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Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) Pilot Station What We Learned Report

May 23, 2024



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Engagement Summary

The City of Saskatoon has been developing a plan to build and operate a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) system in response to the City of Saskatoon's – Growth Plan to Half a Million. Over eighty BRT stations will be built along the city's major transportation corridors. Before starting construction on such a large quantity of stations, a pilot station was built to test the design of the components of the future BRT stations to ensure the final design is sustainable.

From March to July 2023, City Administration engaged internal staff and community members through pilot station tours and gathered feedback either verbally or through an online survey. A BRT project team member took participants through a guided tour of the BRT pilot station providing small groups with information, answering questions and recording feedback on the design and operations.

Many staff and community members appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback on the pilot station design. Most participants who provided feedback toured the pilot station in-person, while a select few were given an online tour with photos. A total of 184 participants attended a guided toured of the facility. All participants were offered an opportunity to fill out an online survey and 82 surveys were completed.

The main themes were:

Information display is too big

The most predominant theme was that the information display was too large and bulky, causing sight line issues for pedestrians and vehicles. There were many suggestions to slim it down or eliminate it completely.

Support for the transit shelter with heat and lighting

Participants liked having a larger transit shelter that supplied on-demand heat and lighting. Suggestions for improved aesthetics included slimming down the columns of the station and changing the colour.

Maintenance and snow clearing

Concerns related to the transit shelter were mostly around vandalism of the lights, heaters, glass and cladding. Several participants were concerned that the infrastructure was expensive and would be difficult to maintain due to the custom manufacturing. Most participants emphasized proper snow clearing, many mentioning an opportunity to coordinate with business improvement districts that already do snow removal within BID boundaries.

Security concerns

There were significant concerns about people sleeping or making encampments out of the shelters and questions about how that would be managed.

Digital screen with next bus information

The e-paper digital screen was easy to read with next bus information.



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Accessibility improvements

A variety of accessibility improvements were suggested by City staff and those with lived experience or expertise in accessibility. Navigation and snow clearing could be challenging for people who are blind, low vision, or use mobility aids. When possible, the number of individual obstacles should be reduced, and elements combined into single structures. Obstacles should be cane detectable. Materials on the ground surface that will heave or get damaged during maintenance should be avoided. There were also concerns that the open space in front of the transit shelter and information display should be wider.

Persons with lived experience or expertise in accessibility suggested audible announcements need to include information on which bus is arriving, as well as information on when the next bus will arrive.

Wayfinding needed

There were many comments that the station needed wayfinding cues for both people who are sighted and those that are blind or have vision loss. It is important to know where passengers should wait for the bus.

Integration into Neighbourhoods

Participants were concerned that the size of the station and related elements may be too large in some locations, noting Broadway Avenue as the most concerning. The need for a secondary, smaller-scale design of the stations was suggested to be key to providing infrastructure in those locations. There was also a desire for the stations to have unique elements, including the application of decorations or art to match the identity of business improvement areas.

Missing Infrastructure

Other improvements suggested for the BRT stations were the inclusion of cycling infrastructure, wi-fi, emergency buttons, ticket vending machines and barriers for centre-medians.

Consideration of results

The feedback from interested groups and individuals helps us understand what people liked best, what they would like changed and what they thought was missing. Many suggestions for improvements were provided. The planning, construction and maintenance of the pilot station have provided many lessons and this information will be reviewed to determine the design and operational changes required to best meet the community's needs.



1. Bus Rapid Transit Background

As Saskatoon's population continues to rise, the city needs to densify its neighbourhoods and improve transit. High-quality transit allows a city to grow without slowing traffic down. When prioritized, transit has the potential to reduce vehicle congestion, provide environmentally efficient and responsible transportation and reduce both personal mobility and public infrastructure expenses.

A BRT pilot station was built to evaluate the components that will be installed at each future station. The goal of the pilot station is to learn from the planning, construction, community engagement and maintenance, to inform a final design and operations plan to meet the needs of the community.

1.1 Strategic Goals

This project supports the City of Saskatoon's strategic goal to improve the reliability and efficiency of transportation, by making Saskatoon's public transit system a viable travel mode. It also supports developing Saskatoon's transit system to be safe, equitable and modern to encourage ridership to grow beyond pre-COVID numbers.

1.2 Pilot Station Design

A bus rapid pilot station was built at the Civic Operations Centre (COC) located at 57 Valley Road. The COC provides administrative spaces, fleet maintenance and equipment storage for Saskatoon Transit. Transit operators start and end their shift here. The pilot station replaced an existing transit shelter, bench and garbage receptacle that was used by transit operators to transfer to the Downtown terminal. Route 15 provides transit access between the Downtown terminal and this facility every 15 minutes. The BRT pilot station became operational in March 2023.

