

Minutes for BRS-Transit meeting on Monday, 22 January 2018 @ 3:30-5:00PM

Location: Committee Room B at City Hall

Present: Cory Shrigley, Allison Gray from Transit; Peter Gallén, Jim Wood (and ‘regrets’) from BRS.

FOLLOW-UPS

1) Fare Review:

- a. The already completed Fare Review has not yet been submitted to Council (originally anticipated for November 2017). Neither has the request to purchase sorely needed new Fare Boxes.
- b. BRS reiterated that Transit Fares, which tie into Fare Collection Systems, are a major topic that we would like to discuss throughout the year.

2) BRS’s Safety Report:

- a. Last spring BRS submitted to Transit a report called “Safety Initiative: Report of Outcomes of Community Engagement and Policy” that was prepared by Align Consulting Cooperative Ltd. It may be noted that the report has not yet been officially released.
- b. The original intent was to have Transit review the report and provide feed-back, before further action was pursued. Because key people have changed within both Transit and BRS, it was suggested that those interested in furthering the goals of the report should first get a chance to read the report before any decisions are made.
- c. Transit did, however, express an interest in pursuing a reasonable number of recommendations in the report and asked BRS to prepare a short-list of their priorities.

- 3) Transit's Lost & Found Procedures were briefly discussed: some tweaking of the text on Transit's website may still be needed, and BRS related a good experience they had had with the service.

NEW ITEMS

- 1) Kudos with regard to a past complaint: BRS congratulated Transit on fixing up the transit stop at Westgate Plaza for Route # 5 at the corner of 22nd Street and Witney Avenue.
- 2) BRS indicated that Route #6 is confusing even to experienced riders: Buses travel in both directions on the circular route. According to the paper-schedule, both circuits begin and end at Market Mall, although the naming of the circuits seem to suggest that they originate at the University. The counter-clockwise route is called '6 Broadway' but it runs Market Mall -> University-Place Riel -> City Centre -> Five Corners (riders have to know this is on Broadway) -> Market Mall, while the clockwise route is called '6 Market Mall via Preston' but it runs Market Mall -> Five Corners (on Broadway) -> City Centre -> University-Place Riel -> Market Mall. It is difficult for riders to determine which of the two circuits to take and which bus stops to use in order to get to the desired destination (in a reasonable time). A new route naming scheme that makes sense for boarders at Market Mall, Downtown, the University and elsewhere may be needed, so that riders can be certain that they are headed in the right direction.
- 3) Foldable bus-seats: BRS raised the issue that folding seats and seatbelts (to accommodate strollers and wheel chairs) in the buses often do not work or work poorly. BRS suggested that cleaning staff might be best suited to check them every night and bring up any concerns for immediate repairs. Transit appreciated our concern and promised to take appropriate action.
- 4) BRS wondered if there is a bus shortage: Transit acknowledged that they were indeed short of buses until Christmas but remedies are in place, because there will shortly be a public announcement stating that 15 new buses have recently been taken into service and another 8 buses will be delivered later this year. Both Transit and BRS agreed that these additions to the fleet are most welcome.

5) Existing Conditions Report:

- a. Through Mike Khouri, BRS has requested a copy of the recently completed 'Existing Conditions Report' prepared by HDR Corporation. Transit informed us that it cannot be distributed until formally presented to Council.
- b. BRS was pleased to hear, however, that City Administration might be willing to divulge specific, limited data from the report, if needed. BRS agreed that such data would be quite sufficient at the moment, although we still remain interested in the full report at a later date. For example, it was suggested that data concerning transit-pedestrian collisions might be needed from the report if Transit and BRS decide to delve more deeply into the 'Safety Report' discussed above in follow-up item 2.

6) Upcoming Transit plans:

- a. Transit's highest priority is to ensure that Bus Rapid Transit and the new Conventional Network get implemented as planned. BRS concurred with this view. It was noted, however, that the construction and implementation will still take several years.
- b. Transit is, therefore, working on plans to implement its third Frequent Transit Corridor (FTC) this summer, while continuing to operate the 8th Street and 22nd Street FTCs as before. The intent is to reconfigure several routes in the NE-suburbs and then pool them into a new FTC-route that runs from Preston Crossing via University to the Downtown Terminal. The intent is also to retain an additional route through Sutherland via College Drive to the University. The details are still being worked out and will be discussed with BRS well before the new routes go live in July 2018.
- c. Regarding plans for 2019, Transit's desire is to have as many current Access Transit users as possible be able to take Regular Transit instead for at least some of their trips. This should be possible by that time, because the entire fleet will by then have been converted to low-floor buses and most bus stops will be accessible.

7) 'Jingle Bell Express' pilot project:

- a. Transit was quite pleased with the ridership on this small-scale pilot project.
- b. Surveys indicated that both riders and non-riders alike were very pleased with the initiative in general and wanted it to continue next Christmas.
- c. One limitation that was brought up was the rather short service on week-days (i.e., evenings only). The reason was simply that Transit wanted to avoid the afternoon rush-hour when most of its buses and drivers were better used running regular routes.
- d. BRS indicated that the Malls being served by Jingle Bell Express did not seem to promote or provide even the most basic information about the service.
- e. BRS wondered why Transit would choose to promote shopping at these particular private Malls. Transit responded that there has been interest expressed by the public in such a circular route. Besides, Transit's own interest lies in experimenting with direct routes between its peripheral Transit Terminals, which are located at these Malls.
- f. Transit hopes to continue the service again next Christmas but intends to make some modifications to schedules while incorporating Downtown in the route as well.

