

Bus Riders of Saskatoon Meeting
September 13, 2015
1:30pm – 3:30pm
Saskatoon Food Bank and Learning Centre

Facilitators: Cameron and Taylor-Ann
Meeting Notes: Sarina

1. Introductions

- Vision, Mission, Group Norms
- Group introductions

2. Presentation by Councillor Zach Jeffries

Zach's initial thoughts and comments:

- Wants to hear our views on transit. Where there are gaps? What is positive? What's improving?
- Liked the 10 Days for Transit work that took place
 - o Good opportunity for Council and Administration to experience services that they're making decisions on
 - o Transit is an investment within the City and it is good to get perspectives on the ground
- Just met with Jim McDonald, Manager of Saskatoon Transit
 - o Resonating message from that meeting: Saskatoon Transit is delivering the service that Council is funding and investing in.
- Frustrations with transit include: the technology (not one single app for getting around), reliability, older/aging fleet
 - o There is a missing connection between political will/funding given to transit and expectations of a great service
- Positives with transit: work that the new transit manager is doing (riders charter, what the promise is for Saskatoon Transit), things are going in a good direction, happy to have voted in favour of ten new buses this year

b) Questions from the floor:

1. There have been discussions from this group about funding from the government to the City, specifically for transit in Saskatoon. Would you be in favour of this?
 - Yes he would be in favour of this
 - Currently the City has dedicated Access Transit funds specific from the Province
 - Provincial government does provide funding to the City. It comes as one set of dollars but it is a catch all, not ear marked for different areas
 - Dedicated dollars for transit would speak to providing a better service

- We are probably not going to get extra traction from the Province for this funding though
 - Federal government has shown possible capital investment post October 19, 2015 elections
 - Difficult for Saskatoon to compare their funding to other municipalities since different municipalities/provinces spend their (Transit) funds differently
2. How are the relationships between the Amalgamated Transit Union and the Transit Management?
 - They are back at the table negotiating
 - That is a good sign
 - Zack does not sit at the bargaining table, but there are some challenges that do not relate to the wages
 - Contracting out provisions – there is a gap over this issue
 - Wages have been a gap as well, but hopefully one that is closing
 - These challenges need to be resolved
 3. How can we work towards better Customer Service with an unsettled Collective Bargaining Agreement?
 - Despite the labour challenges, there are many operators who do not let that get in the way of providing good customer service
 - It is not the most conducive environment for customer service but most of the operators overlook this challenge
 - Hopefully there is a cultural shift internally. As new management and administrative styles emerge in the department, there will be more support provided for staff
 4. Could you clarify the following statement from earlier: “We have the bus service that City Council pays for”. It should not be City Councils fault for allotting the money given from taxes towards transit. It is not on most citizens’ list to support transit.
 - It is City Councils job to look at things not just from the majority of what people are thinking, but to look at the alternatives of “not doing transit right” versus “doing transit right”
 - Growing Forward is doing a good job of that
 - It is a Councilors job to bring ideas/concepts back and explain it to the community
 - The financial argument for better transit is compelling as well
 5. Based on previous meetings with Saskatoon Transit, we were told it should be a Council decision on whether transit should focus on coverage versus frequency. What do you think on how much focus should be on

providing services to the outerlying neighbourhoods of the city versus core neighbourhoods given the location of your ward?

- We need to give serious thought to the 450m transit stop.
- There are some spots in the city that do not drive transit ridership. I think we need to be realistic at looking at this number and altering it to adjust based on where riders are. I do not think it works well to give everyone the same level of unsatisfactory service.
- Transit service is flying blind a little when looking at ridership numbers. The fare boxes are not working as well as they should be. In flying blind, they cannot make the decisions on where service should be without an accurate dataset.
- Frequency versus coverage is Council decisions. They set the level of service. It is not Councils job to say where stops should go. Administration helps inform Council by providing all scenarios and the costs of doing different scenarios.
- By not increasing frequency, we are just continuing to ease ourselves into mediocre system. It is also not fair to expect people to walk 2km to take the bus.

6. The rider/user experience may be a bit cheaper to invest in. There are great bus stops in the city, but there are also stops where they are just stakes and a sign. Do you know if there is a move within transit to try and use these cheaper measures to increase the rider experience?

