

Meeting minutes for the September 15th, 2025 BRS-Transit Meeting at 1:30 pm

Attendance:

- BRS
 - Odin Swidzinski, BRS-Transit Coordinator
 - Robert Clipperton, Member
 - Peter Gallen, Member
 - James Wood, Member
- Transit
 - Cory Shrigley, Customer Service and Engagement Manager
- Internal City of Saskatoon consultants allocated to Transit
 - Karen Grant, Communications Consultant
 - Leighland Hrapchak, Marketing Consultant

Regrets: Jennifer Ewles, Lila Wagner

Administrative issues:

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

Introductions:

- Introductions were provided by all BRS members in attendance, by the Customer Service and Engagement Manager, and by the consultants.

Public service announcements:

- The Communications Department says that they try to issue public service announcements for the highest-priority streets, as there are so many streets that are affected by road construction during the construction season, and works with the Construction and Design Department to approve the detours and communicate them with the general public.
 - The Communications Department inserted the “Transit may be affected” line because the detours may affect Transit, but they currently cannot coordinate individual routes on the detours
- The public service announcements concerning traffic are sent out to people who are subscribed to the traffic public service announcement mailing list, the Mayor and Council, and to the media as it was originally designed to be sent out to the media.
- Transit relies on service alerts, as they are more effective and detailed than the public service announcements, with Transit posting them at affected bus stops, as they are easier to update than the public service announcements.
- The Marketing Consultant says that there have been times where they have a detour ready to go but then it is cancelled in the morning, and sometimes there are very short-term detours that are in effect for only a single day.
 - A BRS member says that they need to refine the message on a public service announcement, so if a given street or bridge (e.g. Broadway Bridge) is closed for a certain amount of time, then there should be something in the alert saying that Route 8 will be affected by the road closure.

- The Communications Department says that it is cumbersome to edit the detours to mention affected bus routes, especially for short-term projects that will be completed in a couple of days, but says that they will put that under consideration for longer-term projects.
- A BRS member says that their vehicle's GPS system knows the location of the current detours in real time, and asks if the City is providing this information for use by GPS systems.
 - The Communications Consultant says that they have a link to a webpage where they can see what roads are closed at any given moment.
 - The same BRS member says they are not sure if the link would be helpful for them.
 - The Marketing Consultant says they are not sure if their vehicle's GPS-system is fed by Google Maps data, or if the data is coming from somewhere in the city.
 - The same BRS member says that those routes are detailed, and says that they do not think that their GPS system uses Google Maps data.
- A BRS member says that BRS are looking for "which routes may be affected," and says that there are instances where the notice says that it may affect a bus route despite Transit still running down the road during construction work and urges the Communications Department to improve communication when bus routes are affected by road construction.
 - Another BRS member says that he occasionally sees the phrase "Transit may be affected" on a notice affecting a road where buses have never gone down, and suggests that they include the link to the service alerts page.
 - The Communications Consultant says that they understood the question, and say that they get their information from the Safety Group, but the staff they have do not have all the resources to double-check the routes, but likes the suggestion of including the service alert link.
 - The Communications Department would like to have full control over service alerts and have everything in one place.
 - Transit and the Communications Department will work together to introduce a link to the Transit service alerts page on the public service announcements.
 - The Marketing Consultant says that the decision was made to move the downtown terminal to 2nd Avenue and 22nd Street last summer without restricting vehicular traffic despite Transit's best efforts, and urges more empathy and understanding to improve communication between the various departments of the city, and between it and BRS.

Transit maps:

- A Transit user who is peripherally involved in BRS obtained a Transit system map from the Service Centre. It is smaller than the Transit maps that Transit used to have, and the print is so small that it is almost illegible. The City produces a bicycle route map that is foldable, and much easier to read. She suggests a map with less information but more relevancy to passenger's needs.
 - The Marketing Consultant says the current Transit map serves as a website-first map rather than a physical map, and says that the maps used during the network redesign engagement sessions had more detail.

- As the new service changes are being rolled out, the Communications Department are introducing a new system map that will be rolled out over the next few months, and says they will look into making the new maps more useful for passengers using paper maps.
- The new Transit maps will be rolled out sometime in October and November.
- A BRS member says these maps should be brought out to engagements, especially the colour schemes.
 - Another BRS member says that maps have been deteriorating because with the advent of apps, there is not much of a need for a fold-out map rather than ledger-sized maps, but says that Winnipeg and Regina still use fold-out maps.
 - The Marketing Consultant says that as much as they want to rely on Transit apps, physical maps are still useful for many people, and as they refine their maps, they will improve this.
- A BRS member asks if the Marketing Consultant is working for Transit or for another department of the City.
 - Both of the consultants work for the Communications Department, and Transit is one of their clients.
 - Transit says that physical maps are not as widely used as they used to be, and says that a system map better explains connectivity.
 - Transit reports that the map developed for the recent engagement sessions was helpful, and says that when they get into the second phase of the network redesign, they will be making a simple and readable map based off the map.
- Another BRS member says that they are surprised about the uptake of the Transit-on-Demand on the west side being so low compared to the east side, and suggests that Transit should inform people about the service.

