

Bus Riders of Saskatoon
Meeting with City of Saskatoon Utility Services Department
January 14, 2015

4:00pm - 5:00pm

301 - 24th Street West, Saskatoon

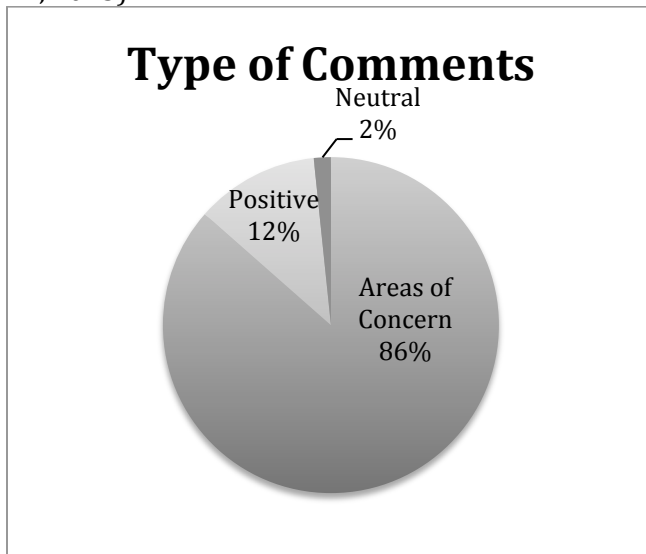
Bus Riders of Saskatoon Members: Sarina, Mandy, Stephan

City of Saskatoon Representatives: Alysha Hille (Marketing Manager, Saskatoon Transit), Bob Howe (Director, Saskatoon Transit), Calvin McPhail (Operations Superintendent, Saskatoon Transit), Jason Wiebe (Operations Superintendent, Saskatoon Transit), Michael Costello (Accounting Coordinator)

