

Minutes for BRS-Transit meeting

Monday, 28 May 2018 @ 3:30-5:00PM

Location: Committee Room 1114 at the COC

Present: Cory Shrigley, Allison Gray, Jim McDonald from Transit; Peter Gallén, Curtis McCoshen from BRS.

FOLLOW-UPS

- 1) Update on Provincial effort to redirect Federal PTIF-funding away from transit-related projects:
 - a. The City and Transit are participating in efforts undertaken by the Province of Alberta to ensure continued PTIF-funding of transit projects.
- 2) Update on the new Frequent Transit Corridor to the north-east going live on July 1:
 - a. Bus stops on both sides of Attridge Drive and a controlled crossing will be installed at Rever Road in time for the route changes.
- 3) Update on disappointing detours:
 - a. BRS provided Transit with yet another example of disappointing detour arrangements, this time due to the construction of a new sewer/water connection at Centre Mall.
 - b. Transit informed us that they are just starting to be consulted on detour arrangements that affect transit. Depending on the project, current responsibilities for detours lie with the Transportation Department, other city departments or even private contractors. Transit is pleased with the progress and incremental improvements that are taking place through a closer working relationship with the other city departments.

NEW ITEMS

- 1) Distribution of meeting minutes:
 - a. BRS wondered if the minutes of our monthly meetings, as currently distributed, reach all concerned individuals within Transit.
 - b. Transit replied that the minutes do get distributed appropriately within Transit depending on the topics and that BRS does not need to distribute them further.

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- 2) Information procedures regarding the recurring, annual route/schedule changes each July:
 - a. BRS expressed concern regarding the – in our view – unsatisfactory information provided each year with regard to the impending, annually occurring route and schedule changes each July. Transit replied that they have also been wrestling with this issue.
 - b. This year an open house was held earlier than normal, on April 17, so changes to the plan could still be made before the implementation of the City's third Frequent Transit Corridor – to the north-east.
 - c. All other route/schedule changes were considered 'minor' and did not – in Transit's view – warrant an open house. Instead Transit posted all impending changes early onto their website; the intent being that the riders can familiarize themselves with the changes from the posted materials. BRS observed that a significant portion of the ridership may not be sufficiently 'functionally literate' to extract the information from these posted materials without assistance and that more hands-on guidance might be required. Transit replied that they do try to meet individual needs, but reminded us that it is important to recognize that their service is essentially a mass transit system.
 - d. Having said that, Transit noted that information improvements are always a priority of theirs. Thus they have come up with a new, creative, flexible, low-cost solution by converting a bus removed from active service into a mobile display & info centre . The intent is then to park this bus in various parts of the city, particularly in areas where route/schedule changes are occurring, to provide hands-on info to the ridership. BRS was pleased with this ingenious project and hoped that it will get adequately staffed plus supported through easily accessible information regarding the constantly changing location of this highly mobile info-point.
- 3) Operator training:
 - a. A complaint to Transit that was conveyed to us by a BRS-member regarding the repeated refusal of a particular operator to 'kneel' the bus spurred the following responses from Transit:

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- i. Transit noted that Operators are often in a no-win situation, because some riders get angry at them for not kneeling the bus soon enough, while others criticize them for kneeling when it was not wanted.
- ii. To BRS's question on operator training, Transit responded that all operators have been adequately trained regarding what is required of them and how to behave and do their job:
 1. All new operators are enrolled in a 5-week initial training program composed of 17 modules.
 2. Subsequent refresher training, called InterAction Training, is also required. To date 80 out of ~250 operators have completed this refresher training.
 3. It may also be noted that one of the 17 modules in the initial 5-week training program consists of Empathy training making operators aware of how difficult it is for people with disabilities (e.g., blind or mobility impaired) to navigate their environment and use transit.
- iii. Besides operator training, BRS noted that the attitude of both Operators and Riders forms a critical part in a productive and respectful interaction.

HEADS-UP FROM BRS

- 1) Nothing to report

NOTICES/CONCERNS/SUGGESTIONS FROM TRANSIT

- 1) Transit informed BRS about the new, circular route #808 pilot, which will begin operation on June 1 and runs until early fall; it provides improved service to City Hospital, Royal University Hospital, the Cancer Clinic, the Field House and a few other locations.
- 2) Schedules for Transit's ongoing travel training initiative for riders, Experience Transit, have now been finalized for this summer.

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TRANSIT FARES & FARE COLLECTION SYSTEMS DISCUSSION

- 1) Transit informed us that they are contemplating a comprehensive Fare Review to be completed by the time the Bus Rapid Transit system goes live in a few years. Such a review would require hiring a consultant, which in turn requires a request to Council for approval and funding for the project.
- 2) Next topic: BRS expressed an on-going interest in documenting Saskatoon Transit's current fare structure in detail. In that regard, BRS is interested in taking a close look at each fare category separately, perhaps starting with the "Low-Income" and "Discounted" Fares. Lack of time prevented us from delving any further into this topic at this meeting.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 25 June 2018, 3:30 – 4:30 pm at City Hall (to be confirmed closer to the date)