

**Minutes for BRS-USSU-Transit online meeting  
Monday, 25 May 2020 @ 2:30-3:30pm**

Location: Online meeting using Jitsi

Participants: Cory Shrigley, Allison Gray, Jim McDonald from Saskatoon Transit; Jamie Bell from USSU; Peter Gallén, Robert Clipperton, Melanie Hoffman, Doug Rudolph from BRS.

**MEETING ADMINISTRATION**

Cory was appointed Chair/Moderator of this meeting, while Peter will provide the minutes.

**REGULAR ITEMS**

**1) Updates on past topics**

- a. Electric Bus Pilot Project:
  - i. The contract has been signed and one electric bus plus charging station are expected to arrive in Saskatoon any day now.
  - ii. About a month after arriving the bus should be on the road for a one-year test.
- b. On-demand Micro-Transit Pilot Project:
  - i. As part of the Innovation Saskatchewan Initiative, the private software company, Pantonium, has been contracted by Saskatoon Transit and Regina Transit to provide the booking capabilities for the on-demand micro-transit pilot project, while the transit properties would provide the buses.
  - ii. Day-time service would be piloted in Saskatoon, while evening-service would be provided in Regina.
  - iii. 'Break-in' testing is expected to start in June with Operators being trained on the tablet-computers and select customers on the app; full implementation of the pilot would commence in September 2020.
- c. Bus Stop Improvements:
  - i. Clinkskill Manor: no progress yet, so BRS agreed to contact SaskHousing.
  - ii. Broadway/8<sup>th</sup> Street: no improvements planned for this year.
  - iii. Attridge/Rever: No temporary solutions are expected to improve access from Forest Grove. Any potential improvements are in the hands of the City's Transportation Department, which has jurisdiction on access to Attridge Drive.
  - iv. Other bus stops: Improvements to most regular bus stops are on hold this year until the Bus Stop Audit and the Time-Point Audit have been concluded, which are expected to result in redundant bus stops being removed.

**2) Other work:**

- a. Market Mall Terminal will see an upgrade this summer.
- b. Improvements at Five Corners on Broadway Avenue had been contemplated, but were shelved for this year.

## **SPECIAL ITEM**

At the request of BRS, the main agenda item for this meeting was transit service adjustments in response to the economy starting to open up while the Covid pandemic is ongoing. Transit Director, Jim McDonald, joined the meeting for this item.

### **3) Transit Director**

Based on specific items in the agenda and questions from the attendees, the Transit Director provided insight into the challenges facing Transit from the Covid pandemic:

- a. First it was noted that an extensive report outlining immediate changes to transit services was going to Council for approval in two days (on May 27); the participants were advised to consult that documentation for details.
- b. Capacity issues:
  - i. A regular bus in pre-Covid service could carry 40 seated passengers plus another 20 standing, while physical distancing now restricted the full load to about 10 passengers.
  - ii. With ridership again on the rise, the severely limited capacity has resulted in passengers being left at bus stops during peak demand.
  - iii. With physical distancing measures still in place, Saskatoon Transit's fixed route capacity is restricted by the availability of buses and operators.
- c. Changes in passenger load patterns:
  - i. In the past, maximum passenger loads were experienced in the morning and afternoon 'rush-hours'.
  - ii. Now the peaks occur at totally different times of the day; typically consisting of shoppers around 11AM or in the mid-afternoon. With the economy opening up, further flux in these unpredictable load patterns is expected.
  - iii. Since the Spareboard<sup>1</sup> allows for a certain number of Operators to adjust to schedule changes, additional buses can at times be inserted in these new time slots.
- d. Financial woes:
  - i. With transit fares suspended since March 19 and severely reduced passenger loads continuing, Transit has lost and keeps losing a significant portion of its revenue while operating costs remain high.
- e. USSU's concerns about the UPass:
  - i. Transit noted that they have not received UPass payments from USSU for the Spring Term.
  - ii. Transit is reviewing UPasses and is in discussions with USSU regarding the Fall Term.

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<sup>1</sup> A standard feature of the regularly occurring signing-up procedure for Operators in the union contract

#### 4) Special meeting of Council on 27 May 2020

The full report from Transit, in which Option 1 was approved unanimously by Council, plus video of the ensuing debate is available under item 4.1 of the Council meeting minutes at:

<https://pub-saskatoon.escribemeetings.com/Meeting.aspx?id=dfbce038-a54c-41c1-af0c-4bdc5d2ad35b&Agenda=PostMinutes&lang=English>

The following highlights and actions, which will take effect on June 8 in sync with Phase 3 of the Provincial Government's Re-Open Saskatchewan Plan, have been extracted from the report:

- a. Extensive background information, including Saskatoon Transit's current approach and actions taken by other Canadian transit properties, is provided in the report to Council.
- b. Front-door boarding of buses will resume on June 8.
  - a. In order to protect Operators, vinyl panels will be installed in every bus.
  - b. Provincially mandated physical distancing rules will remain in effect.
  - c. The 'full-bus' capacity is expected to increase by a few passengers as a result of opening up the front of the bus.
- c. Regular transit Fares will resume on June 8 (after a June 15 implementation date was narrowly defeated by Council).
  - i. Transit's private ticket vendors will be able to sell and re-load bus passes (probably on May 29).
  - ii. Transit's Customer Service Centre at the Downtown Terminal will reopen as soon as protective plexiglas barriers have been installed (hopefully by June 1, but no later than June 6).
  - iii. The process for refunding unused subscription time on existing transit passes will be done at the Customer Service Centre.
- d. Masks and other face covers:
  - i. "Saskatoon Transit will continue to recommend that riders and staff wear masks for the protection of themselves and those around them."
  - ii. "Saskatoon Transit will continue to monitor the mask situation with other agencies and in concert with the Public Health Authorities to determine the best course of action."
- e. Messaging in the communication plan:
  - i. "We want to safely accommodate all riders wishing to use public transit.
  - ii. Avoid public transit during peak hours and continue to work from home when possible.
  - iii. Encourage staggered work hours.
  - iv. Physical distancing remains critical.
  - v. Health and safety of our staff and the public is a key priority.
  - vi. Recommend the use of masks on public transit.
  - vii. While we actively support providing essential transportation while restrictions are slowly eased, we will not be enforcing physical distancing – it's up to all of

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us to make sure we take responsibility for keeping ourselves and each other safe.”

**NEXT MEETING:** Monday, 15 June 2020, 2:30 – 3:30 pm by Zoom or Team.