8) 'Ding-in-the-New-Year' transit service and year-round Safe Bus Program:

- a. BRS was pleased to see this very worthy service on New Years Eve continued yet again. 'Ding-in-the-New-Year' provides extended transit service late into the night on all regular routes and the ride is free. In addition, on this particular night, riders need not be at an official stop, but can flag down the buses anywhere along the route to catch a ride.
- b. BRS suggested that the design and availability of the online/paper-schedules for the extended night service could perhaps be improved. The schedules seemed particularly cumbersome for those traveling 'inbound' (towards the city centre). Riders would also appreciate better availability of these special schedules ahead of the event.
- c. Transit noted that all the extended services were posted into TransitApp several days before New Years Eve and were thus available well in advance. Transit also noted that TransitApp has the advantage of indicating when the next bus will actually be arriving.

9) Year-round Safe Bus program:

- a. Transit reminded us of the year-round Safe Bus program, in which any citizen “that needs immediate shelter or needs to contact emergency services” can go to a parked bus or flag down a bus anywhere along the route. All drivers have a direct line to emergency services. See: <https://transit.saskatoon.ca/riders-guide/safety-security/safe-bus>

10) Traditional Schedules:

- a. Our look at the special schedules for the extended New Years Eve service sparked yet another discussion about the provision of user-friendly schedules in general.
- b. BRS and Transit noted that traditional paper-based schedules and their handy online versions (downloadable PDF-schedules) continue to be required for quite some time, although it was recognized that the definitive trend and continuously rising use is for electronic, app-based trip planners, such as TransitApp and Google Transit.
- c. Since Transit regularly and predictably makes major schedule changes every summer (July 1) plus some additional adjustments a few times thereafter as the need arises, BRS noted that there is an almost constant need to have both current and pending schedules available concurrently.
- d. It was noted that this is accomplished quite easily in the apps, because all schedules in them are always date-specific. It is also easy for Transit to post timely info/alerts in the same apps advising riders about any upcoming changes.
- e. Different versions of paper-based schedules are more difficult to manage and costly to produce. They are typically distinguished by colour and the effective date is always printed on them. The use of a consistent, predictable colour sequence that can be learned by the ridership might be helpful in distinguishing the latest online/paper-schedule from obsolete versions.
- f. Although wary of the risk for confusion, Transit expressed a willingness to look for potential ways of posting current and pending traditional schedules concurrently online. Transit would also investigate ways to highlight/distinguish recently changed schedules in the long list of posted routes.

11) Road-work Detours:

- a. In the past, BRS and Transit have discussed various ways to inform and alert riders of temporary changes to regular bus routes due to roadwork. In this regard it has been noted i) that riders need to know in advance about any changes to routes and bus stops in order not to miss the bus, and ii) that it is difficult to explain the locations of temporarily relocated bus stops in a way that (unfamiliar) riders can figure out.
- b. Since bus detours and delays are quite disruptive to both the ridership and the operators, BRS suggested that Transit might want to take a close look at ways to eliminate most bus detours and delays due to roadwork.
- c. In this regard, BRS provided recent examples where in their opinion i) buses had been unnecessarily detoured (water break this month at corner of 3rd Avenue & 23rd Street) and ii) where numerous buses on the frequent-transit-corridor were unduly delayed by having motor vehicles and buses squeeze into a single lane (during water/sewer-main work last year along 8th Street). In both cases, detouring the motor vehicles – while reserving the restricted street space only for the buses and emergency vehicles (and perhaps limited local traffic) – would have easily solved the problem.
- d. In essence, BRT suggests that Transit vehicles, Transit riders and emergency vehicles should receive preferential treatment during roadwork, while other motorists, who are less inconvenienced by detours, would be subject to restrictions and detours. Besides causing less unnecessary grief, this ‘VIP-treatment’ of transit would raise its status in a small but highly visible manner and thus perhaps contribute to a higher ridership.
- e. In order to implement this scheme for each specific work site, BRS suggested ongoing, very close cooperation between City personnel in several departments (e.g., Transit operational planners and supervisors, Public Works planners and field supervisors, and the Transportation Department).

12) Suggestions from Transit to BRS

- a. Transit informed us that they had recently met with a visually impaired person regarding transit concerns his group was having. Cory had suggested to him that their concerns might best be channeled through Bus Riders of Saskatoon. This network will bring a new perspective to BRS and it was felt that BRS shares in the advocacy work of the visually impaired community. Cory suggested that this might become a sub-committee of BRS in the future. BRS agreed that we would like to hear them out and that the best way might be to invite them to our General Meeting.
- b. Transit noted that questions requesting some clarification are often posted on the BRS Facebook page and to reach out to Transit for assistance when these questions occur. Through a collaborative approach Transit can provide BRS with factual information and clarification of many of these points. Transit encouraged the BRS executive to bring these questions to Transit first so that a timely response may be offered to the public.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 26 February 2018, 3:30 – 4:30 pm (date, time and place to be confirmed later)