

**Minutes for BRS-TRANSIT online meeting
Monday, 18 September 2023 @ 2:00-3:00pm**

ATTENDANCE:

- Saskatoon Transit (Transit):
 - Jim Puffalt, Transit Director
 - Cory Shrigley, Customer Support & Engagement Manager
 - Amanda Lindgren, Engagement Consultant
 - Braden Cline, Johnson-Shoyama Intern
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon (BRS):
 - Robert Clipperton, Spokesperson and Steering Committee Member
 - Peter Gallén, Transit Co-ordinator and Steering Committee Member
 - James Wood, Steering Committee Member
 - Lila Wagner, Steering Committee Member
 - Odin Swidzinski, Steering Committee Member
 - Curt McCoshen, Steering Committee Member

ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

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

OLD BUSINESS

- 1) Update on the upcoming Fare Review:
 - a. Cory introduced Brayden Cline, who is Transit's fifth intern from the Johnson-Shoyama School of Public Policy at the University of Saskatchewan.
 - b. Brayden, who is taking a pause from his university studies, has been hired to research and frame the Fare Review.
 - c. Current intent is to conduct the public engagements for the Fare Review in 2024 with a report going to Council for decision in 2025.
- 2) Update on the City Budget deliberations:
 - a. For the final budget deliberations in November, Transit is preparing a report to Council on the anticipated impacts by the potential expansion of free transit (from children under 5) to children 13 and under – when accompanied by an adult.
 - b. After having reviewed Regina Transit's explanations for the fiscal and ridership impacts of such an initiative implemented there this year, Saskatoon Transit's initial impression is that significantly more revenue than \$2,000 per year would be lost here.
 - c. Having said that, Transit also noted that Saskatoon is one of the last cities in Canada that has *not* yet made this switch to free transit for these older children.

NEW BUSINESS

- 3) Problems with full buses at school-start in September:
- a. BRS informed Transit about the recent Ward 9 Open House¹ (with Councillor Dubois and Mayor Clark) plus a CBC-interview² and a CBC-article³, where a resident brought up problems with full buses that create havoc for high-school students. Since this meeting, CBC has also followed up with a video-reportage⁴ riding on a full bus.
 - b. In the discussion that followed, these observations and suggestions were brought up:
 - i. Full buses, where Riders on bus stops are left waiting for another bus, should be deemed a systemic issue that occurs every year when high-schools and post-secondary institutions resume classes in the Fall:
 1. Transit noted that since every year is quite different, it is impossible to predict where precisely the full buses might/will occur:
 - a. These annual differences are caused by population growth and by changes in the locations where students actually live.
 - b. Moreover, daily start and end-of-day times vary by school.
 2. Although Transit consults with both the Public and Catholic School Boards every year, last minute changes to individual school schedules are not conveyed to Transit to make corresponding adjustments to bus schedules:
 - a. As a result, the school bus may end up departing essentially empty when taking off (sometimes just a few minutes) before the students get out of school and had time to board.
 - ii. On a more positive note, Transit said that the situation now seems to have stabilized with *no* full buses being experienced today:
 1. However since we are already 2 weeks into the school-year (which is much too late for reaching this state), and more importantly since Transit is an essential city service, BRS noted that a much better solution is required right from the first day of classes.
 2. BRS further noted that Transit's annual advice to Riders to "take an earlier or later bus" is not helpful for students. High-school students that take an earlier bus are left standing outside school in the cold, because the school is not yet open, and those that take a later bus will arrive late after school has already started. Thus neither of these options is feasible for high-school students.
 - iii. As a potential remedy to full buses at the beginning of each school year, BRS suggested a 'blanket flooding' of additional buses on all most likely routes right

¹ Ward 9 Open House, September 9 (0:00 & 25:43 minutes into the video): <https://fb.watch/mYIkJJVe9d/>

² CBC-interview, September 15: <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2264238659595>

³ CBC-article, September 18: <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/saskatchewan/saskatoon-school-transportation-1.6969640>

⁴ CBC-video, September 20: <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2265472579741>

at the beginning of classes followed by subsequent re-arrangements (and gradual reductions over say 2-3 weeks) to meet the actual needs.

- iv. Transit noted that more timely information and updates of specific advice via the apps will be attempted.
- 4) Arrival and departure times at the University:
- a. BRS noted that bus arrival times at University did not seem to line up very well with the start and end of classes throughout the day.
 - b. It was suggested that buses should arrive about 15 minutes before class starts and depart about 15 minutes after class ends.
 - c. Apparently there are two sets of typical daily schedules for the majority of students:
 - i. Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays classes are one hour long and start on the half-hour at 8:30, 9:30, etc. throughout the day.
 - ii. Tuesdays and Thursdays classes are one-and-a-half hour long and start at 8:30, 10:00, etc. throughout the day.
 - iii. All classes end 10 minutes before the next class begins.
- 5) Update on the BRT Project:
- a. The Federal Government has now provided final criteria for approving the City's application for joint federal-provincial-municipal funding for the BRT Project:
 - i. Four of the five sub-projects within the application have already been approved, while a duty to consult with the Indigenous community has been mandated for the Green Line.

NEXT MEETING: Monday, 30 October 2023 @ 1:30pm, probably via Zoom.