

Meeting minutes for the August 19th, 2024 BRS-Transit Meeting at 1:30 pm

Attendance:

- BRS:
 - o Odin Swidzinski, Transit Coordinator
 - o Robert Clipperton, Member
 - o Peter Gallen, Member
 - o Curt McCoshen, Member
 - o Lila Wagner, Member
 - o James Wood, Member
- Transit:
 - o Cory Shrigley, Customer Service & Engagement Manager

Administrative issues:

For this meeting, Curt chaired the meeting and Odin prepared the minutes.

Old business:

- Sewer upgrade on 24th Street:
 - o The #5 was still running normally during the sewer upgrade on 24th Street
 - o A BRS member's high-rise has been affected by the sewer upgrade, and has raised concerns about Access Transit and the #5 bus not being able to access the front door of the high-rise they live, which affects those with mobility issues
 - Transit says that it will be treated like any other detour or construction, and they would be communicated to residents
 - o Transit says that the #5 will continue moving down 24th Street, and promised that Access Transit will do a site visit from an Access Transit supervisor as soon as possible to assess how the sewer upgrades on 24th Street affect Access Transit

New business:

- Detours caused by the construction at Downtown Terminal:
 - o Transit reports that there are occupational health and safety concerns about buses hitting curbs, which has led to the downtown terminal being rehabilitated
 - The first phase of rehabilitation will be on 23rd Street, while the second phase will be on 3rd Avenue
 - Rehabilitation work will start this week, and buses will be parked on 2nd Avenue or 3rd Avenue
 - This is not a complete shutdown of the terminal, as some buses will continue going in onto 23rd Street while others will be parked on the street.
- Detours caused by the construction

- Transit is looking at moving the 4s/40s from College Drive to 12th Street during the last phase of the College Drive construction
 - The detour will affect college students being unable to find buses, but all detours will be on the Transit app, and bus stops will have signs saying that they are closed, with temporary bus stops being set up
 - A BRS member suggests that buses should have first priority over cars during reconstruction of College Drive
 - Transit noted that cars are being detoured. However, there are cases where buses would have to change from one side of College Drive to the other side of the road and they cannot make that turn. Moreover, if the curb lane is closed, they could not pick up customers.
 - Transit reports buses will only be delayed by a few minutes during the detour via 12th Street, and that all routes that still need to access Place Riel can still access Place Riel via Cumberland Avenue
 - Transit says that westbound lanes on College Drive will be closed at some point in late August
 - Transit says that if there are maps of the detours, BRS should have access to them
 - A BRS member has expressed surprise that these detours have only affected one stop so far
 - The upcoming detours will affect people at RUH or Place Riel
 - The move will be temporary and there is an expectation it will be completed by mid-September
- Transit projects and reporting:
 - Upcoming welcome week events:
 - Youth expo at the University of Saskatchewan – September 3rd
 - City of Saskatoon Welcoming Week – September 13th-22nd
 - Transit says that they will give some free Transit fares to encourage people to ride the bus to and from the event
 - Trucktastic event – August 24th
 - SCOA's senior event – October 8th
 - A member requests that the dates for the events be sent out to BRS
 - Transit says that invitations to these events will be provided
 - Reports to council:
 - Report on fall/winter overcrowding:
 - The report already went out to the Governance and Priorities Committee

- Transit asked other Canadian transit agencies if they had policies on overcrowded buses:
 - Fifteen transit agencies have responded to Saskatoon Transit's request for information, with only four agencies having any policy on overcrowded buses, with other agencies lacking any formal policy
 - Transit communicates more with customers on crowded buses than other cities
- Lots of agencies rely on adding extra buses to deal with overcrowding
 - Transit has allocated twelve buses to operate on high school routes
 - Transit usually puts buses on standby to deal with overcrowding, but Transit does not have additional buses to add in real time
 - Transit reports that there is no mechanism to tell customers that the bus is now full
- Transit is still not at a point where the fleet is healthy
 - Transit expects that the fleet will be in a healthier position by September 2025
- Full buses:
 - Transit has eighty-four buses to operate all the routes including the two new routes
 - Transit will be installing pass-up buttons on buses so that they can get data on how often buses are overcrowded, so that they can know how many people are actually missed by full buses
- Electric buses:
 - Transit was pleased to report that an electric bus was able to operate a single route for seven hours straight
 - Transit says that electric buses may be used a lot more on longer routes than what Transit/the city had expected
 - Different seating arrangements on the two new electric buses
 - Most buses have two rows of sideways-facing benches, and then benches facing forward, while on electric buses, from the front, all the way up to the back wheel-well, they will have seats against the wall, and all seats flip up: behind the back wheel-well, bus seats still face forward
 - Transit says that there is nearly zero loss in seat capacity compared to a typical bus
 - Transit reports that the capacity (including standing room) may be perfect for high school routes
 - Transit says that there is more room for people with strollers and wheelchairs

- There are four wheelchair spots on electric buses, compared to two on conventional buses
 - Transit reports that the seats on electric buses have a harder surface, but are comfortable and are easier to clean than the seats on non-electric buses
 - A BRS member asks how long it takes to charge the electric buses?
 - Transit reports that it takes approximately four hours from 20% remaining to fully charged, and it would be feasible for electric buses to operate during peak hours on a shift-split basis
 - Another BRS member requested a diagram of seat placement on electric buses
 - Transit says they will try to provide a diagram on seat placement for electric buses
 - A BRS member asks if people standing will have something to grab on to
 - Transit says yes, but they note that people under five feet have a harder time reaching to a straphanger
 - Transit promises that they will send a package to BRS on straphanger placement
- Timeline for additional buses:
 - Transit has not received the eight new buses on order yet, and may receive them in Spring 2025 instead of Fall 2024
 - A member suggests that Transit needs to order the buses for 2025 sooner rather than later to ensure timely delivery, while another member asked why Transit seems to be “holding off” on ordering buses when they have the funding to do so
 - Transit says that the CUTRIC report helps inform Transit on how they can leverage budgeted monies and federal funding on deciding which types of buses that they are going to purchase
 - Ordering buses is a specific process that goes through the city’s procurement department
- Frontline safety worker campaign:
 - Transit is working on eighteen projects to address public safety, with more detailed information to be released to the public at a later date
 - A member asks if Transit has a person who communicates with the Fire Department to coordinate the FSOs
 - There is a staff member talking with the Fire Department on a daily basis to help coordinate the FSOs

- Another member asks if these new projects will focus on repeat offenders
 - Transit says that they will focus on people causing a nuisance and commit Criminal Code offenses, not target those that just request a free ride
- Additional questions
 - A BRS member asks about the lack of ticket vendors in the southwest corner of the city:
 - The Transit Director has spoken with leisure centres to try and get them to sell bus passes
 - Transit reports some pushback from leisure centres
 - Transit has not ruled out payment-in-motion (PIM) technologies for their new passes, but things are still in the air, and they have not transitioned over
 - Another member asks about the 8s, and mentions how you need to look up every single 80-something route on the Transit website when you can find information on the 8s at the customer service centre at the downtown terminal
 - Transit says there is an assumption that you can take any of the 80s between downtown and the mall, but it is not explicitly said on the website
 - Transit will put that document on the website

Next meeting will be on Monday, September 23rd at 1:30 pm.