

**Minutes for BRS-TRANSIT online meeting  
Monday, 15 August 2022 @ 2:30-3:40pm**

**LOCATION:** Online meeting using Zoom

**ATTENDANCE:**

- Saskatoon Transit (Transit):
  - Cory Shrigley, Customer Service & Engagement Manager
  - Allison Gray, Marketing Consultant
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon (BRS):
  - Robert Clipperton, Spokesperson and Steering Committee Member
  - Peter Gallén, Transit Co-ordinator and Steering Committee Member
  - James (Jim) Wood, Steering Committee Member
  - Curt McCoshen, Steering Committee Member
  - Sherry Tarasoff, Member

**ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

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

**OLD BUSINESS**

- 1) N/A

**NEW BUSINESS**

- 2) University of Saskatchewan Student Union (USSU):
  - a. BRS informed the meeting that Lisa Storey-Gamble, current Vice President of Operations and Finance for USSU, had informed them by email that USSU no longer intends to participate in these monthly meetings because they already have sufficient meetings with Transit through other avenues.
  - b. Transit noted that USSU meets with Saskatoon Transit directly every 2 months.
  - c. BRS noted with regret this lost opportunity to meet with USSU, since university students constitute about a quarter of total annual trips on transit.
- 3) Purchase of New Buses:
  - a. Context:
    - i. BRS initiated today's joint-review with Transit regarding design concepts for Transit's new buses because the costs to taxpayers will be substantial and the ramifications for the rather long-term future of Transit services are so great:
      1. The intent of this first meeting on the topic was to describe the context and identify and explain issues of concern.
      2. The hope was then for Transit to consider the issues so that they can be further discussed with Fleet and Maintenance Manager Tracey Davis at our next regular monthly meeting with Transit.

- ii. To start the discussion it was noted that:
  - 1. Transit's Asset Management Plan recommends the purchase of 10 new buses annually.
  - 2. Last time new buses were added to the Transit fleet was in 2019.
  - 3. Current delivery times for new buses are 12-14 months.
  - 4. Upon purchase, a new bus will remain in service for about 18 years.
- iii. Consequently:
  - 1. Even if a new order was placed immediately, it is thus unlikely that delivery would occur before 2024.
    - a. Thus by 2024 Saskatoon Transit will be short 50 buses and by 2026 when the BRT and New Transit Network are scheduled to go live Transit will need another 20 new buses.
  - 2. It needs to be recognized that any new buses to be purchased soon will remain in service into the 2040s, so 'careful future-proofing' through good design is crucial before placing an order:
    - a. Since 70 new buses is precisely half of the entire conventional transit fleet, BRS suggested to Transit that special care is required to get the next much needed bus orders just right.
- b. Current situation:
  - i. Financing of new buses:
    - 1. 2.64 million in financing has already been approved by Council.
    - 2. This sum is expected to enable Transit to purchase two 40-foot battery-electric buses.
    - 3. If additional funds from higher levels of government becomes available, Transit intends to purchase additional buses.
  - ii. Purchase of new buses:
    - 1. A Request For Proposal (RFP), which closes on September 9, has already been issued soliciting suppliers for 40-foot battery-electric buses.
- c. BRS's concerns:
  - i. Overall technical design:
    - 1. BRS assumes that Transit Management in consultation with ATU-local will choose robust and reliable buses, where all technical systems have been carefully considered for the suitability to task in our challenging climate with particular emphasis placed on the daily operation, maintenance, cleanliness and customer and operator comfort.
  - ii. Ventilation System:
    - 1. Air Conditioning (A/C) system:
      - a. Recent posts on BRS's FB-page by Riders have indicated that the A/C-system on even the most recently purchased Nova buses has *not* been functioning in the recent 30+ degree heat.

- b. Recent feedback by Operators have indicated that the Operator is *not able* to adequately adjust the A/C-system either for the passenger cabin or the operator space behind the Safety Shield.
- c. BRS pointed out that the A/C-system in our new buses need to be able to cool the buses up to +40 degree temperatures:
  - i. Since this requirement is crucial, BRS insisted that a bus with non-functioning A/C during the hot season should *not* be going out on the road.
  - ii. Consequently to avoid being short of buses because of sub-functioning A/C-systems, the new buses will require powerful, robust and reliable A/C-technology and sophisticated temperature adjustment controls.

2. Heating:

- a. The sentiments discussed above for the A/C-system also apply to the Heating-system, although in this case the system must of course be able to handle temperatures down to -40 degrees.
- b. Since the batteries in battery-electric buses are unlikely to have sufficient capacity, other technical solutions may be required for the Heating-system.

