

**Minutes for BRS-USSU-Transit online meeting
Tuesday, 21 September 2021 @ 2:30-3:30pm**

Location: Online meeting using Zoom

Present: Allison Gray, Cory Shrigley from Saskatoon Transit; Mandy Fehr (as an observer), Engagement Consultant, City of Saskatoon; and Robert Clipperton, Peter Gallén, Douglas Rudolph, Curtis McCoshen, James Wood, Lila Wagner, Bob Eaton from Bus Riders of Saskatoon (BRS).

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

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

USSU INITIATIVES

- 1) USSU was not present at this meeting.

TRANSIT INITIATIVES

- 2) Latest Covid regulations for transit:
 - a. Masking on transit buses and terminals is now mandatory in accordance with the Provincial Mandate. Operator's do not enforce mask use, but compliance has been good; only 25 cases of non-compliance have been recorded since the new provincial regulations were introduced. Free masks are no longer provided, but the 'mask bus' continues to be parked at the Downtown Terminal to encourage mask use.
- 3) Impressions of free transit service on election day:
 - a. Transit noted that take-up had been rather low for the free transit passes during election day (Federal election on Monday, September 20).
 - b. BRS responded that since there were a lot of polling stations available within walking distance on election day, there might not be a huge need for transit by voters on that day. However, there might be a greater need for transit by voters to get to the advance polls, because these polling stations were a lot fewer as well as poorly located for walking voters.

BRS INITIATIVES

- 4) Update on Saskatoon Transit's New Mobile Ticketing System:
 - a. Phase 1, which went live on 15 June 2021, included:
 - i. Configure the cloud-based *Justride* for Saskatoon Transit by implementing current fare offerings as mobile tickets:
 1. This included the provision of any combination of i) up to 5 single tickets (e.g., at \$3:00 per trip for adults), ii) traditional discounted 10-pack tickets (e.g., at \$2:50 per trip for adults), iii) monthly and annual passes, as well as iv) Senior's Passes, which requires each qualified rider to have an *entitlement*¹ registered in *Justride* at the Customer Service Centre.

¹ 'Entitlement' is the technical term used for the granting of special rights to riders. Saskatoon Transit has a long tradition of providing *entitlements* to seniors, high-school students, university students and low-income riders so that they can purchase discounted transit passes. In *Justride*, these same traditional *entitlements* must be entered

- ii. Install new Validators in all buses.
- iii. Configure Masabi's standard user-app for Saskatoon Transit; and call it the *TGo*-app. This app on the rider's mobile device sells and activates Saskatoon Transit's mobile tickets/passes and validates any activated tickets (QR-codes) upon boarding the bus.
- iv. Implement most *TGo*-functionalities into *Transit*-app as well:
 - 1. A question was raised about the reason for two user-apps.
 - 2. Transit noted that the *TGo*-app is a white-label app, developed and customized by Masabi for Saskatoon Transit specifically for the *Justride*-platform; this makes it easier to tailor all of Transit's specific needs. For example, *entitlements* granted by agencies other than Transit are only done in the *TGo*-app.
 - 3. *Transit*-app, on the other hand, as a stand-alone third-party app has the advantage of providing riders with trip planning, service alerts and next-bus information, while now also providing ticket sales (as well as on-demand integration hopefully soon) – all within the same mobile app. However, *Transit*-app cannot handle all *entitled* passes. For simplicity's sake, any time a partnership exists where the partner (such as USSU for U-Passes, School Boards for high-school student passes, Social Services for Discounted Pass, and employers for Eco-Passes) has access to their own file management, passes will be available only on the *TGo*-app.
- v. Keep operating the existing cash-boxes to provide single-trip cash tickets and the old validators to scan Go-Passes (current transit cards).
- b. Phase 2 was started immediately after Phase 1 went live and is currently in progress:
 - i. First, a mobile version of the discounted university student pass, U-Pass, was implemented in *Justride* in time for the Fall Semester, when most students returned to classes on campus. This implementation required electronic payments, including the compulsory U-Pass fee, to be processed through the regular U of S registration process accompanied by U-Pass *entitlements* to be assigned automatically for qualified riders, before a university student could download a U-Pass into the *TGo*-app on her mobile device. It should be noted that U-Passes are not available through *Transit*-app. Uptake of mobile ticketing among some 20,000 university students has been about 95%, with only a small number opting for U-Passes to be placed onto a physical UPass "smart" card.
 - ii. Second, *entitlements* in *Justride* for mobile Eco-Passes will be introduced next. These entitled passes will only be accessible through the *TGo*-app and the entitlement will be entered into *Justride* by the employer.

into the rider's Profile by a staff person (or computer program) after having checked the qualification of the rider for that entitlement. The rider will then be able to purchase the applicable mobile pass through the *TGo*-app (and in some cases on *Transit*-app as well) on his mobile device.

