

Meeting minutes for the February 18th, 2025 BRS-Transit Meeting at 1:30 pm

Attendance:

- BRS
 - o Odin Swidzinski, BRS-Transit Coordinator
 - o Robert Clipperton, Member
 - o Peter Gallen, Member
 - o Curt McCoshen, Member
- Transit
 - o Cory Shrigley, Customer Service and Engagement Manager

Regrets: Lila Wagner

Administrative issues:

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

Old business:

- Safety issues
 - o How does Transit plan to address the safety concerns that were raised at the recent SPCOT meeting?
 - Transit said that they are working with the Fire Department to balance the FCSO's responsibilities and daily duties.
 - Transit is meeting weekly with the Fire Department, and they are working on communications to discuss violence on buses, to share information, and to discuss how they are using time and how much time they are at the bus compared to the amount of time they spend travelling to another destination or at the terminal
 - Transit reported that the fire support officers are using radios to communicate with one another, and they are developing a process for communicating locations
 - Transit reported that the commissionaires are now conducting foot patrols seven days a week and they have added patrols five days a week at the Confederation Terminal and two times on weekends at the Downtown Terminal
 - Transit said that the Transit Security Advisor, Rob Garisson, is the liaison between corporate security and Transit: he was the supervisor of the former Community Support Program, but he now liaises between the Fire Department and Transit and is asked to provide a direct report to Transit
 - Transit reported that the Transit Security advisor will help with some synergy between Transit and Fire
 - Transit said that the Transit Security Advisor will be working alongside the Fire Department and will be reporting directly

- to Transit, so that they can receive weekly reports on what is going on the frontlines
- Transit provided BRS with a brief biography of the Transit Security Advisor
- Another BRS member said that they want Transit to understand BRS' concerns about an interim report on the FSOs, and suggested that there should be a report sooner rather than later, and said that accountability is not just having weekly meetings, but how things can actually change for the better, and added that it is important for Transit to know what is going on so they can make things better and hold people to account
 - Transit said that the operations department is attending these meetings, but the customer service engagement manager does not attend the safety meetings, and believes that Transit is making tangible positive steps at these meetings
 - Transit is advocating for increasing the number of commissionaires: they want to be effective eight hours a day and to see more of them on the streets
- A BRS member asked can the Customer Service and Engagement Manager articulate the concerns raised by the ridership at the meetings and the whole system if they are not part of the conversation, and wanted to know if things are getting better
- Another BRS member said that it is encouraging to see a reaction other than "we will wait until the next budget cycle." He expressed doubts that just increasing the number of FSOs is the right call
- The same BRS member mentioned that there are only so many support workers, noted that Transit records the number of incidents that took place on buses and not incidents that were prevented by the support workers, added that it was good to hear things happening from Transit's perspective, and urged Transit to get the information out to the public as soon as possible in order to combat misinformation
- A BRS member said that the city will be hiring thirty-one more police officers on the streets with the province funding the cost, and asked Transit for statistics on police intervening on Transit-related incidents as it may not be under the review conducted by the Fire Department's Director of Community Relationships, Rielly Knock, and asked how that can happen as more police officers should lead to quicker response times
- A BRS member said that the community support workers used to have a monthly or a quarterly report going out over time, but it was discontinued after the Fire Department took over the program, and wanted to ask the

Fire Department's Director of Community Relationships about whether or not they are already providing similar reports to the city

- The BRS member said that the question about regular reporting was raised by another BRS member who submitted a comment to the recent SPCOT meeting
 - It was subsequently found out that these quarterly reports on the Community Support Worker program went to the now defunct Street Action Steering Committee. BRS would like to see these detailed reports continue as a regular part of the new Fire Support Worker program and be published in a timely manner.
- How effective are electric buses in -30 °C conditions?
- The maintenance department reported to Transit that they are not specifically collecting data on the efficacy of electric buses in -30 °C conditions, as they were not out on the road during the cold snap
 - A BRS member asked Transit what were the warranty issues keeping buses off the roads during the cold snap?
 - Transit said that the warranty issue that led to them taking the bus off the road was a faulty fault light (engine light) sensor
 - Another BRS member expressed concern that these electric buses were not repaired in a timely fashion and stated that it would prevent Transit from collecting data on the efficacy of purchasing electric buses in the future
 - Transit said they are not purchasing electric buses because they did not qualify for federal funding, and Transit reported that Nova is working on repairing the buses in Montreal
 - Multiple BRS members raised concerns about the length of time it is taking for Nova to fix the electric buses, especially as Transit said that only one bus was out for warranty work for faulty lights at the previous meeting
 - Transit said that they need to keep things in perspective: they are “making service” and they cannot afford to have an electric bus be towed back to the shop. The bus cannot be out on the road with an “engine” light on.
 - Transit informed BRS that a CUTRIC report will be provided to city council
 - A BRS member asked why Transit did not ignore the faulty fault light sensor and just continue operating them
 - Transit said they cannot risk damaging buses, and that there is a reason why Nova is taking a while to repair the buses and holding them back