- One difficulty at these stops is keeping them clean (i.e. dirty benches) but creating a service level around cleaning bus stops is low hanging fruit. This could be something to help build the user experience.
- Overcoming snow ridges are discussions that have been had within the City (i.e. the possibility of making priorities for clearing). As a rider you do feel like you and the service are an after thought when you have to step over the ridges to access the bus.
 - This was a discussion had with Jim McDonald. He will look into this over the year.
- Does Bus Riders have any suggestions for low hanging fruit on the buses?
 - E.g. WiFi, charging stations, etc.
 - If our group has any suggestions, he would be open to hear the suggestions.

7. The City has in the past approached the provincial government for changes to development levies. What would your opinion be on including public transit an ask to the Province to change the Planning and Development Act?

- Very much in favour of taking in the full cost of development. There are things within the Planning and Development Act that the municipalities are not even using.
- The City sent a letter to the Province to ask that when the Planning and Development Act is opened that they would like to have a discussion about changes (e.g. fire and emergency services). The correlation between immediate costs of development and further costs are not considered and they should be (i.e. services built immediately in the neighbourhood versus in the future).
 - Transit should be included in this.
- This will also be important as we transition to BRT (e.g. new stations in a neighbourhood)

8. Suggestion for service:

- Transit does not seem to have any influence on the prioritization of road clearings. If the transit routes had more priority on the roadway itself, that would improve the reliability of transit.

9. We understand that Councilors are busy and not experts in every area. We have a lot of similar goals in terms of reliability and better services. What can Bus Riders do to help Councilors and Council forward pressure for better transit? Or things that we should be doing as a group?

- Raising the profile for work that needs to be done. Bus Riders has helped because that was not being done before. The discussion has now been elevated.
- Growing Forward process has also been helping, or making life easier for some Councilors to understand what is needed and the money that would need to be spent on public transit
- Whenever there is an opportunity to speak to Council on an agenda item, it is helpful. It is important to show there is a group of people committed to improving transit. Saskatoon Cycles has done a good job of that since it reminds Councilors of the issues and that there are people who care. It may seem repetitive and silly but it makes a difference. It keeps the pressure on and reminds people.
- Having the conversation about low hanging fruit. If there is anything Zach or his colleagues can do to help further that, lowers the barriers in the future for bigger decisions.

10. What's the temperature of your riding for transit? It seems like many residents do not have transit as a focus, if that is true, could you confirm that? Do you see a possibility of increasing ridership in your riding?

- There are many users that use their vehicles. Car culture is popular in neighbourhoods like Erindale or Arbor Creek. The neighbourhoods do not necessarily enforce a transit culture.

- Better decisions about land use and built environments should be a focus of Councillors. When areas like Erindale are built, it cannot be a shock to the city as to why these residents do not use the transit system. Better Land Use planning will help to build the transit environment. Areas like Evergreen with higher density corridors are a better step towards better Land Use planning.
- It is also a Councillors job to explain the idea of transit and “Growing Forward”
- Lots of the discussions Zach has with his riding and constituents are more about a lack of response to complaints or issues with Saskatoon Transit rather than general transit concerns.

11. General question about relationship between the City and the University of Saskatchewan

- The UPASS has been a fantastic thing for Saskatoon Transit. The partnership between the USSU, GSA and the City has been great.
- There is a challenge to current administration in that kids do not get hooked to transit early. There are no incentives in place to entice riders at a young age and to keep them riding the bus.

12. It could be difficult for prospective new riders to understand the transit system because of the way the routes are laid out (i.e. they are not grid-like).

13. Having an app that shows where the buses are with real-time technology would be helpful.

- The technology does exist for this. It is on a website, not an app currently. We need to have this information available in an open data fashion. Companies that already have functional layouts could then just use this information for those using as a service (free apps). There would need to be a pricing structure for apps that charge money.

3. Committee Updates

- Online Committee:
 - Samuel is no longer on the committee as he has moved away
 - If anything for posting was missed, just fire an email to the committee
 - If anyone wants anything added to the website, just contact the committee
 - Want to ensure our website is a vibrant source of information

Note: check consistency of numbering for meeting notes as some may have been missed.

- Could we stop numbering the meetings and just label it by date instead?

