

Meeting minutes for the December 9th, 2024 BRS-Transit Meeting at 1:30 pm

Attendance:

- BRS
 - o Odin Swidzinski, BRS-Transit Coordinator
 - o Robert Clipperton, Member
 - o Bob Eaton, Member
 - o Zach De Francesco, Member
 - o Peter Gallen, Member
 - o Lila Wagner, Member
 - o James Wood, Member
- Transit
 - o Cory Shrigley, Customer Service & Engagement Manager
 - o Seth Akande, Johnson-Shoyama Executive Intern

Regrets: Curt McCoshen

Administrative issues:

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

Old business:

- Separate BRS-Transit meetings with Filip
 - o Transit says Filip is starting to prepare for the separate meeting with BRS, and he should be ready to have them by February, but it is up to Filip to decide whether or not he will attend
 - o Transit says that he may attend the January meeting, but no promises were given
- A BRS member asks for the Customer Service and Engagement Manager's job description in response to a BRS member's previous comment on the Customer Service being a "super-rider"
 - o Transit says that part of the Customer Service and Engagement Manager's job is build partnerships with bus riders and stakeholders like Inclusion Saskatchewan
 - o Transit will provide the job description for the position to the BRS member
- Has Transit looked at the free transit initiatives in Orangeville?
 - o Transit says that they have done some research on free transit in general, but they have not looked at the specific initiatives mentioned in Brampton or Orangeville, and they will need more information from BRS about the initiatives in those cities
 - Transit said that they'd take a closer look at the information in Brampton and Orangeville
 - o CUTA conference updates:

- Transit did not provide a lot of details about the CUTA conference at the meeting, but notes that high school ridership was a major topic of discussion at the CUTA conference
 - A BRS member asks if Transit can get the Downtown Business Improvement District on board with free transit in order to increase traffic downtown
 - Transit says that they normally let city council take the lead on these initiatives and proposals
 - Transit notes that every year, the Jingle Bell Express has received increasing ridership as they provide a direct route from mall-to-mall despite it not being a free service
- Fare review
 - The fare review is part of a larger corporate level initiative (Universal Low Income Supports, or ULIS) led by Mike Jordan, with an aim of making things such as the city's leisure pass and fares more equitable, and uniting them under a single strategy
 - Transit is asking for the fare review to move forward
 - A BRS member asks if the fare review will go straight to SPCOT or Council, or if they will talk with Transit before it goes to SPCOT or Council?
 - Transit says that they will help frame the engagement questions for the fare review and put things together in equitable packages
 - A BRS member notes that waste disposal was also referred to the fare review process
 - A BRS member asks if Transit has been spoken to about the fare review process
 - The fare review process is currently with the City
- Bus interiors
 - A BRS member asks about who made the decision about seat layouts for Transit
 - Transit says that seat layouts and bus interiors should be discussed in the January meeting

New business:

- Budget discussions
 - The big changes in the municipal budget are an increase of \$1.2 million for maintenance expenses
 - This will allow Transit to hire additional maintenance staff and to implement enhanced preventative maintenance and increased maintenance to keep the buses on the road
 - The maintenance increase should be in line with increased expenses for buses, as they will be able to have staff that can do the required maintenance

- \$80,000 has been provided by the city for ongoing support for the commissionaires
 - Until now, the commissionaires were unbudgeted, but now Transit and the Fire Department have an allocated budget to maintain the commissionaire program
- \$128,000 has been provided to expand service supervisor hours during the morning and afternoon peaks
 - Additional service supervisor hours will provide more coverage and depth so that Transit can have the right ratio of supervisors at all times of the day
- A BRS member asks if Transit did not receive any items that they asked for in the budget
 - Transit says that they have currently received what they asked for in the budget
- The same BRS member asks Transit if Saskatoon Transit has hired a mechanic for electric buses
 - Transit says that they would like every mechanic trained to handle both electric and diesel buses
- The same BRS member asks if they received funding for bus service to Aspen Ridge
 - The On-Demand route to Aspen Ridge was put in place last year as part of an incremental process to improve routes to Aspen Ridge that will take six years to complete
 - Transit says Filip is looking at gaps in what HDR proposed and a report to Council will go ahead in 2025
 - Service hours could be discussed with Filip at the separate meeting
- A BRS member asks about commissionaire funding
 - Transit is allocating \$80,000 from the Transit budget for the commissionaires, but they are unsure if it is an additional \$80,000 to what they were already paying or if it is the total budget
 - Transit says the commissionaires and the fire community support workers are working together to accomplish the same goal, and the \$80,000 will indirectly support the community support workers, especially as they grow stronger in their mandate and capacity to handle issues
- Zero-Emission Fund
 - Transit says that the federal government informed Saskatoon that they received too many applications for the program, but they cannot provide more detail about it until a report to council goes out in January
 - A BRS member asks if Transit has already received a finalized CUTRIC report

