

**Minutes for BRS-USSU-Transit online meeting**  
**Tuesday, 25 May 2021 @ 2:30-3:30pm**

Location: Online meeting using Zoom

Present: Allison Gray, Paul Bracken from Saskatoon Transit (ST); Abhineet Goswami from the University of Saskatchewan Students' Union (USSU); Ian Williamson, Mandy Fehr, Patrick Lo from the City of Saskatoon's Corridor Planning Team; and Peter Gallén, Robert Clipperton, Douglas Rudolph from Bus Riders of Saskatoon (BRS).

**ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

- For this meeting: Allison was appointed chair and Peter will prepare the minutes.

**USSU INITIATIVES**

- 1) With their recent changes in personnel, USSU noted that they are learning the ropes on many fronts:
  - a. Besides these monthly meetings with ST, an invitation was extended to USSU to participate in BRS's monthly Membership Meetings as well.

**TRANSIT INITIATIVES**

- 2) Corridor Planning
  - a. Members of the City's Corridor Planning Team were present to explore the willingness of BRS and USSU to participate in all/some of the 10 segments of the Corridor Planning Project (over the next 10 years).
    - i. The Corridor Planning Team provided a short overview.
    - ii. The meeting participants discussed expectations and engagement strategies.
    - iii. The Corridor Planning Team provided a survey for BRS to fill out about engagement preferences.
    - iv. BRS noted that they want to participate and that Peter has already been appointed as their Liaison; BRS also noted that they would discuss their approach to the project at the next Steering Committee meeting.
    - v. USSU noted that they will discuss the issue with their Executive.

**BRS INITIATIVES**

- 3) Paul Bracken, Maintenance Manager for Saskatoon Transit, provided the following updates:
  - a. Battery-Electric Bus Pilot
    - i. Throughout the project, a contractor has collected continuous telemetric data on the operation of the pilot bus, while Saskatchewan Research Council (SRC) will write the final report on the pilot project.
      1. The pilot has already determined that battery-electric propulsion is more reliable and economical to operate than diesel engines, whose emissions reduction systems are particularly unreliable.

2. The pilot bus has experienced problems with brakes and the fire suppression system; waiting for spare parts for the suppression system had caused interruptions of the pilot.
  3. A substantial reduction in operating range was noticed throughout the winter:
    - a. Power-draw from the batteries by the heating system was particularly detrimental.
    - b. Although the air-conditioning system also uses battery power, it is less significant.
    - c. Cabin heating by a small, auxiliary diesel heater is thus being considered.
  4. The electric pilot bus is expected to be visible soon in Transit-app.
- ii. Recharging of onboard batteries in each electric bus:
1. There are two major approaches to recharging battery-electric buses:
    - a. overnight charging at the depo after running the bus throughout the day on battery power, and
    - b. short-duration quick-charging throughout the day at each end-stop using an inverted pantograph on the chargers.
  2. Paul noted that the quick-charging stations are very costly because they have to be of such high capacity to provide the required surge of electricity. ST is, therefore, leaning towards in-depot charging.
  3. Thus ST is considering overnight charging at the depo (COC). Currently only the pilot project charger has been installed there, but the COC has the electrical capacity to provide re-charging of 30 buses per night (3 buses per charger for 5 hours each on 10 chargers); additional power supply will be required at COC when the number of electric buses increases.
  4. Paul noted that the pilot bus from BYD is an older-model demo-bus (manufactured in 2018), and that battery technology has already improved significantly since then. Thus ST is considering the pursuit of high capacity, long-range, battery-electric buses for its fleet, while alternative options to provide passenger compartment heating are being pursued.
- b. Next bus purchase:
- i. New buses have not been purchased for two years as ST continues to eagerly await the anticipated release of joint federal-provincial-municipal ICIP-funding (approval by the Provincial Government has not yet been received):
    1. Paul noted that delivery times are 12-14 months after placing an order.
  - ii. When the necessary funds are provided, ST will most likely try for the purchase of diesel-electric hybrid buses before considering electric propulsion for their fleet.

- c. Bus shortage:
  - i. BRS wondered if there was a shortage of buses as they had noticed several alerts about mechanical failures on the road.
  - ii. Paul's records don't show any daily shortages back to February, when runs were cancelled due to failures resulting from cold weather:
    - 1. As part of normal operating procedures, ST does not cancel service in extreme cold and continues to send buses out during the winter season. This is extremely hard on the buses and failures do occur more frequently as a result. This means that certain maintenance of the buses is postponed, which does indeed tend to result in more mechanical failures on the road in late spring.
    - 2. Over the summer months, the service department then catches up with any postponed maintenance and repairs, so that the entire fleet is again in tip-top shape come fall.
- 4) Other updates:
  - a. New ticketing system:
    - i. The Masabi *Justride* mobile ticketing system will go live on June 15.
    - ii. Contrary to previous announcements, unused tickets in *Justride* (such as 10-packs ) will not expire; instead they will be valid for 365 days after purchase and they can then be extended repeatedly at ST's Customer Service Centre.
  - b. Service changes:
    - i. On-Demand:
      - 1. As of May 31, the On-Demand Pilot will employ two buses, which will cover the entire city:
        - a. This also means that (on-demand) transit service will be initiated for the first time to the new Brighton neighbourhood and the south-east Costco store.
    - ii. Service adjustments (reductions) taking place on June 27 have already been posted on ST's website:
      - 1. ST will carefully monitor service needs to the University as their on-campus enrolment increases.
- 5) Approved topics for the next meeting:
  - a. Discussion of upcoming service changes.

**NEXT MEETING:** Monday, 14 June 2021 @ 11:30pm via Zoom (confirmed; note unusual time)