

City of Saskatoon – Saskatoon Transit and Bus Riders of Saskatoon Meeting
July 15, 2015

4:00pm - 5:00pm
301 24th Street West

City of Saskatoon: Jim McDonald (Director of Saskatoon Transit), Linus Bryksa,
Chelsea Lanning (Infrastructure Engineer –Long Range Planning)

Bus Riders of Saskatoon: Tracey, Robert, Sarina

AGENDA

1. Introductions

2. Questions and Discussions

- i. Question: Increased frequency on some routes: is it possible to use the user data to move to a higher frequency on some key routes to see if it has an effect on ridership? What's the volume threshold to decide to add buses or increase frequency? What's the City's strategy to increase the frequency on some routes as we transition to BRT?

Answer:

- Linking this to Growing Forward plan
- Saskatoon Transit plans to give Council a report (or information) to assist with the Growing Forward plan
- Working on the strategy of how to implement the ideas from Growing Forward
- Coverage versus frequency is an important discussion to have in Council
 - Saskatoon Transit is working on that component of education
 - First step is educating Council on the difference and need for coverage versus frequency
 - Then an analysis of what it would look like
 - Then a recommendation to Council
- How do you get increased frequency? Usually this would be more funding or could mean reducing coverage.
- Council should make the final decision on what the model looks like (ie what percentage of coverage versus what percentage of frequency)
 - Council would then hold Saskatoon Transit accountable to implement this
- BRS Question: Some buses seem to have higher frequency. Do some buses run at a higher frequency? (i.e. Route 13).
 - Answer: This could be because some buses are catching up on schedules (or could be additional busses).

- This question came from Bus Riders in terms of using this data to determine the high frequency routes
- Growing Forward looked at where ridership is now and where it is going to go
 - That is where the east/west and north/south and other routes came from
 - Came from ridership data
 - Growing Forward implementation priorities and strategy phase will be public in the fall 2015
- What are the short term/long term timelines?
 - The frequency discussion might make the 2016 budget discussions
 - New garage opens in 2017. Jim would prefer to operate as much as possible on the new model in this new space.
 - There will be many changes internally for transit in this new model but it should be transparent for users. The change will not be as dynamic (which is a good thing).

ii. Question: Lessons from Edmonton: From Jim's experience, what other interesting or different things worked in Edmonton that might work here?

Answer:

- Intent to have a new leaf for Customer Service. That is the main focus of Jim's right now within Saskatoon Transit.
- The idea is that anyone coming for service is a customer regardless of whether that person is internal to the organization or external. It is critical to remember that everyone to some extent is a customer and needs to be treated with all the respect and courtesies that entails. The worst-case customer is the individual waiting at a bus stop unsheltered when it is -40C.
- BRS Suggestion: An expectation of riders is to be able to ask bus drivers which bus gets me where. Many people are not finding that information available here.
 - BRS provided an example of a Saskatoon Transit customer who relies on operators needing this expertise as this persons own comprehension and utilization of existing information (leaflets, maps and displays) is not sufficient
 - Answer: That should be the basic expectation for people getting on the bus. Saskatoon Transit understands this should be something operators do. An internal shift has to be made for those who do not operate under this assumption (it may be a slow change).
 - Looking at training dollars and time to address this.

- **Come back to this agenda item in 6 months time and see what initiatives have been put in place at that time**

iii. Question: University Bridge closure: What has Saskatoon Transit learned from the University Bridge closure? Are there any lessons there about prioritizing transit or exclusive use of some lanes/streets?

Answer:

- Not as bottle necked as anticipated. Has not necessarily percolated to increased ridership.
- The hot traffic spots seem to be existing zones of congestion (or congestion is minimal)
- Positives for Saskatoon Transit and the City of Saskatoon:
 - Learned a lot about Communications (drivers in general, active transportation user, communications department)
 - Saskatoon Transit is hoping that this will help in the discussion about dedicated lanes since things have gone well operationally for road users.
 - Amount of collaboration between departments has been a positive outcome of the closure
 - Helping to have other departments understand Saskatoon Transit
- They have not tracked on time performance
 - The complaints have decreased of on time performance (or late buses)
- Ridership has remained the same as previous summer levels

iv. Question: Productivity and future meetings: How does Saskatoon Transit think we can ensure that these meetings result in real change and that we don't just rehash the same stuff and not see movement? We would like these meetings to be worthwhile for both groups.

