

**Minutes for BRS-USSU-Transit online meeting  
Monday, 14 March 2022 @ 2:30-3:30pm**

Location: Online meeting using Zoom

Present: Allison Gray, Cory Shrigley from Saskatoon Transit; and Robert Clipperton, Peter Gallén, James Wood, Curt McCoshen, Lila Wagner from Bus Riders of Saskatoon (BRS).

**ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

- For this meeting: Cory 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) The focus of this meeting was on the ongoing frustrations riders are experiencing as well as the transit improvement initiatives that Riders might look forward to in Transit's latest plans:
  - a. Transit Plans:
    - i. The *Transit 5-year Plan, 2021-2025* is currently in draft form while it was awaiting the approval of the City's 5-year Strategic Plan (which took place in January 2022).
    - ii. In addition to the 'Key Actions' within the Transportation-section to meet specific 'Outcomes' in the City's latest *Strategic Plan*<sup>1</sup> (pp. 54-55), as well as its own 5-year plan mentioned above, Saskatoon Transit also has its own *Internal Business Plan*, which describes in more detail Transits ongoing activities. This *Internal Business Plan*, which is continuously updated, is not a public document.
    - iii. Moreover, it may be noteworthy that the City's 5-year Strategic Plan in turn conforms to the City's *Official Community Plan (OCP)*<sup>2</sup> (approved in June 2020), which is a legal document required and approved by the Government of Saskatchewan.
    - iv. Transit noted that their internal Business Plan and the City's Strategic Plan are structured like the Official Community Plan, where 'Transit' is referred to throughout the documents.
  - b. Discussion of Transit's plans:
    - i. To start the discussion on transit improvements, BRS conveyed to Transit the 'tiredness of waiting for a number of exciting transit initiatives' that Riders have been promised for years but never seem to materialize.

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<sup>1</sup> The City's *Strategic Plan, 2022-2025*: [https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2022-2025\\_strategic\\_plan.pdf](https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/2022-2025_strategic_plan.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The *Official Community Plan, 2020*: <https://www.saskatoon.ca/sites/default/files/documents/city-clerk/bylaws/9700.pdf>

- ii. BRS also mentioned general deficiencies in ‘rider comfort’ and ‘information to riders’, that would require improvements:
  1. As a simple guide on Rider Comfort, BRS suggested that Transit as an organization as well as all Transit staff need to put themselves in each Rider’s shoes so to speak and ‘feel like a Rider feels’. Exploring this complex issue in more depth might be worthwhile at future meetings.
  2. Regarding Information to Riders, a participant brought up the insufficient instructions to Riders regarding ‘Entitlements’ in the new Masabi *Justride* mobile ticketing system. Time at this meeting did not permit a discussion of the issue, but Transit offered to follow up with the individual. The more general and complex issue of ‘Information to Riders’ would require explorations in more depth at future meetings.
- iii. Although other improvements have been implied in the past (such as new benches at bus stops and improvements to the ticketing system), only one concrete initiative for potential improvements was discussed at this meeting. Regarding On-Demand Transit (ODT) it was noted that:
  1. A new software-vendor has been contracted and the new system is expected to go live in May 2022.
  2. With negative experiences from the extended Pilot Project fresh in mind, BRS expressed hope that the glitches in that system will have been eliminated from day one of the new system going live.
  3. Since such a major change to the ODT-system is imminent, BRS reminded Transit that advance information needs to go out to Riders very soon. Transit needs to keep in mind for example that if a new ODT-app will be required, the App needs to be downloaded and that task in itself is cause for distress among many Riders. Furthermore, all ODT-riders will probably be required to relearn the booking and cancelling procedures and the information features in the new app.
  4. Transit indicated that the new vendor is a leader in the industry and that the new app is expected to be more user friendly than the current app.
- iv. A proposed new Business Model for Transit:
  1. Considering that Riders recently suffered from serious service disruptions, such as the snow storm in November 2020 and the now 4-month, ongoing shortage of buses on the road since December 2021, BRS suggested that Saskatoon Transit’s current business model might be too ‘Fragile’ by having placed too much emphasis on ‘Efficiency’.
  2. BRS thus suggested that putting the emphasis on ‘Robustness’ and ‘Resilience’ instead might be a better business model for Transit.
  3. For Riders, this should manifest itself in a transit service that is ‘Predictable’ and ‘Reliable’. In addition it should result in information to Riders that is ‘Relevant’, ‘Timely’ and ‘Accessible’ for everyone.

4. Moreover it needs to be recognized that although these are indeed 'buzz words', they are not empty words; each word requires concrete actions and results to have the desired effect for Riders on the ground.
  5. Transit acknowledged that they are reviewing how they structure the availability of bus routes and the sign-up of drivers for these routes so that service is both efficient, resilient and adaptable to situations with extenuating circumstances.
- 4) In response to pre-submitted questions Transit noted regarding:
- a. *Dashboard*:
    - i. The delay in presenting Transit's new *Dashboard* data analysis and visualization tool to participants at these meetings is caused by the necessity to move the *Dashboard*-software from the University servers, where it has been residing during the *Research Junction* project, to Transit's own servers. This physical transfer is at the mercy of the City's IT-department.
  - b. Purchase of new Buses:
    - i. An emergency report on the proposed purchase of new buses will go the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation (SPCOT) for their April-meeting.
  - c. Ridership:
    - i. The ridership is very slowly trending upwards but it is still hovering on both sides of 50% compared to pre-pandemic levels.
  - d. Masks on buses:
    - i. Based on 'button-pushes by Operators', mask compliance continues to hover around 97-98%.
- 5) Topics for upcoming meetings:
- a. Operations Manager Mike Moellenbeck is expected to present Transit's *Dashboard* and the associated *Research Junction* project at the April meeting.

**NEXT MEETING:** Tuesday, 12 April 2022 @ 2:30am via Zoom (note the change in day-of-the-week)