

**Minutes for BRS-TRANSIT meeting  
Monday, 1 May 2023 @ 1:30-2:30pm**

**LOCATION:** In-person meeting at the Civic Operations Centre (COC)

**ATTENDANCE:**

- Saskatoon Transit (Transit):
  - Cory Shrigley, Customer Support & Engagement Manager
  - Allison Gray, Marketing Consultant
- BRT Team:
  - Rob Dudiak, BRT Project Manager
  - Liz Hoffman, Special Projects Manager, BRT Community Partnership
  - Amanda Lindgren, Public Engagement Consultant
  - Tegan Closson, Engineering Intern
- 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
  - Sherry Tarasoff, Steering Committee Member
  - James Wood, Steering Committee Member
  - Lila Wagner, Steering Committee Member
  - Jennifer Ewles, Steering Committee Member

**ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES**

- For this meeting: Allison led the discussion and Peter prepared the minutes.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- 1) None

**NEW BUSINESS**

This was a regular quarterly meeting with the BRT Team. The meeting began with a site visit to the BRT Pilot Station at the Civic Operations Centre (COC), before continuing in the COC Board Room.

- 2) BRT Pilot Station at the COC:
  - a. Purpose:
    - i. This Pilot Station is intended to show what a 'typical' BRT Station will look like out of the 90+ stations to be built along the three BRT Lines. There will, however, be some variations. And the centre-loading platforms on the contra-flow runningways will by necessity be substantially different.
    - ii. The purpose of building this Pilot Station at the COC is i) to get feedback from Riders on the features and functionality of the Station, ii) stress-test each component of the Station for durability and ease of maintenance, and iii) train Bus Operators to drive up to the Platform and load/disembark passengers.

b. Main Features:

- i. Liz described the principles and main features of a BRT Station, including the Platform, Shelter, Information Display, and other amenities (such as garbage cans, benches, advertising panel that are not yet installed at this Pilot Station):

- ii. Platform:

1. The height of the Platform is 10 inches above the adjacent street:
  - a. This height is deliberately slightly lower than the bus floor.
  - b. It allows Access Transit buses to open their doors, which swing outwards over the Platform.
  - c. And it allows regular transit buses with protruding door hinges to drive up close to the Platform.
  - d. Consequently, Riders will need to take a small step up when boarding the bus.
  - e. Kneeling and the Ramp are still available for Riders that have difficulty accessing the bus.
2. The length of the Platform is determined by the requirement to accommodate two articulated or three regular buses at the same time:
  - a. Commentators noted that the Platform felt very big and intimidating for many low-volume stations.
  - b. When a comment wondered if the Platform could initially be built shorter and lengthened later when capacity required, Rob noted that for any platform that was *not* built to its full length the City would lose some joint federal-provincial funding.
3. Commentators noted that the space from the Platform edge to both the Shelter and the Pylon seemed overly narrow both for wheel-chairs to pass and for longitudinal movement along the Platform for all Riders.
4. The coloured strip along the Platform edge was appreciated and the BRT Team noted that the slippery surface of the embedded Drainage Channel will be improved.

- iii. Shelter:

1. Liz described the Shelter amenities, such as the radiant Heaters in the ceiling, the three Security Cameras (not yet installed), and the Bench (not yet installed):
  - a. Commentators suggested that energy might be saved by activating only half of the Heaters from each push-button at the two entrances. The durability of the current push-buttons was doubted.
2. Liz noted that the gap under the Shelter wall is deliberate to allow the wind to clean out the Shelter of snow and debris:
  - a. Commentators noted that they had found it very unpleasant to stand under the Heaters while at the same time experiencing a cold draught around their ankles.

3. Commentators wondered about Access and Safety:
  - a. The two entrances were appreciated, but the width was deemed insufficient for large wheel-chairs. It was suggested that the entrance further away from the internal Bench could be wider to accommodate wheel-chairs.
  - b. Rob noted that the CCTV-cameras would likely be passively monitored; i.e., that the recordings would only be reviewed in response to specific complaints. Effort is underway, however, to investigate more advanced, live monitoring systems as well.
4. Commentators wondered about Vandalism:
  - a. Rob noted that changes had already been made to the original design of the glass walls, which are particularly prone to vandalism:
    - i. The size of the panels had been adjusted so only two differently sized glass panels will now be required.
    - ii. And each glass panel can be easily exchanged (without requiring the removal of the roof; as was the case in the original design).
  - b. Rob noted that while the make of the radiant Heaters might still change, the Heaters will be off-the-shelf, standard heaters that can be easily/quickly exchanged as complete units.
- iv. Information Display:
  1. The main purpose of the Information Display is to make the BRT Station visible from a distance to potential Riders. It will also provide a distinct image consistent with the branding of the entire BRT network.
  2. In addition, the Information Display contains the Digital Screen for Transit's electronic information system that provides notifications of the next bus(es) plus applicable alerts and other useful information.
    - a. A comment was made regarding distracting glare on the Digital Screen.
    - b. To minimize vandalism, it was suggested that the Digital Screen could be slightly recessed and perhaps covered by a protective, non-glare glass pane.
  3. Commentators noted that the Information Display seemed excessively 'massive'.
    - a. Rob noted that the entire lower portion of the Information Display contains electric and electronic equipment for the various systems at the Station. This equipment could, however, be distributed elsewhere on the Station, if deemed necessary.
- v. In closing, commentators noted that the Pilot Station provides a real tangible sense of what the future BRT Stations will entail and feel like that drawings cannot convey.