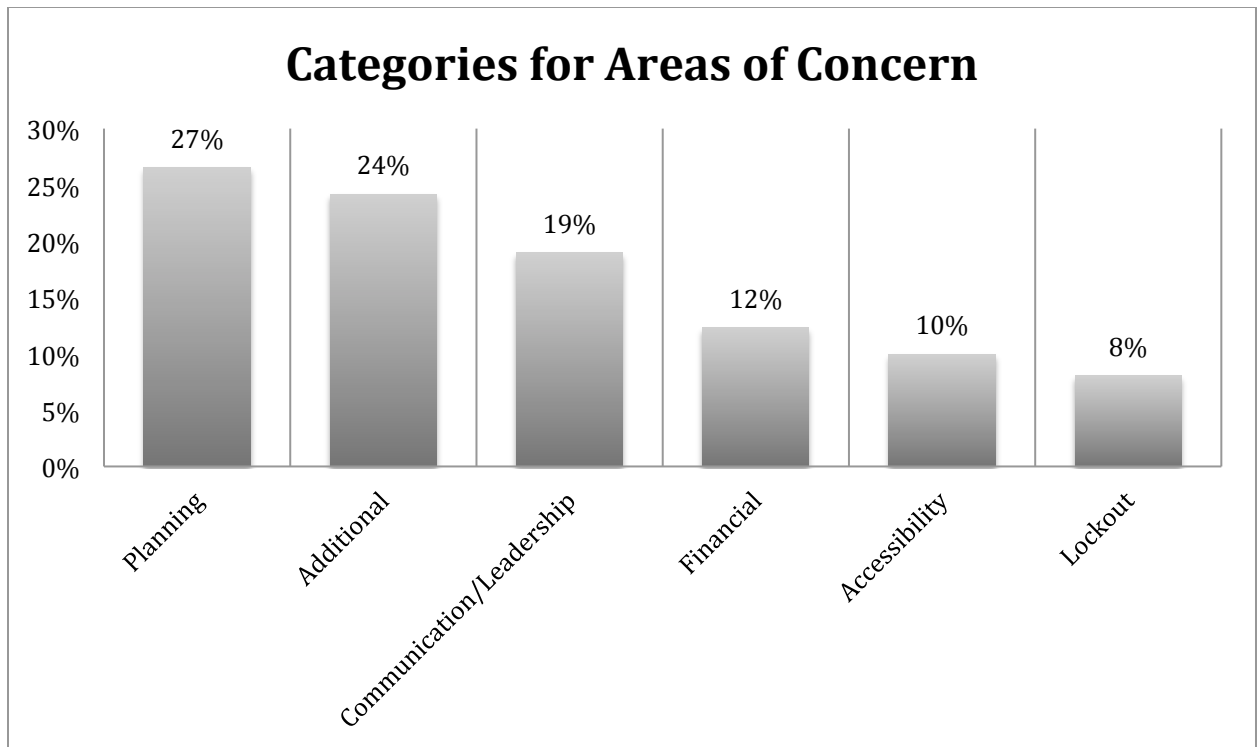
1. Introductions

2. Presentation from Bus Riders of Saskatoon on Comments and Feedback from Riders

- Note: Data compiled by Sarina from Facebook, Gmail, group meetings (valid as of January 11, 2015)



- - Comments from the group are made up of positive and negative comments. The meeting mainly focused on the areas of concern but did emphasize the importance of the positive comments. **It is encouraged that along with negative comments, riders submit positive transit experiences as well to the Saskatoon Transit. They like to congratulate individual drivers on their good work (such as broadcasting accomplishment in the radios).**



- - Among the 86% of comments of concern, these are the categories that are most talked about within Bus Riders of Saskatoon. They categories are listed by order of importance (i.e. Planning is talked about the most within Bus Riders of Saskatoon, and within that category Reliability is the area discussed most often). They categories are defined as follows:
 - Planning – Reliability, Routes, Frequency, Future Planning
 - Communication/Leadership – Communication, City Leadership, Operators
 - Financial – Funding, Cost
 - Accessibility – Bus Shelters, Bus Conditions, Accessibility
 - Lockout – self-explanatory
 - Additional – Call to Action Suggestions, Environmental, Bus Riders of Saskatoon internal proceedings
- Examples that generated a lot of discussion and feedback within each category:
 - **Planning**
 - Reliability
 - Transit times are very long. Getting caught waiting downtown, especially since buses are late AND/OR early.
 - Bus delays at the downtown terminal. I.e. late buses waiting downtown.
 - Planning around snow. Snow is not a new thing for Saskatoon. Frustrated by the delays it causes in service.
 - *Response from Saskatoon Transit: Council has determined priority streets (1,2,3 – which are available online for viewing). Public Works clears the streets in this priority and the only full routes to follow these priority streets are the DART routes. Other routes may only be partially covered for snow clearing. Snow tires have been added to multiple buses this years and that has been found to be a success in terms of helping buses*

which may be delayed due to winter conditions. In addition, winter conditions that delay traffic also delay transit since they are stuck in the same gridlock.

- Planning
 - City **must** invest in transit system before increased ridership will occur. Frustration with City planning in terms of encouraging alternative forms of transportation. I.e. continues to charge high fees for poor service without dedicated bus and bike lanes.
- **Communication/Leadership**
 - Communication
 - Disconnect in receiving information. Example of one person boarding the #9 which was late. The bus ended up being an extra bus because the original one was caught behind a train. The extra bus was appreciated but the disconnect came when the driver and sign didn't reflect that this bus was an alternative and wouldn't follow the full route of the #9. Many people missed their stops (or never got picked up) because they didn't know the bus was meant to only go downtown.
 - *Response from Saskatoon Transit: This specific example was an operator's error. Hopefully many instances of late buses will be solved by the new GPS/real-time system. The system is on track currently and a BETA model is still set to be released at the end of January 2015.*
 - ITS System on the bus is a frustration as well. It does not always read correctly on the displays and seems to be a point of frustration for drivers. Is there a possibility of presenting more information on the displays more frequently (i.e. next bus will arrive within 5 minutes).
 - *Response from Saskatoon Transit: The driver's display can be muted. The ITS system is new but is based on older data that until recently was only used internally. The instances of random announcements are due to the system containing older information that needs to be cleaned. This is easily solvable if it is reported.*
 - *Response from Saskatoon Transit: Saskatoon Transit agreed that a more interactive display could help with communication for riders, especially in instances of full buses. As of now, the programming for these messages are done at the main office and determined by the ITS system. It could be possible to provide more options for messages.*
 - Leadership
 - Concern about communication between City departments in terms of transit (i.e. delivering correct route information- Route #1)
 - *Response from Saskatoon Transit: The instance of the long-term detour along Victoria Avenue with Route #1 not showing up in the literature was recorded. These are examples of pressure points in Saskatoon Transit that they are hoping to address more thoroughly in 2015.*
 - Operators – staff, drivers (2%)
 - Buses driving by passengers and not stopping. This happens even when buses aren't full.