The station was built to mimic the various components of a standard curbside station. A raised concrete pad, with a yellow tactile strip along the curb, creates accessibility improvements for passengers getting on and off the bus. A transit shelter was built to provide shelter from the wind, rain, snow and cold, with glass walls on four sides and two entrances facing the curb lane. Inside the shelter is a button to turn the on-demand heat on and off. Lighting is provided on the external overhang and interior of the transit shelter. An information display stands next to the shelter and includes an e-paper digital display that provides real time next bus transit information. A junction box supplying power to an advertising panel was also included; however, the advertising panel infrastructure will not be installed at this location.

In addition to the typical station components, additional features were assessed that would be required at some station locations. A tree well and paving stones were built into the station to see how the design would incorporate these features where they already exist adjacent to a BRT station site. A garbage receptacle from the existing transit stop was installed at the BRT station to provide this amenity for Saskatoon Transit staff and visitors.

The pilot station was almost complete prior to the start of engagement; however, some components were not installed or required repairs. Benches, security cameras and speakers were not installed, and modifications or repairs were ongoing throughout the engagement process. A tree well was built at the site; however, a tree has not been planted yet.



1.3 City Project Team

The following BRT project team members took part in public engagement sessions, providing information about the pilot station and the BRT project. They were also involved through planning and attending engagement sessions.

- Rob Dudiak, Special Projects Manager, Technical Services
- Liz Hoffman, BRT Community Partnership Manager, Technical Services
- Amanda Lindgren, Public Engagement Consultant, Communications & Public Engagement
- Sue Echlin, Communications Consultant, Communications & Public Engagement
- Allison Gray, Marketing Consultant, Communications & Public Engagement
- Taha Najam, Transit Planner, Saskatoon Transit
- Courtney Usselman, Program Coordinator, Saskatoon Transit

2 Summary of Engagement Strategy

Engagement goals indicate the level of influence community members will have and connect our engagement more clearly to decisions. The City strives to conduct public engagement in a way that meets the vision and guiding principles of the City's Public Engagement Policy.

The engagement goals for the BRT Pilot Station included:

- 1. **Involve:** Understand community members' impressions and experiences with the BRT Pilot Station.
- 2. **Consult:** Gather feedback from community members on the design and operation of the BRT Pilot Station.
- 3. **Inform:** Provide clear, transparent communication about project timelines, reporting back on what we have learned and how feedback was considered in the design and operation of the BRT stations.

2.1 Participants

Engagement was focused on specific groups of transit users and others affected by the design of the Station. Specific emphasis was placed on engaging with people who use transit, including transit staff, people experiencing disabilities, who depend on transit, or living experiences of systemic barriers. The pilot station is located at a public facility where members of the public were able to visit at any time.

Identified stakeholders included:

- Transit operators and staff
- > BRT Nutana Stakeholder Committee
- USask College Drive Workshop participants
- USask Access & Equity Services
- Bus Riders of Saskatoon
- Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- SaskAbilities
- Active Transportation Advisory Group
- Post Secondary Students (USSU Connections Committee)

- High School Students (Wild OUTSIDE)
- Seniors
- Indigenous Peoples
- > Newcomers
- Settlement organizations
- People with living experiences of systemic barriers
- People who depend on transit
- Business Improvement Districts
- North Saskatoon Business Association
- Combined Business Group



Table 1: Summary of Engagement Activities

Activity	Participants	Timeline
Focused Meetings & Pilot Station Tours	BRT Nutana Stakeholder Committee USSU Student-City Connections Committee Business community Bus Riders of Saskatoon Students Indigenous peoples Newcomer and settlement organizations People with lived experience of systemic barriers People with lived experience and/or expertise of accessibility	March – July 2023
Wisdom Wednesday - Transit Staff Engagement	Transit staff, operators, customer service staff	April 2023
Pilot Station Tours – City of Saskatoon Internal Engagement	Planning & Development Construction & Design Transportation Communications & Public Engagement Roadways Parks Major Projects Recreation & Community Development Information Technology Saskatoon Police Sustainability Emergency Planning Saskatoon Light & Power	April – June 2023
Pilot Station Survey (Online / Paper)	Transit customer service staff, operators and other transit staff	April – June 2023
On-site Information & Survey QR Code	Visitors to the pilot station General public	April – July 2023
Pilot Station Open Houses (3)	Transit staff Transit riders Community groups Business community Mayor & Council	June 1-3, 2023

Total in-person participants = 184

Total # of online surveys = 82

Invitations were also sent to the following organizations with no confirmed attendance (they may have attended on their own time and not alerted the BRT team).

- Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC)
- Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Committee (DEIC)
- Saskatoon Council on Aging (SCOA)
- Chamber of Commerce

3 What We Did

City of Saskatoon staff and interested community groups and individuals were invited to give feedback on the design of the BRT pilot station. Participants were encouraged to attend a guided tour or visit the facility to experience it on their own. On the tours, BRT project team members provided participants with information about the design and operations of the test facility. Participants had the opportunity to ask questions and provide their feedback. They could also provide additional feedback through an online survey. A QR code was displayed on the e-paper digital screen at the station and posted on the glass of the transit shelter to encourage operators or visitors to the facility to fill out the online survey between April and June 2023.

Most participants that gave feedback toured the pilot station in-person. A total of 184 participants attended a guided toured of the facility. All participants were offered the link to the online survey, with a total of 82 surveys completed.

3.1 Wisdom Wednesday - Saskatoon Transit Staff

Saskatoon Transit operators and staff working at the Civic Operations Centre and the Downtown Transit Terminal were invited to tour and provide feedback on the pilot station. This aligned with Saskatoon Transit's monthly Wisdom Wednesday event, held on April 19th, 2023. The event was held between 10:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. to allow for coverage of a variety of shifts. A snowstorm that day meant feedback was collected inside the Civic Operations Centre near the operator break room. Most staff attending the engagement event had already toured the pilot station; however, some of the customer service staff from the Downtown terminal may have saw it for the first time.

Boards and sticky notes were set up near the break room to allow staff to come and go as they wished. Staff were asked to provide feedback on the following questions using sticky notes on boards and giving verbal comments recorded by engagement staff:

- > What are your overall impressions of the BRT pilot station?
- > Is there anything you think should be considered or included that is missing?

A tablet was available to fill out the online survey, and paper copies were made available to the employees to return them to dispatch.

Approximately twenty transit operators and customer service staff stopped by to chat and provide their feedback throughout the day.



3.2 Pilot Station Tours - City of Saskatoon Staff

City of Saskatoon staff from a variety of departments and divisions were invited to attend one of three pilot station tours. Invitations were sent to staff that had an existing or anticipated involvement with the BRT project, or expertise on the construction or maintenance of the station design components. A MyCity post provided information to all City staff with access in case they wanted to attend. Follow-up emails were sent to a selection of staff members that were unable to attend any of these events. One-on-one tours were held with four additional staff members.

Events were planned on two Friday afternoons on alternating EDO schedules, and a weekday morning was chosen as well to provide multiple options for staff to attend. Attendance was highest during the Tuesday morning tour with twenty-one participants. Staff were able to come and go during the three events.

3.3 Focused Meetings and Pilot Station Tours - Community Groups, Institutions or Organizations

Community groups, institutions and organizations were invited to attend a pilot station tour relevant to their group. Invitations were sent to community members representative of those who use transit, people experiencing disabilities, people who depend on transit, or people with lived experience of systemic barriers who take transit. Invitations were also sent to community groups, institutions, or organizations with a current relationship to the project.

Each small group met on site providing feedback in-person with an online survey available for additional feedback. Fourteen pilot station tours took place between March and July 2023.

3.4 Pilot Station Open Houses

Open house events were planned between June 1st and June 3rd. These events allowed for participants to come and go over a three-hour period on a Thursday evening, or a Friday and Saturday afternoon. Attendance was low and mostly resulted in engagement with transit operators who were using the station at the beginning or end of their shift.

Feedback was recorded during the events and an online survey was offered to anyone who was interested.

3.5 Online Survey

An online survey was provided to all participants following the pilot station meetings or tours. A total of 82 responses were collected, including 19 from Saskatoon Transit staff, 27 internal staff and 36 community members.

Participants were asked to answer the following open-ended questions. This feedback gave an understanding of the impressions of the overall look and feel of the BRT station, what was working well and what elements required changes and improvements:

- 1. What is your overall impression of the BRT pilot station?
- 2. What do you like best about the pilot station?
- 3. Is there anything else you think should be included or changed in the future BRT stations?
- 4. Is there anything else you want us to know?



Participants were asked to rate the following comments between strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree or I don't know.

- 1. The transit shelter is a comfortable place for people to wait for the bus.
- 2. The design of the pilot station provides a safe place for people to wait for the bus.
- 3. The transit information display with digital screen is user-friendly and easy to interact with.
- 4. The transit information display is the right size.
- 5. The transit shelter and platform are the right size and scale for our City.