Facebook:

- The Communications Department says that staff are not allowed to make public statements, and says that some of the comments made by staff on BRS' Facebook page may violate their internal code of conduct.
 - A BRS member asks if there is a written statement that they can post a link to so they can inform people that Transit staff is not supposed to comment.
 - The Communications Department follows up on complaints that are made from the general public, but occasionally, people do not hear a resolution to their complaints because it is about a staffing matter.
 - The Communications Department urges riders to reach out to the Communications Department, and says that they will follow up with their complaints.
 - Another BRS member says that there are some people who just want to complain, but there are cases where they have received a large number of complaints from the public about Transit service.
 - If they go to the Customer Service Centre, then the Communications Department will follow up with them.
 - The same BRS member says that someone with current knowledge about Transit issues should be able to post on the Facebook page with permission from the

city from time to time to address certain issues raised on the BRS Facebook page.

- The Communications Department says that BRS should reach out to them, and they can provide a graphic for BRS to use on their Facebook page.

Transit app unreliability:

- The Transit App is a third-party app, but Saskatoon Transit has a partnership with them and a contract: even without it, Transit App has access to the data because the open data¹ is published by the city. Each app takes the data a bit differently, but ultimately it is up to the individual provider to display the data.
- The causes of Transit app unreliability are route design, especially for loop routes; interconnected routes; operators failing to log in; service changes; timepoints; changed refresh rate, detours/off-route, and on-time performance, especially when buses are more than 20 minutes behind schedule.
- A BRS member says that they would like to see a really sophisticated map where you can customise the information on the website or phone by turning individual layers on or off.
 - The Communications Department is beta-testing a desktop version of Transit App's trip so that a Rider can plan out a trip without needing a phone, even though it is not as detailed as what the BRS member would like to see.
- Another BRS member says what brought the question on was a huge number of complaints, as the default is scheduled information, but people may assume it is real-time information as opposed to scheduled information, and asks if there have been technical failures or if it is on Transit App's end?
 - A BRS member says that some of the problems are app-dependent, says that the Transit site does not mention other apps, suggests that they should meet with the app developers to see why the data-feed works better for some apps and not others,
 - As an example of how various apps work differently, Transit noted that problems arise because Transit App looks to the closest bus stop and creates a trip journey that might go outbound for an inbound journey, whereas Google Transit produces a simpler trip plan.
 - The previous BRS member says that Transit should look into the problem.

Other business:

- A BRS member asks about reliability statistics on Route 8, citing a high level of complaints on the BRS Facebook page.
 - Transits says the figure of four out of five buses staying on schedule was accurate as of a month ago, but with construction on both Broadway and 8th Street winding down, they will be getting a better baseline.
 - Transit has noticed a fluctuation of on-time performance, with some buses still being bunched up, and is monitoring the 8s.
- Another BRS member says that the construction team messed up the promised service improvements in July, and suggests not calling it service improvements unless they are

¹ <https://transit.saskatoon.ca/about-us/open-data-saskatoon-transit>

sure that service is being improved, with the BRS member suggesting that they should call the July service changes “service changes.”

- A BRS member says that finding their way around the budget package can be onerous, but once they know what is being asked for by Transit, they can advocate for Transit to city council.
 - Transit suggests that they should repackage a list of questions that can be moved to the next meeting, and see how many answers that he can give to BRS.
- Transit said that BRS will be meeting with the Maintenance Manager on September 24th at 10:00 am at the Civic Operations Centre for an hour at the workshop, but BRS should prepare a list of questions.
 - A BRS member asked If they have everyone prepared for the upcoming workshop.
 - Transit replied in the affirmative.

Network redesign survey:

- Was the USSU engagement session in-person or online?
 - Transit said that the engagement survey has gone out to the USSU, and it will go out to the public on September 20th.
- A BRS member asks about the in-person engagement session at Francis Morrison Library.
 - Transit says that the in-person engagement session will take place on October 6th to avoid conflicts with the reconciliation event on September 22nd.
- Another BRS member asks if the survey had been changed between when they saw the draft survey and when it has gone/is going out to the public and other stakeholders.
 - Transit says that the BRS member saw the draft copy of the survey at a meeting, but the survey was moved from the summer to September to capture students: they have not made any changes so there will be no surprises, and they will be receiving the link.
- Transit says that the survey will be mostly online, but they will provide paper copies of the survey at the Customer Service Centre downtown.
 - The Communications Department says that they may consider having paper copies of the survey offered at other engagement sessions.

NEXT MEETING: Tuesday, October 21st @ 1:30 pm via Zoom