Answer:

- This may be a discussion on frequency of meetings
- When Saskatoon Transit is not doing change related activities, it may seem slow
- When Saskatoon Transit starts dealing with some of the projects Chelsea is working on, and bring discussions to Council, and more Growing Forward discussion, etc... a change in frequency of meetings may be useful
 - At that point Saskatoon Transit may look to increase these types of meetings with BRS and a few more members. It could also mean bringing questions to our monthly meetings on behalf of Saskatoon Transit for clarification. Or Transit on Tap.

- The frequency of these monthly meetings can be adjusted to accommodate circumstances where we may need more time.
 - The decision on frequency of these meetings is being left to BRS.
 - This topic should come up once or twice a year to revisit how these meetings are going
 - There is potential for themed meetings based on activities coming up.
 - We could also have targeted meetings with BRS certain individuals
- v. Question: Service to new children's museum – there is currently no service to the new children's museum/old Mendel across from the revamped Kinsmen Playground.

Answer:

- Saskatoon Transit has met with Kinsmen people and Children's Museum people last month. They told them about Bus Riders Group
 - Saskatoon Transit asked what had been considered for pedestrian circulation for the site and to the site. Keeping these lines of communication open.
 - They talked about projected numbers for people and expected patrons
 - Saskatoon Transit told them about Saskatoon Transit realities
 - They currently have two stops with 450m buffer (on 25th and in City Park)
 - Is there potential for improving pedestrian access in case Saskatoon Transit cannot get front of door service
 - Spadina is a difficult road to service. The road is not wide. Complaints from people living along Spadina as well. They would not know how to deal with those differences.
 - Always opportunities for pedestrian circulation improvements even if the Kinsmen Park Master Plan is already completed
 - Perhaps widening a sidewalk, or a through path
 - The lines of communications continue to remain open between Saskatoon Transit and Kinsmen and the Children's Discovery Museum.
3. Reply to Transit on Tap from Bus Riders of Saskatoon
- Overall a positive response from Bus Riders of Saskatoon
 - Lots of interest in partnering on something like this
 - Good promotion for both
 - **This would be an educational/informational opportunity vice a public consultation**

- i.e. this is how the routes are built versus why can't the route go into this street for two blocks?
- These complaints may be the starting point of getting this information out. People will want to voice those individual opinions. How to transition this dialogue to provide education.
- The purpose of Transit on Tap would be education/information not consultation
 - Currently this is still only an idea being thrown around.
 - It is hoped that by this engagement Transit will have the chance to better inform the public so we get a more informed result during consultations. People will also understand where Saskatoon Transit is coming from.
 - The more people engaged the better.
 - Providing the education helps people understand the process better
 - BRS suggestion: Possibility to park a bus outside a mall and provide free coffee
 - Answer: This would be modeled off of Portland's model as a starting point (which we know works)
 - Upon establishing the City can then potentially specialize the consultation based on topics list (i.e. talking about transit terminals we could actually have a bus at terminals)

4. Transit Advisory Committee Discussion. Bus Riders of Saskatoon has discussed this committee formation and would like to share some of our discussion points.

- Saskatoon Transit is still searching for their recommendations
- BRS has a suggested list of potential members
 - **BRS can provide this suggestion upon request**
- This advisory group should be incorporated in the Growing Forward
 - Last consultation comes out fall of 2015
 - Final report hopefully for Spring of 2016
- **Chelsea to clarify the formation of the Transit Advisory Committee and what happens next**

5. Follow up from previous meetings

- Tabled for September meeting

6. Adjournment

Next meeting: Wednesday, September 16, 2015 4:00pm - 5:00pm