

**Minutes for BRS-USSU-Transit online meeting
Monday, 9 May 2022 @ 2:30-3:30pm**

LOCATION: Online meeting using Zoom

ATTENDANCE:

- Saskatoon Transit:
 - James (Jim) McDonald, Director
 - Linus Bryksa, Planning Supervisor
 - Allison Gray, Marketing Consultant
- University of Saskatchewan Student Union (USSU):
 - Lia Storey-Gamble, VP Operations & Finance
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon (BRS):
 - Robert Clipperton, Spokesperson and Steering Committee Member
 - Peter Gallén, Transit Co-ordinator and Steering Committee Member
 - Curt McCoshen, Steering Committee Member
 - James (Jim) Wood, Steering Committee Member

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

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

OLD BUSINESS

- 1) Nothing to Report

NEW BUSINESS

- 2) Lia Storey-Gamble, the newly elected Vice President of Operations & Finance for USSU, intends to become the permanent representative for USSU at these monthly meetings; all participants briefly introduced themselves.
- 3) Transit Director Jim McDonald described Transit's near-term plans (fiscal years 2022 & 2023):
 - a. Resolve the Shortage of Buses:
 - i. Fleet Renewal:
 1. New Buses: New buses are sorely needed as some older buses no longer pass SGI inspections.
 2. Funds: A request for funds for new buses is being prepared to be submitted soon to the Standing Policy Committee of Transportation (SPCoT). This capital request is outside the current Transit budget, since anticipated ICIP-funds were not released by the Provincial Government.
 - ii. Re-allocate existing buses to meet Ridership fluctuations:
 1. The Covid-pandemic saw a huge reduction but also significant redistribution of Ridership, which is slowly increasing but has not yet returned to pre-Covid patterns.

2. As a result Transit is experiencing lower ridership peaks that instead last longer or occur at non-traditional times and non-traditional locations throughout the day.
 3. This unsettling situation continues to require significant re-distribution of available buses and service hours as the demand keeps changing.
- b. Non-functioning Fare Boxes are being addressed:
- i. Spare parts are no longer available for the existing fare boxes.
 - ii. Transit has thus heavily promoted the new Masabi *Justride* mobile ticketing system, which does not use the old fare boxes and bus card validators.
 - iii. New fare boxes have been ordered and will be installed once they arrive.
 - iv. The new operator safety shields have caused unexpected difficulties for the installation of the new fare boxes.
- c. Get On-Demand Transit (ODT) to meet expectations:
- i. The contract for a more sophisticated ODT-solution from a new vendor has been signed.
 - ii. The new ODT-system will go live this summer but is expected to require subsequent tweaks in response to actual on-the-ground experiences.
- 4) Transit Director Jim McDonald described Transit's longer-term plans (years 2023 to 2026):
- a. Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and a reconfigured New Transit Network (Transit Plan):
 - i. Both the BRT and the new Transit Plan are expected to go live together in the Summer of 2026.
 - ii. The routing of the BRT has already been fixed and approved by City Council.
 - iii. The introduction of the BRT and new Transit Plan in 2026 are expected to be preceded by 18 months of engagement with the public starting in 2023 followed by 18 months of advertising and information campaigns.
 - iv. While planning for a major reorganization of the entire transit route network continues within the Transit Plan, no major route changes in the current network are expected in the meantime.
 - v. Any route and schedule changes that do occur will be based on the Service Standards document approved by City Council last summer.

- b. Replace Pulses¹ at Terminals with Headway² Management along the entire Route:
 - i. As a deliberate culture shift, Transit continues to move away from facilitating Transfers between Routes through rigidly fixed ‘pulses’ at Terminals and instead encourages Transfers to take place anywhere that two lines intersect or touch on each other.
 - ii. Weaning both Operators and Riders off the pulse is a challenge. For Riders this means that they should always consider using Transit-App to plan each trip most effectively.
 - iii. One of the ways this more flexible Headway Management manifests itself is that Routes can now operate at different headways, say 30 minutes, 40 minutes, 15 minutes and 10 minutes between buses. This broader range of headways allows Transit to re-allocate buses from routes with low ridership to routes where high demand requires more resources, which in turn results in higher Frequency and thus better service on these routes.
- 5) Planning Supervisor Linus Bryksa described the Service Changes coming into effect on May 29:
 - a. Preliminary consideration was given to reducing headways to 40 minutes on several additional routes, but this change will not be undertaken at his time.
 - b. Routing changes will affect three routes: Route 1 Exhibition, Route 20 South Industrial, and Route 13 Broadway as outlined below:
 - i. Route 1 – Exhibition:
 - 1. Route 1 will incorporate a part of Route 20, which includes Brand Road, Melville Street and South Industrial. With this extension of service, regular frequency and service throughout the day will become available to the Auto Mall Village and South Industrial including the new SARCAN at 2900 Jasper Avenue S.
 - ii. Route #20:
 - 1. Route 20 – South Industrial:
 - a. Route 20 will be discontinued and the South Industrial portion of this route will be replaced with the Route 1 extension.