- Another BRS member said that if a certain part is broken, Transit must find out why that part is broken and urged Transit to not make excuses
 - A BRS member provided an anecdote of spending a significant amount of money to get a new gas cap and spending the amount because if they did not spend it, their warranty could be void, and said that they understood why Transit acted the way it did in taking the bus off the road despite the issue being seemingly minor
- Another BRS member asked how the bus could be repaired, acknowledged that getting it repaired is different to whether or not it can run under warranty, and suggested that if the electric bus cannot be run under warranty that it be replaced with a new one so the faulty one can be repaired “at Nova’s leisure”
 - The previous BRS member said that the problem was a monopoly on bus manufacturing in Canada, as only two companies produced buses: New Flyer or Nova
- Transit promised BRS that they would provide “a better update” on electric buses at the next meeting, but the update that the maintenance department gave them was what they gave to Transit, and expressed hope that they will be able to have the electric buses covered under extended warranty
- A BRS member said that Transit needed the data this winter
 - Transit acknowledged that the electric buses were not out to the extent they would have liked

New business:

- Accuracy analysis
 - Transit had two conversations to discuss accuracy: one with Transit App, who provided a data accuracy report to Transit, and another with Vontas, who is responsible for Data-ITS (computer on the bus that tells the bus where it is at)
 - Transit reported that support was provided by both Trapeze and Vontas
 - Both firms confirmed that when buses run 20 minutes late in cold conditions, there is a breakdown in data compared to real time data: if it is 20 minutes late and it is cold outside, buses might think they are going in a different direction,
 - Another factor that Transit mentioned in “jittery” bus routes was the practice of interlining bus routes
 - Transit reported that they are working on decoupling the interlines to ensure better accuracy for individual buses, especially as more buses enter the fleet

- Another BRS member asked if interlining means that bus numbers change but you stay on the same bus
 - Transit said that it is, and they noted that a bus running late at Lawson Heights could cause delays down the line at Market Mall even if they are on “separate routes”
- Another BRS member observed that if Transit is reliable, they would not have these problems
 - Transit said that both Trapeze and Vontas told Transit that buses should not be running later than fifteen minutes
 - Transit said they could blame the delayed buses on many things, but a key aspect was a lack of time in the schedule to manage the routes
- A BRS member said that there has to be something amiss with the data that is not as good as it used to be
 - Transit reported that when passengers used the Go feature (using your cellphone location), it is very accurate, but once all the passengers using it get off the bus, it reverts to the scheduled time, which causes apparently “jittery” times
 - Transit added that if the ITS is not working, and then if the person who is using the Go feature on the Transit App got off the bus, the signal disappears
 - Transit added that new technology is great to have but we are also at the mercy of the technology, and it is not always perfect.
 - The Customer Service Engagement Manager said the technology must work properly and relies on other factors such as a good GPS signal, operator login, working antennas and hardware, which was why they reported some discrepancies in scheduling
 - Transit has had a limited amount of service hours in the past to implement new service to new neighbourhoods. In the case of the 87 to Rosewood, Transit did what they could to add this service with the available buses and service hours.
- Bridge closures
 - Construction on the Broadway Bridge
 - Transit said that the planning department will be meeting with Nutana stakeholder groups in early March, and after that meeting, they could potentially provide a sneak peek of updated schedules at the next meeting
 - Transit could see if they could send a package to BRS after that meeting takes place
 - Transit reported that the Productivity Committee drives the route decisions, and has said that there are plans to move the bus stops

- over to Victoria Avenue and to use Victoria Bridge while Broadway Bridge is closed to vehicular traffic
- Transit said there is a redesign report that outlines the strategy at a high level
- How prepared is Transit to deal with bridge closures in general
 - Transit said that regarding University Bridge, when the bridge was closed for the summer a few years ago there were seven phases during construction, where buses and certain other vehicles were able to operate normally on one side, but not on the other side
 - Until they see that detail of how a given project takes place, Transit said that it is hard to plan ahead, but they are pushing the planning engineer to provide information to them as quickly as possible so it can be disseminated to the public
 - A BRS member asked if Transit could flip a switch on Transitmaster and publish schedules for everybody in case of a sudden bridge closure and have it in place
 - Transit said that they have plans in place for University Bridge and for Broadway Bridge, but not for other bridges
 - A BRS member asked if Transit had a plan for emergency situations, such as the recent fire at the University Bridge which caused the bridge to be shut down for several days
 - Transit reported they responded within an hour to the fire at the university bridge
 - Another BRS member pointed out that buses were 15 minutes late, and claimed that Transit was reacting by the seat of their pants
 - Transit said that it was not just getting a bus to serve the route but keeping it on time
 - Another BRS member said that they were surprised that planning is willing to use Victoria Bridge as an alternative route for routes on Broadway Bridge rather than the Freeway Bridge and that perhaps this is because it is a summer closure and there are no concerns about ice on the Victoria hill. They mentioned that during the recent University bridge closure, there were not a lot of comments on the BRS Facebook page, which they contrasted with Transit providing a bleaker picture of service disruption.
 - Transit reported that in the past few years using Transitmaster, operations has gotten much better in putting in detours in a timely manner and sending service alerts to Transit app, but the one point they are still learning to use is schedule offsetting so they could change the schedules if there are delays