- External Committee:
 - Update from a few people emailing busridersofsaskatoon@gmail.com. Sarina responded to everyone encouraging them to come to these meetings for more information, in addition to checking out the Facebook page and busridersofsaskatoon.ca
- Internal Committee:
 - Internal structure of Bus Riders and committee information for the website is being worked on.
 - Marianne and Tracey to finish this

4. Discussion and future activities

a) Group finances:

- We have about \$400 in the bank, after 10 Days for Transit and printing expenses for flyers for the parade.
 - It would be good to have the flyers business card sized in the future
- Robert has a financial report
- ***Motion to approve up-to \$200 to reimburse expenses for 10 Days for Transit, upon receipts.***
 - **Tracey made motion**
 - **Lila seconds the motions**
 - **All in favour: unanimous**
 - **Note: funds going back to individuals who purchased**

b) City of Saskatoon Meeting:

- There is a gap in getting the information from Saskatoon Transit Meetings to the group.
 - Many groups are challenged with this. We can push back a little and say that we have asked this previously and reference the previous meeting minutes.
 - Do we have a forum section on the webpage? That could be helpful. These are searchable.
 - Our online committee may not know how to do that. Do we have the capacity to administer this?
 - In the meantime, if there are consistent questions that come up, we may be able to do a FAQ.
 - This could be something in the future if we have a larger committee. We would want people to be able to moderate in terms of being civil but also in terms of being able to answer questions.
- Agenda Items:
 - Ask for an update on 5 year and communications strategy
 - There was a Facebook comment in regards to a security concern. There was one gentleman who was touching women inappropriately and it seemed that the police are aware but perhaps not all transit

operators. In lieu of this situation, how are security concerns communicated through to operators and those working in Saskatoon Transit?

- A possible suggestion: could post signage to remind people that these behaviors are illegal and not to happen on the bus
- What are the general processes in place for people who are cold or potentially to the point of hypothermia? What are the processes in place to prevent this?
- Can we ask Saskatoon Transit if there are any events they want added to our calendar (e.g. Transit on Tap)
 - Also the rest of the group should send these activities for our organization
 - *Postponed until outreach plan is complete*
- Attending September 15, 2015 meeting: Cameron, Marianne, Sarina

c) Activity since last meeting (rephrased to upcoming activities):

- What do we want to do, what are our purposes and goals? In doing outreach, what are our goals and by order of priority?
 - Internal and external committees to come up with a draft outreach plan
 - Cameron to send an email to start the meeting committee. Taylor Ann wants to be CC'd on these emails.
- Online committee wants to go back to Facebook comments and answer some of those questions
 - *Postponed until outreach plan is complete*
- Online committee: looking to do write-ups summarizing the City of Saskatoon meetings and putting it on our websites
 - *Postponed until outreach plan is complete*
- Possibility of creating an online calendar for events. What are peoples thoughts?
 - The events calendar should we intentional with the goal. Is the goal to encourage people to use transit or come to a meeting? Or is the goal to get people to come to more meetings? Or to get people to come to more meetings? Having a clear goal would be important.
 - We have been trying to get people to come to more meetings
 - *Postponed until outreach plan is complete*
- Committee recruitment Update:
 - Look at previous minutes for people who to contact and follow up with them
 - Hilary said she would be willing to be on the online committee
 - Cam to follow up with Brian H. about online committee
 - Ryan Walker was listed for Tracey to contact for a planning/student perspective
- Could we do some outreach for students (SIASST, U of S, high school) now that school is back in session?
 - Maybe we could advertise on the Sheaf or get an article written

- In the future, distribution through the USSU would work. Alana could do that.
- *Postponed until outreach plan is complete*
- Make a list of all the groups that we could contact and facilitate more interaction with. Creating that list would be helpful.
 - Council on Aging and bus buddies program might be nice as part of the outreach.
 - *Postponed until outreach plan is complete*
- Is there a Councillor we would like to ask to come to next meeting:
 - Pat Lorje denied our request
 - Ask first, Councillor Iwanchuk and then Olauson
 - Tracey to ask Iwanchuk
 - Sarina to ask Olauson if Iwanchuk cannot make it
 - Ask for 45 minutes of their time

5) Determine next meeting facilitators:

Next meeting: Sunday, October 4, 2015

- Avoiding Thanksgiving long weekend

Next meeting facilitator(s): Cameron and Lila

Next minute taker: Tracey

6) Adjournment 3:30pm