¹ *Pulse* is described by Transit Consultant Jarrett Walker as follows: “In a smaller city... especially in North America, you may notice a horde of buses gathered around a single platform or street corner. You may also notice that this happens every hour or half-hour throughout the day. This event, called a *pulse*, is a way of providing fast transfers even among services that aren’t very frequent.”

² The related technical terms *Headway* and *Frequency* can be defined as follows: *Headway* is the “time interval (usually expressed in minutes) between the passing of successive transit units (buses) moving along the same route in the same direction”, while *Frequency* describes the “number of buses within a unit of time” (usually one hour). Thus, a ‘15-minute’ *Headway* describes a *Frequency* of ‘four buses per hour’.

While *Pulses* require that all buses arrive and depart a Terminal at the same time to facilitate the Transfers, *Headway Management* requires that the buses stay on their prescribed schedule throughout the entire route, so that the same headway between buses is maintained and Transfers can take place effectively at locations along intersecting routes.

- iii. Route 13 - Avalon / Lawson Heights:
 - 1. From July through to August, Route 13 is expected to be impacted at 12th Street and University Drive due to summer construction.
 - 2. A planned detour will move Route 13 to 8th Street and Clarence Avenue. Route 13 will continue to service Broadway Avenue south of 8th Street, with additional frequency along Clarence Avenue, which will support customers travelling to and from the University area.
- iv. Updated route maps and schedules for Routes #1 and #13 have already been posted on Transit's website.
- c. Bus stops:
 - i. About 75 existing bus stops will be withdrawn since they are so close to each other that the auditory messages in the buses do not have time to complete and the entire messaging system gets tangled up.
 - ii. USSU and BRS requested a map of the discontinued bus stops, which should also be posted on Transit's website.
- 6) Questions & Answers:
 - a. Effect of lower ridership on the Budget:
 - i. Budgetary shortfalls during the Covid-pandemic have been settled and Transit is now expecting to stay within its operating budget, which received the customary inflationary increase.
 - ii. New Routes: Additional financing for routes to North Kensington and Aspen Ridge was received, which will allow the hire of 1-2 new Operators.
 - b. Fleet Renewal:
 - i. Transit Audit: BRS expressed the hope that the Audit this summer/fall will identify the root causes of the bus shortage and propose remedies.
 - ii. Seating: BRS suggested that different seating arrangements might be considered when new buses are purchased.
 - c. Transfer Waiting Times:
 - i. Although traditional pulses are being deliberately eliminated, Transit indicated that Transfers continue to work well and that a typical daytime Transfer should not exceed 15 minutes. Riders are encouraged to send in complaints using the Customer Feedback Form when this is not the case.
 - d. Transit-App:
 - i. Transit-App has had high uptake and is used for Alerts, Trip Planning, Next Bus Information, the GO-function and (electronic) mobile Ticket/Pass Purchases.
 - ii. Although total transit ridership is still reduced almost 50%, the use of Transit-App has rebounded to 85% of 2019-levels.
 - iii. Detailed data is being collected and analyzed.
 - e. Getting Information out to Riders:
 - i. Public Service Announcements (PSAs) are used to inform potential riders about events accessible by transit.
 - ii. Alerts are published in Transit-App and on Transit's website.

iii. Social Media is also used.

7) Topics for upcoming meetings:

- a. Review of Transit's and CUTA's Key Performance Indicators (KPI).
- b. Operations Manager Mike Moellenbeck is expected to present Transit's *Dashboard* and the associated *Research Junction* project at a future meeting.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, 13 June 2022 @ 2:30am via Zoom (note the change in day-of-the-week)