- The Transit Planning Manager may have more insight on what an Emergency Plan would look like if the City had to close a bridge.
 - Transit said that the Transit Planning Manager has to layer a lot of emergency plans on top of each other as these issues depend on what exact emergency takes place
- A BRS member said why should BRS ask the Transit Planning Manager when the Customer Service Engagement manager can do so?
 - The Customer Service and Engagement Manager said that he could ask that to the Transit Planning Manager and added that the Transit Planning Manager is working on an emergency map in case of snowstorms He said that it should be added to a discussion on bridges and see if he can come prepared in the future to answer that question.
 - Another BRS member said that it would be worth asking the same questions as the Customer Service and Engagement Manager and directly hear from people making the decisions
- How much does Transit receive in advertising revenue?
 - Transit said that they are working on a new contract with Patterson
 - Transit said that the contract was traditionally a 50/50 split, and can generate up to \$800,000-\$900,000 in revenue
 - A BRS member asked Transit who are the other people tendering for the advertising contract?
 - Transit reported that two other firms were seeking the advertising contract in addition to Patterson
 - A BRS member asked Transit if it would be worthwhile to use other means of advertising to generate revenue for Transit rather than cover up the windows with advertising
 - Transit would like to bring Leighland to a meeting, and he could answer some of the questions about advertising
 - Transit reported that there is language in the advertising contract to restrict advertisements from covering more than 30% of the total window space on a bus so people can still be able to look out of windows
 - Transit said that on a nice sunny day when the bus is clean, you could see through the advertisements, but once it gets dirty or if it is dark, you have a hard time seeing the advertisements
 - This claim was disputed by a BRS member
 - Another BRS member said that sometimes we BRS-members at these monthly meetings want the discussion; not just answers to specific questions. The member went on to push back on 'money above all else' as a criterion regarding advertising on buses and

wanted the focus instead to be on a positive rider experience rather than trying to make a profit.

- Other questions
 - o Meeting times:
 - Transit presented two options for the upcoming meeting to BRS
 - A meeting with the Transit Planning Manager, or a meeting with the Access Transit Manager
 - A BRS member said that BRS should invite two regular users of Access Transit to that meeting if they are meeting with Access Transit in March
 - Transit proposed that they can try to have the meeting with the Access Transit manager in March, and the Transit Planning Manager can provide an update in April
 - A BRS member asked Transit when will the Transit Planning Manager ready to talk about the new route network
 - Transit said that the Transit Planning Manager will be ready to meet with BRS in April
 - The same BRS member asked Transit when can BRS meet with the Transit Planning Manager to discuss the engagement session for the Broadway Bridge closure
 - Transit did not have a date for a meeting about the engagement session specifically
 - Another BRS member said that when the corridor engagement sessions took place, he and another BRS member attended the online sessions, which were “worthwhile.” The process was derailed by the implementation of changes brought with the Housing Accelerator Fund.
 - The meeting with the Access Transit manager will take place on March 17th
 - o A BRS member asked about drawings of the bus layouts used by Saskatoon Transit
 - Transit’s new maintenance person said they did not have bus layouts from Nova, but the Customer Service and Engagement Manager provided an in-house design of the new seat layout, and promised the BRS member will receive a design of the old layout that is still used on most buses in Transit’s fleet
 - The BRS member asked that Nova should provide the drawings and send them to BRS
 - Transit said that these spaces with crossbars can only be changed if you change the wheelbase, and it would reduce the number of seats

- The Customer Service and Engagement Manager said he will find out whether or not Nova can provide their layout drawings
- Another BRS member asked why do buses not have fixed seats in the front when the people in the back do not usually sit down while those who sit in the front typically need to sit down
 - Transit said that they need room for wheelchairs, and added that the new layout is more flexible for high school routes and for the morning peak times
- A BRS member asked what art program the Customer Service and Engagement Manager used to make the new bus layout that was presented at the meeting
 - The Customer Service and Engagement Manager used Adobe Publisher to design the layout of new buses
- Another BRS member asked about the white things in the diagram on one row of seats between two black lines bordering the seats
 - Transit said that they are supposed to represent the seats that face backwards
- Warm-up locations
 - Transit noted that fewer warm-up shelters are operational in the city between 6 am to 9 am, leaving only buses as the only option for some people to warm up during a cold snap

Next meeting on 17th March, 2025 @ 1:30 pm on Zoom