The participants then moved indoors to the COC Board Room to continue the meeting.

- 3) BRS raised the issue of potential congestion and capacity issues about the BRT Stations near the proposed New Arena and Convention Centre:
  - a. Bus congestion & schedule adherence at the BRT Station on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue & 23<sup>rd</sup> Street:
    - i. The buses must line up behind each other in the order they arrive at this station, and they cannot depart until the bus(es) in front take off.
    - ii. Although being an excellent place for easy transfers (especially for wheel-chairs and other mobility-challenged riders) between buses from all three high-frequency BRT-lines serving the four cardinal directions of the city, passenger loading times may exceed the time available when multiple high-capacity (articulated) buses converge in close succession at this potential choke-point.
  - b. Passenger congestion & safety on platform:
    - i. There is the inevitable scramble in both directions along the rather narrow, potentially crowded and obstructed (by the Shelter & Information Display) centre platform when riders alight, board or transfer between the many buses going in opposite directions along the platform.
    - ii. Note also: riders will not know in advance where their bus will stop along the platform, which worsens the scramble (especially for wheel-chairs).
  - c. Sidewalk congestion & street crossing safety:
    - i. Additional congestion may occur on the sidewalk and crosswalk where large crowds from an Arena event congregate to get to the BRT-station platform, which is located precariously in the middle of the busy street.
  - d. Arena events affecting the BRT lines on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street:
    - i. Concern was expressed that the BRT buses that drive along 22<sup>nd</sup> Street between 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue and Idylwyld Drive without the benefit of dedicated runningways might get stuck/delayed in traffic congestion created by the additional motor traffic being generated by events at the New Arena and Conference Centre.
    - ii. If special Event Buses are contemplated for Arena events, there are concern for their timely site access as well as crowding around loading/alighting.
- 4) BRS made it clear they did not expect to get answers to these specific concerns at this meeting. Instead BRS was interested in making sure that all appropriate city departments have been alerted and will become familiar with the concerns expressed here:
  - a. Rob assured the meeting that the BRT Team has been and continues to be in regular contact with an impressive and exhaustive list of city departments and other agencies for all aspects of final design and construction of the BRT Project.
    - i. Moreover, the people assigned to the project from these diverse organizations are keenly aware of the intricacies of the BRT Project and their input is much valued by the BRT Team.
  - b. As the design for the BRT Project continues to progress, the Project Team is by necessity forced to lock down various aspects of their designs:

- i. It was noted that HDR Corporation was given the task back in 2018 to provide detailed, 'shovel-ready' design drawings for the BRT Project long before the location of the New Arena was known.
  - ii. While the location of BRT routes and stations already remain fixed and will not change, many details are still flexible and open to design changes.
    1. For example, the detailed design of the BRT Station on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street is not yet finalized. What is already known is that it will be different from the Pilot Station at the COC.
    2. The BRT Team did not concur with BRS's concerns about potential congestion at the BRT Station on 1<sup>st</sup> Avenue at 23<sup>rd</sup> Street. They have found no reason to believe that this station will be particularly busy when the BRT service begins as there are other locations to transfer between the BRT lines; and this station will not function as a busy terminal for conventional transit routes.
  - iii. It was noted that as unfortunate as any changes to already built infrastructure may be in the future, if they indeed prove necessary they will have to be part of a separate project when and where these changed conditions exist.
- c. Having said that, the BRT Team together with its partners have been making changes:
- i. As an example, design changes have already been made on Preston Avenue in response to the new Electrical Switching Station and the new Fire Station there.
  - ii. Much attention has also been placed on the detailed design of the BRT Station at Cumberland Avenue which is located on the College Drive runningway. This station with centre platform in the middle of the street has already been identified as a station with unusually large ridership requiring special attention.
- d. It was emphasized that overall concepts and detailed design of all travel mode implications resulting from the location of the proposed New Arena on the Midtown Plaza parking lot will *not* fall within the mandate of the BRT Team:
- i. Rob has already discussed with the Arena Team where the division of responsibility for impacts on travel will be, which is not limited to the BRT but includes motor traffic, pedestrian traffic and all forms of transit. This will be included in the newly formed Downtown Entertainment and Event District (DEED) project because it is in the early stage of design while the BRT project is nearing construction.
  - ii. As a general comment, Rob also noted that patrons of the Conference Centre and Arena will adapt and adjust their behaviour when arriving and departing events as happens now with Sask Tel Centre. Many people will remain nearby patronizing cafes and restaurants; some will take regular transit instead of the BRT; special event buses may be deployed; and more than one BRT station will be within walking distance from these venues.

COS-meeting, 1 May 2023

5) Next Meeting:

- a. BRS expressed an interest in meeting with Terry Schmidt, General Manager of Transportation and Construction, to discuss the upcoming 2-year City Budget; and other topics of mutual interest if time permits.

**NEXT MEETING:** Monday, 29 May 2023 @ 1:30am via Zoom