

**Minutes for BRS-Transit meeting
Monday, 29 July 2019 @ 3:30-5:00pm**

Location: Committee Room B at City Hall

Present: Allison Gray from Transit; Tracey Loewen from Access Transit; Peter Gallén, Robert Clipperton, Curtis McCoshen, Jim Wood, Bob Eaton from BRS.

MEETING ADMINISTRATION

- 1) Curtis was Chair of this meeting, while Peter will provide the minutes.

USSU ITEMS

- 2) USSU was not present at this meeting

TRANSIT ITEMS

- 3) Free Transit to festivals (see Transit's website for details):
 - a. Free transit (restrictions apply) will be provided to Saskatoon Fringe Festival (August 1-10), Saskatoon Exhibition (August 6-11) and Folkfest (August 15-17)
- 2) Transit-app improvements:
 - a. Riders are now able to plan their trip to all public events at Sask Tel Centre on route #333 using the app called 'Transit'.
 - b. In August the app called 'Transit' will include co-planning tools for multi-modal trips using transit, taxi and ride-share (Uber-Riide).

BRS ITEMS

The main agenda item was a discussion about Access Transit with Manager Tracey Loewen.

- 4) Fleet
 - a. 28 high-floor, ramp-equipped buses in the current fleet; buses are sourced and purchased through, Crestline, a local company who sources the manufacturer (the most recent buses were manufactured by Startrans).
 - b. Cost of latest high-floor buses about \$121,000, with low-floor buses expected to cost 160,000 to 170,000 dollars.
 - c. Next purchase will be for low-floor buses, although current difficulty is time to supply (Note: the 30-foot Vicinity buses are deemed too big for this purpose)
 - d. Current buses are designed to accommodate 6 wheel-chairs, but in practice they accommodate 4 typical mobility devices.
- 5) Website:
 - a. Access Transit has a webpage that is currently buried deep within Saskatoon Transit's general website (<https://transit.saskatoon.ca/rider-guide/accessibility/access-transit>).

- b. Saskatoon Transit is in the process of reorganizing their website, which will make Access Transit more visible.

6) Service

- a. Access Transit provides a safe and comfortable trip from accessible door to accessible door while certain restrictions apply. For example one particular entrance is utilized at each shopping mall (as described in detail on the website).
- b. 22 buses are in service during peak
- c. 5 booking/scheduling agents during peak; down to 1 in the evening
- d. Driver, Companion & Attendant:
 - i. The Driver, who is not medically trained, will:
 - 1. Assist you from the door to the vehicle
 - 2. Help you board and exit the vehicle
 - 3. Secure you and your mobility device
 - 4. Assist you from the vehicle to the door at your destination.
 - ii. Access Transit allows clients to bring with them a personal Companion, who can assist with needs beyond the bus trip; the Companion must pay regular fare.
 - iii. Clients that require dedicated attention throughout the trip must always be accompanied by an Attendant, who rides free; the Drivers provide their normal assistance, such as boarding and securement, for these clients as well.
- e. Service hours:
 - i. Mon 6:15am to 11:15pm
 - ii. Tue-Fri 6:15am to 11:45pm
 - iii. Sat 8:15am to 11:45pm
 - iv. Sun & holidays 8:15am to 11:00pm

7) Data analytics:

- a. With the help of Transit's IT staff and Access Transit's own call-centre software (Trapeze) data analytics is used extensively to analyze and improve the service:
 - i. Savings in Green Time, which is the time between trips when no trips are booked, can be achieved through improved trip planning.
 - ii. No-shows (including cancels at the door) and late cancellations (less than two hours before scheduled trip) are excessive. Targeted education towards abusers of the on-demand-system are being introduced to reduce no-shows.
 - iii. The expected benefits of these initiatives are additional trips that can be accommodated with current resources.

8) Eligibility

- a. Access Transit uses a two-step process to evaluate and accept eligible clients:
 - i. As shown on the website, potential clients are required to contact Access Transit by phone or email. Instructions and a downloadable application form will be introduced on the new website.
 - ii. The process consists of the Client filling out the official application form, and taking the second form to the Client's health care provider to fill out.

- b. BRS noted that by requiring a Client's health care providers (e.g., family physician) to assess the potential Client on behalf of Access Transit, they are placed in an obvious and uncomfortable situation of conflict-of-interest. Based on personal knowledge BRS also noted that this person may not be the most qualified to make such an evaluation. Instead it was suggested that a Physical or Occupational Therapist or other competent staff contracted by Transit might be better suited to conduct a more nuanced evaluation of the Client's capabilities and needs, which might for example be different in summer and winter conditions.

9) Family of Services

- a. Family of Services is a new concept for utilizing all of Saskatoon Transit's services for different portions of a rider's trip:
 - i. One example might be that a person currently using Access Transit for the entire trip might instead use Access Transit for the trips between home and the nearest BRT station while using Conventional Transit from there.

10) Driver Training:

- a. BRS noted that Driver training for an Access Transit driver is much cheaper than the training for an operator at conventional Transit and wondered why this is so?
- b. The driver training for an Access driver is approximately one week, where it is six weeks for a conventional transit operator. All Access drivers receive annual training on proper securement on wheelchairs and other mobility devices as these devices keep evolving.

11) Complaints

- a. Access Transit has a much higher rate of complaints than conventional transit. The reason for this is that there appears to be a very small group of active complainants. It should be noted that many clients and drivers of Access Transit have a very close and personal relationship where even such 'apparently trivial' occurrences as "the Driver didn't say 'Bye' when I alighted" may matter deeply.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 26 August 2019, 3:30 – 4:30 pm at City Hall (confirmed)