3. Air Quality:

- a. The COVID-pandemic has taught society the importance of clean air in confined spaces to impede pandemics and the spread of contagious diseases.
- b. BRS urged Transit to explore the availability of Ventilation-systems that adequately deals with these issues.
- c. And if such systems are not yet commercially available, CUTA may be the best venue for achieving required improvements over the longer term.

iii. Interior Design:

1. Space for Mobility Scooters & Child Strollers:

- a. Current buses have a shared space in the front with flip-up seats that accommodate both Mobility Scooters and Child Strollers.
- b. An article in the press noted that Winnipeg Transit has recently decided to require Child Strollers to be folded up due to lack of adequate space in the bus.
  - i. BRS noted that it is unsafe for babies and small children to be removed from the Child Stroller while on the bus.
  - ii. BRS further noted that a passenger cannot be expected to hold babies on their lap while also managing the stroller and supervising their other children.
- c. To avoid a similar requirement in Saskatoon, BRS urged Transit to incorporate the required flexibility in the seating/standing

arrangements of the new buses to be able to provide additional Child Stroller space as may be required over time.

2. Seating arrangement:
  - a. BRS pointed out the unacceptable situation of the permanently soiled seats in the 'facing-seats' arrangement at the back of the current Nova-buses.
3. Standing-room arrangement:
  - a. Posts on BRS's FB-page by Riders have indicated that standing passengers do *not* have adequate supports to hold on to.
  - b. BRS also noted that some passengers prefer to stand even when seating is available:
    - i. Sometimes when that is the case, these passengers tend to stand right in front of the rear door impeding alighting by other passengers.
    - ii. To prevent this from happening and also to provide additional space for Child Strollers it was noted that some transit agencies provide a small permanent standing-room space with waist-high horizontal railing opposite the rear door(s).
  - iv. Other Rider-centric systems in the buses that require close attention:
    1. The Ramp, which does not work in low temperatures in current buses.
    2. The Audible Announcements, where better individualized volume adjustment in each bus is required.
- 4) BRT Pilot Station at the Civic Operations Centre (COC):
  - a. Shelter and Pylon designs have been completed and these structures are expected to be installed at the COC from September to October/November.
  - b. Electronic amenities are *not* expected to be installed this year.
- 5) BRT-branding:
  - a. The third round of consultation with Stakeholders (including BRS) will begin imminently.
- 6) New On-Demand Transit (ODT) service:
  - a. Transit reported that the experience to date shows:
    - a. Shorter trips due to the stop-to-hub configuration.
    - b. Availability of a robust Dashboard for statistics and data analysis.
    - c. Successful integration of *Transit*-app with the new *ODT*-app.
  - b. Riders new to the ODT-service need to:
    - a. First download the app called *Saskatoon Transit On Demand* (developed by Spare Labs Inc.)
    - b. Open the app and register for the ODT-service by providing email address, cell-phone number and name.
    - c. Make sure the latest version of *Transit*-app is installed.

- c. Although explained on Transit's website (but not in the ODT-video<sup>1</sup>), Saskatoon Transit recommends that users always use **Transit-app** to plan their trip from end-to-end:
    - a. Note especially that for trips where the arrival time is important, the Rider should always book the trip by specifying the Arrive-by time in the app (although a bit of slack in the desired Arrival-time may be useful).
      - i. Thus Riders are advised to refrain from back-calculating from their desired Arrival-time to estimate and then enter a Departure-time in *Transit-app* or the *ODT-app*.
    - b. Consequently, if the trip-plan in *Transit-app* turns out to require the use of ODT for a portion of the trip, Transit-app will calculate the scheduling of the trip from end-to-end including transfer-locations and wait-times:
      - i. Furthermore, the booking of the ODT-portion of the trip can then be made directly from within *Transit-app* (which transfers the user through the tap of a button in *Transit-app* to the *ODT-app* to make the booking).
      - ii. Information and alerts about the ODT-portion of the trip should then be monitored in Transit-app as the trip progresses.
- 7) Service Changes:
- a. Service changes will come into effect on September 4.
  - b. New schedules and route maps have already been posted on Transit's website.
- 8) Transit campaigns:
- a. Transit informed the meeting that the *Bus Stop Blues* campaign to solicit input from Riders regarding desired locations for new Bus Stop Shelters will begin in September.
  - b. And a *Back-to-School* campaign for high-school students has been reintroduced.
- 9) Topics for upcoming meetings:
- a. The September meeting will feature Fleet and Maintenance Manager Tracey Davis.
  - b. The October meeting will feature Dan Willems, Director of Major Projects, to provide the quarterly update on the Bus Rapid Transit project while BRT Project Manager Rob Dudiak is on sabbatical.
  - c. Operations Manager Mike Moellenbeck is expected to present Transit's *Dashboard* and associated research projects at a future meeting.

**NEXT MEETING:** Monday, 12 September 2022 @ 2:30am via Zoom

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<sup>1</sup> A video explaining the set-up and use of the new ODT-app is available at: <https://youtu.be/JVkd4FIYur0>