- Transit says there will be two reports in January or February: the first report is the ZETF/CUTRIC report, and the second report is the update on Saskatoon Transit's fleet renewal strategy
- Snow clearance
 - A BRS member reports that the sewer replacement in front of their apartment building has not been completed, which forces buses to be detoured to areas which are inaccessible to people who use walkers or wheelchairs, and expressed concerns about snow clearance in front of their building
 - Transit says that they will meet up with the BRS member to discuss their concerns at a later date
 - Another BRS member observed that bus stop clearance has been better than they had been in the past few years, and would like to hear more about the change
 - Snow clearance from bus terminals
 - Transit says that they have formal snow-removal contracts with Market Mall, Confederation Mall, the Centre Mall, Lawson Heights Mall, with the former two having been updated; while Place Riel is taken care of by the University, and the Downtown Terminal is under the jurisdiction of the roadways department
 - Transit says that there needs to be a continuity in the level of service across their network, and last year, they made a request for the facilities department do some ad-hoc cleaning at the downtown terminal
 - The Municipal Engineering Service (MES) handles all the snow removal contracts for sidewalks, and is trying to handle a contract so that if they get five centimetres of snow or a snow event is declared, they can have the walks cleared by 7 am the following day
 - The downtown terminal has long been a hot potato between Transit and the city, but Transit is taking the initiative in trying to find a contractor that will handle snow clearance from the downtown terminal
 - A BRS member asks about buses being stuck on the hill leading up to Confederation Mall, and asks if the proposed contract is addressing snow clearance on that hill
 - MES has added a piece to the contract which states that if the roadways department is unable to reach certain spots (such as 8th/Louise, Centre Mall, or Confederation Mall), Transit will have their own contractor to perform spot checks in these areas
 - Snow clearance along bus stops
 - Transit has split up the contract that handled both advertising and snow clearance so that one contractor handles shelter

- maintenance, and one contractor handles advertising, and the contracts are in the process of being negotiated for a one-year term
- Transit says that the old contract was reactive and relied on complaints, but the new contract will proactively handle the 255 sheltered bus stops
 - For the unsheltered bus stops, 95 unsheltered bus stops are the responsibility of the city to keep clear of snow, while the remaining unsheltered bus stops are the responsibility of the nearby property owners
- BRT platforms
 - Three of five 36-metre long BRT platforms that were built this fall require snow to be removed from the platforms
 - These platforms are part of the new contract that they are negotiating with a new contractor, which will include snow removal from the platforms already built so Transit can get a scope on how much it will cost to clear the snow from the BRT platforms
 - A BRS member asks if they are moving bus stops next to the BRT stops to the BRT platforms
 - Transit says that some bus stops, such as Arlington/8th, will be moved onto the BRT platforms, the old shelter will be secured and moved to the platform, and the old bus stop will be removed, but some like the Shaw Centre will remain covered in snow
 - The same BRS member asks if that project is under BRT or Transit
 - Transit says that the project is under BRT. Future budget approvals will cover off these added costs.
 - The same BRS member says that everyone cleared the sidewalks in their neighborhood, but then snow clearance crews moved the snow onto the sidewalks, and notes some bus stops were half-cleared and then there is a ridge in the middle of the bus stop right where a passenger would step off
 - Transit asks that the BRS member send photos to them, and says that they have received reports where when a BRT platform is cleared of snow, the grader pushes the snow into the BRT platform, and they are seeing the need that this should be under a systems manager in the bylaw to ensure that bus stops can be accessible, as they are currently inaccessible
 - Transit aims to make contracts with snow removers and make sure they are enforced, and then prioritize bus stops that have shelters and bus stops owned by the city, with the ultimate goal of getting to all of the bus stops on the network

- Transit says that they are finally taking snow removal more seriously than they had in the past, and they will work with MES and find ways of articulating plans into contracts
- A BRS member asks if bylaw inspectors understand that they need to watch the bus stops and see if the bus stops were cleaned
 - Transit says that MES supervisors enforce the contracts, but adds that the process needs to be brought in-house
 - Transit has made a new request-for-proposal for maintenance, and has plans to add a new level of service
 - Transit suggests that contract enforcement could stay in the planning department, or it could be allocated to a new section of Transit, and expressed a hope that there would not be “too many stovepipes”
- Are there areas in the city that are particularly difficult to access?
 - The On-Demand service in Aspen Ridge fits into Transit service standards, but it is not on a priority route, which led to the closure of four stops to prevent buses getting stuck in Aspen Ridge
 - Access Transit has a similar problem to Transit’s On-Demand service as they are supposed to provide point-to-point transportation between any point within the city
 - Transit says that there were ten people with bookings on On-Demand for November 25th and November 26th that were advised to rebook their journeys as it was unable to access Aspen Ridge, and Access Transit has faced those issues at a larger scale as many more streets were impacted by the snowstorm
 - A BRS member says that if Transit is rerouting bus routes because buses cannot safely go to certain bus stops, how do they ensure that people with accessibility issues can get to the bus stops, and asks if they are expecting city services to go everywhere, or if people should ask if they should expect full service?
 - Transit reports that there are eight-unit care homes in new neighbourhoods on narrow streets which make it difficult for Access Transit to pick and drop off people who live in those neighbourhoods

Next meeting on Monday, January 20, 2025 @ 1:30 pm on Zoom.