

**Minutes for BRS-USSU-Transit online meeting
Tuesday, 13 December 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, James Wood, Sherry Tarasoff, Curt McCoshen 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) Nothing to report.

BRS INITIATIVES

- 3) Mandy Fehr, Engagement Consultant with the City, made a Power Point presentation on upcoming engagement activities and sought input related to engagement on transit issues:
 - a. Mandy noted the following engagement activities related specifically to transit:
 - i. Bus Rapid Transit:
 1. Station Pilot
 2. Accessibility to/from Stations
 3. Safety & Security
 4. Public Realm
 5. Public Art
 6. New Transit Network to support the BRT routes
 - ii. Fare Review – expected to take place in 2022.
 - iii. Changes to Service – this engagement will include Detour Signage
 - b. Mandy also noted that some decisions have already been made by Council and cannot be altered (for example the BRT routes). Bus Riders emphasized that it is still important to explain and discuss these issues.
 - c. Bus Riders (BRS) provided some initial observations on engagement specific to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and the New Transit Network:
 - i. Bus Rapid Transit does *not* provide comprehensive transit service. The New Transit Network, therefore, needs to be an integral part of the BRT. Smooth, timely and comfortable transfers and accessible bus stops for all transit riders in all seasons will be critical in this new transit network.

- ii. BRS also emphasized that service availability¹ in the new network will be critical. It is the optimal combination of physical layout of the entire transit network plus the actual availability of service when needed that will determine the overall usefulness of the new transit system to ‘take riders from where they happen to be to where they need/want to go when they want to go while ensuring their arrival at their desired destination in safety and comfort within a predictable and reasonable time’. For the engagement process regarding the transit network this will mean talking about span and frequency as well.
 - 1. It needs to be recognized that the New Transit Network has not been discussed at all in public yet, so there will be a steep learning curve for riders and residents to get their heads around the radically new transit concept and the totally new transit routes.
 - 2. It also needs to be recognized that many Riders are not yet familiar even with the details of the BRT itself, and some may even be quite sceptical of the BRT.
- iii. These many factors may thus require a bit more involved discussions with (at least some) individuals or small groups, in which case knowledgeable and engaging individuals are required as facilitators. Probing questions need to be asked of riders and potential riders to encourage them to consider all their transportation needs, including the needs of family members, when using the BRT and the New Transit Network. Local knowledge from experienced and diverse transit riders will be crucial in identifying potential gaps and deficiencies in this new network and service regime.
- iv. Difficult-to-engage segments of society will require special efforts to provide insightful feedback. Probing questions need to be asked regarding trips that go unfulfilled, so that the reasons get identified.
- v. In engagements and surveys, it is imperative to inquire whether participants use transit or *not* so that their comments can be appropriately contextualized.
- vi. To raise awareness for the upcoming engagements, BRS suggested that it may be useful to place information pop-ups around the city with maps and brief explanations about the proposed local routes and wider transit network so that existing and potential riders can educate themselves before their input.
- d. Cory noted that in preparation for the New Transit Network their Planners have completed the bus stop audit, time-point audit and the headway measurements for each proposed new route.
- e. In conclusion Mandy indicated that the City is looking for ways to prevent ‘stakeholder engagement fatigue’, since other engagements that also have a transit-component have already begun as well, such as Corridor Planning and Wayfinding. Mandy’s initial task,

¹ *Span* is the technical term for the daily duration of service (from the start of service early in the morning to the end of service late at night, or potentially something much less); *frequency* is the technical term for how often the bus comes (also noting that the frequency may change throughout the span).

therefore, is relationship building with the various stakeholder groups to determine how best to conduct these engagements. Mandy noted that she will continue exploring ways for BRS to provide meaningful input suited to them.

- 2) Budget approvals and rejections:
 - a. Transit's Operating Budget:
 - i. The following requests for increases to Transit's Operating Budget for inflation and growth were approved unchanged: \$2,031,400 for 2022 and \$868,000 for 2023, respectively.
 - ii. In addition, Transit received requested Operating funding for service to North Kensington (in 2022) and Aspen Ridge (in 2023): \$167,200 increase each year.
 - iii. Funding requests for transit service to Wanuskewin Park and for the Downtown Loop were not approved.
 - b. Transit's Capital Budget:
 - i. Two fully electric buses plus charger were approved for 2022 with delivery *not* likely until 2023: \$2.64 million.
 - ii. Transit's Asset Management Plan prescribes the purchase of 10 new buses every year. In addition 10 existing New Flyer buses require mid-life refurbishing each year of their mild-steel frames (this program is nearing completion).
 - iii. Note that no new buses have been received since the 2019-series, so Transit is now on course for a shortage of 38 new buses by the end of 2023.
- 3) Cost of a Service Hour:
 - a. Continuing the discussion on service hours from the previous meeting, Transit noted that the \$107:20 cost of one service hours also includes depreciation.
 - b. Transit further noted that Service Hour costs are provided in Transit's 2020 Annual Report (p. 22): https://transit.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/tc-tr_annualreport2020_web5-compressed.pdf
 - c. BRS remained unsure whether the quoted costs include the actual purchase cost of the bus (at least the substantial difference in purchase price between a 30-foot bus and a 60-foot articulated bus is not obvious). Consequently, BRS expressed an interest in the number of Service Hours (on average) that a transit bus will provide throughout its life.
- 4) Topics for the January meeting:
 - a. Operations Manager Mike Moellenbeck will present Transit's *Dashboard* and the associated *Research Junction* project at the January meeting.
 - b. Discussion with Mandy Fehr regarding the engagement approach will continue.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 17 January 2022 @ 2:30am via Zoom (note time-of-day)