Power), Lee Thomas (Manager of Growing Forward, Long Range Planning), Chelsea Lanning (Transit Planning Engineer – Saskatoon Transit part time/Long Range Planning part time)

1. Introductions

2. Questions from Bus Riders of Saskatoon

Downtown bus mall (Lee Thomas)

- Question: Would you be able to provide Bus Riders of Saskatoon with an update on the downtown bus mall and the idea of its removal. Is there a specific transit concern for the bus mall?
- Reference to City Centre Plan: <https://www.saskatoon.ca/business-development/planning/neighbourhood-planning/city-centre-plan>
- Operational Concerns
 - That space is too small
 - Not efficient to get in and out
 - Not conducive for efficient transfers
 - We have outgrown the bus mall
 - How do we make this space more efficient and appropriate towards the system we are working towards?
 - The Downtown Bus Mall would be replaced by two main transfer points - one near the University and one west of downtown somewhere along 22nd Street
 - A frequent service would operate between these two points crossing the downtown area
 - This concept will be tested this summer with the closure of the University Bridge when a shuttle type service will connect the Place Riel Terminal with the Downtown Bus Mall
- Growth plan – early 2016 to Council for adoption
 - Leg work begins
 - Transit will sit down for a year or year and a half on how to transition the system

- If council approves – develop budgets for 2017
- July 1, 2017 would be the earliest that these transition changes could happen
 - The new bus mall will be happening at that time too (dispatching will change – drivers can no longer walk to downtown)
- Under lying assumption is a fleet revitalization (cleaner fleet, newer fleet, etc...)
- New buses to be delivered in May
- Construction of new order buses timeline has been extended to 18 month delivery wait time (i.e. longer to get new buses)
 - Capital gets booked when the order is made

Signal Prioritization

- Question: Several years ago a pilot project on traffic light prioritization was proposed (Wiggins and College Drive). Could you provide a status update on this project?
- Two components: fleet and field
- Hardware installed in field
 - Clarence to Bottomley every set of signals
 - Fleet component in some of the buses
 - Early reviews is that it is a great system and City want to keep it
 - The locations the City have chosen are not the best locations
 - Platoon system: groups of buses on the bridge at the same time
 - “Platoon of vehicles”
 - Not a lot of benefit to College Drive to improve
 - City looking at other locations to install the system
 - Possible locations: Signal priority for 8th Street, Broadway Avenue, Preston Avenue (between 8th Street and College Drive)
 - Tie into the BRT
 - It would be done as part of the implementation
 - It works best with a bypass lane – otherwise the bus calling for the green light is stuck in traffic
 - Look at intersection modifications
 - Ideally nailed down and installed in 5 years but it has been added to the ten year plan
 - If the City turned the program on at Clarence now, it would not be noticeable
 - Buses can call for an early green light (the light is already green when you come to the light)
 - College Drive is already maxed out on green light time
 - The bus asks for the red time to be shortened (as long as walking time is met)
- **Lee and Chelsea will send images and information of how this system works to Sarina**

Community Shuttle in the North End

- There will be service to the North Industrial – the blue blob on the Growing Forward map means there will be service to the north end
- Recognize certain areas have low ridership
 - North Industrial has a different service need than other riders/areas
 - High frequency service to Lawson Heights Mall with a shuttle to the North Industrial
 - Partnership with major employers
 - Questions asked include:
 - Where do the majority of people go?
 - When do they start?
 - Breaking that service out because it is unique
- Something similar for South Industrial to Montgomery
- Trying to break apart the reliances
- BRT will be the spine of the network
 - Point A would be that corridor
 - Point B would be Lawson Heights Mall
 - Then get riders out at to where they need to go
- Discussion had about the road network and retrofitting these areas (i.e. there are not many sidewalks in the north end – not very walkable)

Data

- Question: How is the digital bus pass data used to enhance Saskatoon Transit and the riders experience? Similarly along those lines, we have noticed that the last time transit released an annual report was in 2012. Now that Saskatoon Transit is not a utility, these reports are not published. Is there any intention of continuing these reports so that comparisons can be made over time to track changes in ridership numbers, revenue (break down by fare type, pass, cash, student, etc.) and expenses.
- Fare Box data
 - Used for route planning
 - Challenges: only record when people get on
 - Supplement with screenline counts
 - Sitting in a city van and recording what comes through
 - Look at volumes on buses, stops with heavy volumes and flow of people
 - Fare box records pass numbers so there would be privacy issues with supplying this data (i.e. for internal use only)
- Annual reports are still published
 - 2014 report was not done because of the lockout
 - **Bus Riders of Saskatoon to compose an email with a request for information and send to Alysha**
 - Saskatoon Transit will let us know what information they will be able to supply as the report has not been completed
 - Comparing data sets on a month to month basis is challenging

- Differences could be due to a glitch in how the systems communicate and the reliability of the data
 - It has been a learning curve for Saskatoon Transit
 - The ITS system and fare box integration was more difficult than expected
 - Difficulty with information flow
 - E.g. fare box not working or sign not changing correctly
- The fare box system does not allow a month to month approach for bus passes
 - (i.e. May 11-June 11 rather than June 1 to June 30)

Website

- API to be released in the future for open data
- Made modifications to the load capacity of the transit website
- People choosing the online form rather than calls to contact Saskatoon Transit

Snow Clearing

- Question: Does Saskatoon Transit encourage drivers to report uncleared (snow) from sidewalks/bus stops to bylaw enforcement? If not, could you please elaborate on the reason, especially if drivers notice riders with mobility issues.
- Yes, Saskatoon Transit encourages drivers to report snow clearing and then it gets reported to Public Works

Protocol for when drivers or passengers feel threatened

- If passenger or driver feels immediately threatened
 - Calls emergency services through radio dispatch (calls MD or police)
- If passengers or drivers are not in direct threat but a rider is a nuisance
 - Driver will Call supervisor, supervisor will assess the situation and give advice on how to deal with it
- If a passenger or driver is not sure and uncomfortable it is suggested to call the police
 - Safety of the driver and passengers is main priority

3. Adjournment