- iii. Third, discounted mobile Student Passes for high-school students will be implemented in October. These entitled passes will only be accessible through the *TGo*-app and the entitlement will be entered into *Justride* by a designated teacher in each high-school as the qualified students receive their Student Cards. This streamlining of procedures will eliminate the currently lengthy delays in issuing discounted Student Passes.
 - 1. The original intent was to have the new procedure in place before school started this fall, but the two school boards were too busy with Covid-related issues at that time.
 - iv. Fourth, a similar procedure will subsequently be implemented later this fall at Social Services to issue mobile Discounted Passes. These entitled passes for qualifying clients will only be accessible through the *TGo*-app and the entitlement will be entered into *Justride* by Social Services staff.
 - v. Fifth, new Bus Cards will also be introduced this fall/winter (date to be determined). These new cards, which will replace the current Go-Passes, will be DESFire² smartcards readable by the new Validators in the buses.
 - 1. The new cards will provide four 'slots', where one of the slots will store transit tickets/passes, while the other three slots can be used by other future city services, such as a Leisure Pass or for other such functions.
 - vi. Adoption of mobile ticketing so far:
 - 1. Uptake of the new mobile ticketing system by riders has grown steadily throughout the implementation process and is currently at 31% of daily trips, which is considered an exceptionally high adoption rate in the transit industry this early in an implementation.
 - vii. Promotional Contest:
 - 1. In order to promote the new ticketing system Saskatoon Transit is running a promotional contest.
 - 2. Everyone who has purchased bus fare in either the *TGo*-app or *Transit*-app as of Sept. 30, 2021 will be entered to win one of:
 - 1 - Annual Pass
 - 3 - Monthly passes
 - 5 - Ten-Ride cards
 - 10 - Day PassesTerms and Conditions: [SaskatoonTransit.ca](https://saskatoontransit.ca)
 - viii. Phase 2 is expected to wrap up before Christmas.
- c. Phase 3:
- i. Phase 3 is not expected to begin until a Fare Review has been completed in 2022 with extensive engagement from the community:
 - 1. The conclusion of this engagement will be followed by a report and recommendations to Council/Committee for decision on a new transit fare structure as well as the cost of fares in each category.

² Definition of DESFire: "Data Encryption Standard Fast, Innovative, Reliable and Secure" (contactless smart card)

2. It should be noted that the Fare Review will discuss the opportunity to introduce entirely different fare collection and fare discounting principles, such as Account-Based Fare Collection (ABFC) and Fare-Capping³ that have not been available in the current fare collection system.
 - ii. Account-Based Ticketing (ABT) including Fare-Capping are expected to be implemented in this phase in accordance with Council decisions after the Fare Review.
- 5) Update on On-Demand:
 - a. Saskatoon Transit has issued a Request for Proposals (RFP) to provide the software for an 'on-demand' or 'micro-transit' service in Saskatoon for the next few years:
 - i. Now that Transit's on-demand pilot project, whose software was supplied by Pantonium⁴, is essentially concluded, the intent of the RFP is to expand the list of potential suppliers for a permanent on-demand service.
 1. Furthermore, the intent is to integrate the on-demand with fixed-route service into *Transit*-app to show how these different services can function together – multi-modal.
 2. The RFP will close toward the end of October. Numerous vendors have indicated interest; more information to follow after the close of the RFP.
 - ii. It should be noted that the RFP only includes the provision of on-demand software. Same as now, buses and operators are provided by Saskatoon Transit from the regular transit pool.
 - iii. The provision of on-demand/micro-transit as 'Software-as-a-Service'⁵ has already been approved by City Council. The new contract will be limited to a few years so that the service can be discontinued or the supplier can be changed, if warranted. Annual financing for the contract comes from Transit's regular operating budget.
- 6) Recent survey in Transit-app:
 - a. Transit-app runs a quarterly survey in participating North-American cities called 'Rider Happiness Benchmarking Program', in which Saskatoon Transit is a participant.
 - b. The Summer-survey was concluded recently and the Fall-survey will commence shortly.
 - c. The results of the (Canadian) Spring-survey are available online at:
https://blog.transitapp.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/RHB-Report_CAN.pdf
- 7) Update on Transit Detours:
 - a. Detour By-law:

³ Note 1: Account-Based Ticketing (ABT) and Fare-Capping were explained in footnote 3 of the February-minutes: https://busridersofsaskatoon.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/COS-minutes_2021-02-08.pdf

⁴ Note 2: 'On-Demand' (in capital letters) is the trademarked name of Pantonium's user-app for their proprietary version of a generic on-demand/micro-transit software solution.

⁵ Note 3: Software-as-a-Service was defined in footnote 1 of the February-minutes.

- i. Although a City Councillor made a verbal comment about Transit being excluded from the Detour By-law that was passed by Council in August, this bylaw should not be confused with the long-awaited report on Transit Detour Signage.
 - ii. Although Transit was not expressly included in the Bylaw, Transit was pleased that the bylaw requires the City to *divert* instead of *detouring* transit riders.
 - b. Transit Detour Signage:
 - i. The report from Transit/Transportation on Transit Detour Signage that was scheduled to go to the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation (SPCoT) in the fourth quarter of 2021 has been postponed. Instead, it will be preceded by consultations with residents within the Fare Review in 2022.
- 8) New Bus Stop design with Bench, Handle and potential Lighting:
 - a. In response to a previous submission from BRS, Transit is delighted with the bus stop design used in the City of Hamilton, Ontario (see Figure 1).



Fig 1: Bus stop with bench and handle in Hamilton, Ontario

- b. Transit is currently reviewing the design, including a potential light, and hopes to start the procurement process as soon as possible.
 - c. BRS suggested that the bus stop in the south-west corner of 8th Street and Broadway Avenue would be a good first installation. BRS also noted that the Bench and Handle could potentially be attached elsewhere as well; for example on light standards and other existing sturdy posts around the city.
- 9) Topics for an upcoming meeting:
 - a. Latest Transit-project in Research Junction with online demo of the current Dash-board.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 19 October 2021 @ 2:30pm via Zoom (note change of weekday)