

**Minutes for BRS-USSU-Transit online meeting
Monday, 11 January 2021 @ 2:00-3:15pm**

Location: Online meeting using Zoom

Present: Cory Shrigley, Allison Gray from Transit; Peter Gallén, Robert Clipperton, Doug Rudolph, Lila Wagner from BRS.

MEETING ADMINISTRATION

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

USSU ITEMS

- 2) USSU was not present at this meeting.

TRANSIT ITEMS

- 3) Nothing to report besides the items below.

BRS ITEMS

- 4) Update on the Service Standards document:
 - a. The much awaited, first ever Service Standards document for Saskatoon Transit is now expected to go to Council and Committee in February 2021.
 - b. BRS inquired about the 'Community Routes' in the Service Standard:
 - i. Jingle Bell Express at Christmas was provided as an example of such a route.
 - ii. BRS noted that all the '300'-numbered routes in Edmonton, which run on 45-minute intervals in some suburbs, are there called Community Routes.
- 5) New Fare Collection System
 - a. The new Fare Collection System from *Masabi* works in close relationship with *Transit-App* and will launch in the Spring and Summer of 2021. The roll-out is expected to unfold as follows:
 - i. As part of phase 1, new electronic validation units will be installed across the fleet to provide a safe and contactless validation of electronic tickets while laying the foundation for the next stage of the project.
 - ii. Phase 2 will involve turning on Account-Based Ticketing for Riders: This ground-breaking Mobile and Account-Based Ticketing solution will transform the passenger experience by allowing Saskatoon Transit riders to control a single mobile account and ride across the city safely and seamlessly by tapping their mobile devices or smartcards to travel. Riders will be able to add money to their new stored value accounts and simply tap their mobile devices or smartcard on the validator when boarding the bus. This will allow customers to ride across the Saskatoon Transit system without having to select their fare or buy a ticket in advance, providing the ultimate convenient ticketing experience. The system

will automatically calculate and deduct the correct fare from rider's accounts, applying best-fare policies where appropriate.

6) Update on the Fare review

- a. The upcoming Fare Review engagement is expected to take 8 months:
 - a. Following the engagement process, a report and recommendation will be drafted to Council.
 - b. Public engagement on Fares will have to wait (due to the Covid-pandemic) until such a time that face-to-face engagements can be accommodated.
 - c. A work-back schedule is being drafted to take all this into consideration as well as the timing for budget deliberations.

7) Discontinuation of Charter Service

- a. As of November 2020, Transit has discontinued its long-standing charter service.
 - i. Much of the charter activity came from schools, but they now have access to free regular transit services through the Class Pass program.
- b. The newly announced transit service to Wanuskewin is not a traditional charter service. It is instead a transit service jointly funded by Transit and Wanuskewin that is made available to the public; like the longstanding transit service for Folk Fest.
 - i. This seasonal service to Wanuskewin is included in the 'Popular Destinations'-section on Transit's website: <https://transit.saskatoon.ca/plan-my-trip/popular-destinations>
 - ii. BRS expressed a desire for higher visibility among transit riders for the new service to Wanuskewin, perhaps through the 'News'-feature or other announcements on Transit's website and social media.

8) Update on the Pantonium On-Demand pilot project:

- a. Through BRS, Transit received feedback from a former user in a downtown seniors' complex that stopped using the On-Demand service:
 - i. Although pleased with the On-Demand service, she reverted to using the free and direct service from their residence to malls (these dedicated bus services for seniors had been temporarily suspended due to Covid).
- b. Small expansion of the service area for the On-Demand pilot:
 - i. The On-Demand pilot's service area now includes COSTCO on Marquis Drive, which is mentioned in the 'On-Demand Transit'-section on Transit's website.
 - ii. BRS suggested that this change to the pilot project (by adding a major retail outlet to the service area) might warrant more prominent advertising to all existing and potential Transit users through Transit's website and social media.
- c. There has been no increase in ridership with about 6 regular users taking up to 12 trips per day; the peak occurs 7-9am.
- d. While Pantonium has already been collecting and analyzing data on the use of the On-Demand pilot, Transit has now also provided them with data from certain fixed routes as well for comparison.
 - i. Locations of highest use include pick-ups/drop-offs at Bethany Manor in Lawson Heights, SARCAN at Faithful/45th Street, as well as College Drive.