- *Response from Saskatoon Transit: This should not be happening.*
 - **Financial**
 - Cost
 - Transit fair increase (Comments 40; Likes 49)
 - No fare Saturdays discussion (Comments 15; Likes 12)
 - *Response from Saskatoon Transit: No fare days are actually more possible than discounted fares. Fares are mandated by Council and actually involves a bylaw change.*
 - **It should be noted that Council has mandated Saskatoon Transit few years ago to provide them an annual increase in fares for transit. This year the Council has asked for more options.**

3. Discussion item from Saskatoon Transit

- Alysha asked that when Bus Riders of Saskatoon present to Committees that we provide a bit more consideration towards Saskatoon Transit. The reason that prompted this was the presentation given by Bus Riders of Saskatoon to the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation. Saskatoon Transit felt that we did not give enough consideration to the previous meetings we have had with them in regards to our presentation. The examples that were given were based on two topics:
 - Transit Advisory Committee
 - Market Analysis (A six month research project was done; elasticity study not done yet)
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon acknowledged that it was not our intention to upset Saskatoon Transit and tried to provide clarification on why we presented on those two topics. Clarification are as follows:
 - Transit Advisory Group – we felt like it was not addressed in during the committee report, and based on the meetings with Saskatoon Transit, we felt like having a Transit Advisory Group would be a great idea and it should not be left out of discussions. The group is something we would like to see formed.
 - Market Analysis – based on previous meetings that included Bus Riders of Saskatoon and Saskatoon Transit members, we were given the impression that a market analysis had been completed but that a price elasticity study had not been completed. The report submitted to the committee stated that a market analysis had NOT been completed and so we had to work on that assumption since that was what was presented to the committee. At the January 10, 2015 meeting for Bus Riders of Saskatoon, this was a topic of discussion but we all felt the price elasticity study was essential to being completed in addition to the market analysis.
- Saskatoon Transit provided acknowledgement to some success of Bus Riders of Saskatoon in having transit be a more frequent discussion point through City meetings.
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon mentioned that a strength of our group is to be able to be a point of communication and bridging between various departments as one of our previous concerns was a disconnect between various City departments. We feel that transit is a citywide issue and topic and encompasses many departments.
 - An example of disconnect would be that Community Services published the report to the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation without having Saskatoon Transit review it first. The error of not including the Market Analysis could have been alleviated.

4. Additional Items

- The report that Councillor Loewen put a motion forward for (see below) will fall to Saskatoon Transit to complete within 90 days of receiving the request (which has not arrived yet).
 - 1. The administration to report on a long term strategy for managing Transit fare increase.
 - 2. The administration to report back on necessary steps to get transit to industry standard in terms of maintenance staff, equipment and operation consistencies.
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon asked the reason for the 0% ridership increase prediction in the 2015 budget plan, it was answered from an accounting perspective, it was safer to not overestimate.
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon asked what kind of training is provided to the operators to ensure quality customer service. It was answered that Saskatoon Transit is adopting new training mechanisms (giving operators a passenger perspective of riding the bus) for the newly hired operators this week. Once successful it will be widely used afterwards. Due to the nature of its 24 hour operation, full staff meeting are not possible, but are using other techniques.

5. Adjournment