

**Minutes for BRS-USSU-Transit meeting**  
**Monday, 16 December 2019 @ 3:30-5:00pm**

Location: Committee Room B at City Hall

Present: Cory Shrigley, Allison Gray, Deepak Santhanakrishnan from Transit; Sarah Foley from USSU; Peter Gallén, Robert Clipperton, Curtis McCoshen, James Wood, Bob Eaton from BRS.

**MEETING ADMINISTRATION**

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

**USSU ITEMS**

- 2) USSU was represented by Sarah Foley, who is a Member of Student Council for the College of Arts and Science and a member of the newly formed ad-hoc USSU Transit Committee.

**TRANSIT ITEMS**

- 3) Update on current Transit initiatives:
  - a. Jingle Bell Express has received good media coverage this year.
  - b. 'Merry Christmas'-messages on buses have been well received.
  - c. Pilot Route (see November minutes)
    - i. The pilot route along the 'cultural corridor' will be named "Route 1010 Spadina", because it will run from 10AM to 10PM along Spadina Crescent.
    - ii. The reception has been enthusiastic among stakeholders engaged so far.
    - iii. Engagement with the festival directors has been scheduled for 8 January 2020.

**BRS ITEMS**

At the previous request of BRS, the main agenda item for this meeting was an update on the Fare Review that has been undertaken by Transit. The participants were pleased to discuss issues related to transit fares with Deepak Santhanakrishnan, who has been retained by Transit to conduct research and develop models and analytical tools to predict the interaction between transit fares, transit ridership and transit revenue that will be utilized by Transit management for more informed decision making on strategy and transit fares.

- 4) First, Deepak introduced himself:
  - a. Deepak is an engineer and economist by profession.
  - b. He is currently a Masters in Public Policy (MPP) student in the Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy (JSGS) at the University of Saskatchewan, where his thesis focuses on the food security and social safety net programs in India and Indonesia. In particular, his thesis analyzes to what extent the introduction of digitization in the food based safety net programs serves the objective expected of targeted population. The analysis proposes an alternative governance structure and system to deal with issues in the food based safety net program.

- c. As part of his studies with JSGS, Deepak has pursued an 8 month JSGS internship with the City of Saskatoon. Saskatoon Transit is Deepak's mentor throughout the internship, where he will be focusing on the development of a Fare Review Strategy. The internship commenced in September 2019.
- 5) Deepak then presented a slide deck outlining his work for Transit:
  - a. September was spent on literature review and documenting the experiences of select transit agencies.
  - b. October was spent identifying long-term fare strategies (5- and 10-years) and their key levers (trends in customer behaviour; impact of fares on both transit ridership and transit revenue).
  - c. November was spent developing the analysis tool for Transit's senior management.
  - d. December is spent working on the analysis tool and elasticity (i.e., relationship between fares, ridership and revenue) to predict future trends.
  - e. January will be spent on further refinement of the tool; internal feedback; start report.
  - f. February will be spent writing the report on long-term fare structures and strategy.
  - g. March will be spent incorporating the feedback from Transit's senior management team and finalizing the report.
  - h. Contract ends at end of March 2020, so by April the report, slide deck and analysis tool will be submitted to the Transit Director.
  - i. Citizen engagement on the Fare Review will not commence until after the municipal election (which takes place in October 2020).
  - j. The new City Council is then expected to receive Deepak's report together with the citizen engagement report and a proposal for a fare strategy and new fare structure sometime after the municipal election. The intent is to present Council with three options for new fares that will be applied to the time before and after the BRT goes live as well as the introduction of a new mobile ticketing system.
- 6) The ensuing discussion yielded the following observations:
  - a. USSU's main interest in the upcoming Fare Review was the fate of the current U-Pass.
  - b. BRS wondered if carbon mitigation will be considered when setting new transit fares (triple-bottom-line accounting).
  - c. Deepak had found some interesting ideas from other transit agencies, for example 'fare capping' in Dallas, Texas and Portland, Oregon.
  - d. BRS brought up the issue of 'free transit':
    - i. It was recognized that there is no such thing as free transit; if rides become free, then funds to finance transit services must be provided from some other source.
    - ii. BRS suggested that free transit in Saskatoon, if introduced, may in practice mean 'free sometimes, somewhere, to some riders'.
    - iii. Transit indicated that some surprising consequences may arise from free transit.
    - iv. In conclusion, BRS insisted that 'affordable' transit needs to be a key goal.

**NEXT MEETING:** Monday, 20 January 2020, 2:30 – 3:30 pm at City Hall (confirmed; note earlier start).