- e. A Request for Proposals (RFP) is going out in the Summer of 2021 to make the 'on-demand' service permanent.
 - i. The RFP means that Pantonium has to re-bid for a permanent contract and other vendors can bid as well.
 - ii. Transit has the capacity within its existing operating budget to provide one bus for the permanent on-demand service.
- 9) Update on the Electric Bus pilot project:
- a. The electric bus is put in regular service on various routes. The current route will be announced on Transit's Twitter-feed daily.
 - b. Since the pilot bus does not have ITS/GPS installed, it operates as an 'extra' and is thus not visible in Transit-App or Google-Transit.
 - c. On cold days the bus operated its electric heating system, which quickly drained the batteries. The bus had to be taken out of service early in its run to change batteries. Thus, the pilot project concluded that electric heating will not work in our climate.
 - d. Without use of the electric heaters, the bus operates up to 7 hours without re-charge.
 - i. The pilot bus uses 10% of its battery charge per hour before rapidly depleting the last 20% of the charge. The inevitable consequence of dead batteries is a tow (flat-deck trip) to the COC.
 - e. BRS wondered if Transit is considering artificially induced 'ambient noise' to alert the visually impaired of an approaching electric bus (as is done in Edmonton).
 - i. Transit stated that the bus does generate 'road noise' and further modifications would need to be future considerations.
- 10) Update on the BRT Station pilot project:
- a. RFP for the BRT-station pilot at the COC to go out in February.
- 11) Covid-19 update:
- a. Mask use on transit buses was discussed again:
 - i. There continues to be a discrepancy between the mask-use officially reported by Transit (95%) and that observed by riders (lower compliance).
 1. It was noted that riders may wear a mask when they pass the Operator on boarding but pull it down when they sit down.
 2. Transit noted that every two weeks they have a blitz at the Downtown Terminal, and since December they have deployed Supervisors on routes where non-compliance has been an issue.
 3. There are also window decals on the buses reminding passengers to keep their nose and mouth covered.
 - ii. BRS wondered if a few targeted and well-publicized fines by Police would help to increase the actual use of masks on transit.
- 12) Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA):
- a. Saskatoon is exceptionally well represented in CUTA:
 - i. City Councillor Sarina Gersher was Vice Chair of Directors in 2020 and will become Chair in 2021.

- ii. Transit Director Jim McDonald was Vice Chair of the Executive Board and will become Chair in 2021.
 - iii. Marketing Consultant Allison Gray was Secretary of the Communications and Public Relations Committee in 2020 and will become Vice Chair in 2021.
 - iv. Access Transit Manager Tracey Loewen was Vice Chair of the Accessibility Sub-Committee in 2020 and will become Chair in 2021.
- b. Information about the duties of various CUTA boards/committees is available at: <https://cutaactu.ca/en/about-us/executivecommittee-board-directors>.

13) Schedule-problem on Route #9:

- a. BRS made Transit aware of several instances reported on their FB-page where a Rider had repeatedly been late for work by missing his bus transfers at Confederation Mall on his way from Riversdale to Blairmore, resulting in two-hour trips to work on this relatively short distance:
 - i. BRS thus wondered if there might be a systemic problem where Route #9 is regularly/frequently missing the 'pulse' at its end-stops.
 - ii. Transit stated that they cannot follow up on vague or anecdotal information. It is best to submit a written inquiry or complaint directly to Customer Service that includes specific details pertaining to the actual or attempted trip (Note: the Official Form prompts for the required information).

14) Agenda items for upcoming, regular monthly meetings were determined:

- a. Meeting on 8 February 2021:
 - i. A representative from Masabi will be on hand by Zoom to discuss the features of Saskatoon Transit's new Fare Collection System.
 - ii. Potential privacy issues in Masabi and the current system will also be discussed.
 - iii. Transit's actions during the November 2020 snowstorm will also be discussed.
- b. Jay Magus, Transportation Director for the City, will be on hand for the April-meeting to discuss issues of mutual concern with Walking Saskatoon and the regular participants.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 8 February 2021, 2:30 – 3:30 pm on Zoom (date & time already confirmed).