4 What We Learned

Many participants appreciated the opportunity to give feedback on the pilot station design. Saskatoon Transit staff, other civic staff and community groups and individuals were, for the most part, supportive of the BRT station and thought it was a move in the right direction. Participants commented that they liked the larger size and transparency of the transit shelter. Comments showed that the stations were clean, modern, practical and efficient. Providing heat, lighting and a legible digital screen with next bus information were seen as improved features for transit riders. Despite this positive feedback, there were concerns that need to be addressed before fully building out and operating the BRT stations. Participants supplied feedback on areas for design and operations improvements regarding vandalism, maintenance, pedestrian circulation, accessibility, security and aesthetics. The following data was collected from the online survey:

- 1. 61% agreed or strongly agreed the transit shelter is a comfortable place for people to wait for the bus
- 2. 63% agreed or strongly agreed the pilot station provides a safe place for people to wait for the bus
- 3. 62% agreed or strongly agreed the transit information display with digital screen is userfriendly and easy to interact with
- 4. 67% agreed or strongly agreed the transit information display is the right size
- 5. 53% agreed or strongly agreed the transit shelter and platform are the right size and scale for our City

To fully understand the scope of the feedback, it is important to review all categories in their entirety.

4.1 Bus Rapid Transit Station Infrastructure

The BRT stations have many components that interconnect with each other. The following feedback is broken down into specific pieces of BRT station infrastructure.

Information Display

The information display received feedback that indicated issues with site lines and accessibility for both pedestrians and motor vehicles due to its size and lack of transparency. There was a dislike for its overall footprint and bulkiness, with a consensus that it had not been designed at a pedestrian scale. There are concerns that it creates congestion between the curb and the display. Participants found that this wide structure would not fit in locations with high pedestrian activity combined with narrow sidewalks. This feedback is contrary to the results from the online survey and therefore it is believed that participants incorrectly thought that question #4 online was referring to the size of the digital screen display inside of the information display, rather than the information display itself.



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There were varying opinions on the height of the structure with many suggesting a shorter structure would be better scaled to pedestrians, and others proposing that a taller structure could be seen by pedestrians from a further distance.

There were added concerns about the material being expensive, difficult to repair and likely to be damaged due to snow clearing and corrosion.

Suggestions for changes include:

- > Reduce the structure footprint or eliminate the need for the structure entirely.
- Replace the structure with a simplified next bus arrival screen mounted on the transit shelter facing the other end of the platform.
- > Push the structure further back on the platform to increase clear space.
- Place the internal components of the information display into a shorter structure, creating a slimmer profile, turning the structure 90 degrees, or placing the components underground.
- > Replace the existing lock with a tamper proof lock.
- > Protect the base of the structure due to high cost of repairs.
- Do not add bases to the feet that would easily be damaged by snow clearing. Paint the concrete/iron bases instead.
- Incorporate art onto the back side of the information display.
- Use sharp contrast colours between the ground surface and information display to help people with low vision find the structure.
- > Structure needs to be cane detectable without a large opening between bases.

Digital Screen

The digital screen mounted flush with the information display was mostly seen as an improvement, with comments indicating it was well positioned with a clear and legible screen using the e-paper technology. Suggestions for improvements to the digital screen included:

- Further recess the screen into the display and protect with a secondary cover to reduce damage and replacement costs.
- Raise the screen height or provide a secondary screen with next bus information for busier locations where a lower screen might be blocked.
- > Consider options to include the screen facing inside the transit shelter.
- Speakers with audible announcements to be connected to the e-paper display information for someone who is visually impaired.

Transit Shelter – Size, Shape and Materials

The transit shelter received a wide variety of feedback from community members. It was seen as positive that the transparency of the shelter allowed people to be able to see the bus approaching or people walking by or occupying nearby spaces. It also provides transparency through the shelter to adjacent businesses.

Most agreed that the shelter provided added comfort for people waiting for the bus for a brief period, even in the coldest temperatures and on windy days. There was a range of opinions regarding the size of the shelter where some thought it was too large, and others thought that it was too small to fit a high number of strangers. Some respondents wanted a completely enclosed structure while others appreciated the gap at the bottom of the shelter that allowed for drainage and garbage to not collect. Others were concerned that the breeze inside reduced the level of comfort during very cold days.



The high degree of precision required due to the amount of cladding and caulking throughout the structure was concerning as the design is difficult to build and maintain. Suggestions for improvements to the transit shelter include:

- > Reduce the gap at the bottom of the shelter.
- Reduce the column thickness to minimize the heaviness of the structure and reduce opportunities for crime.
- The bases were seen as potential tripping hazards and suggestions were made to design them to fit within the dimension of the columns.
- > Reduce the amount of cladding used throughout the structure to minimize maintenance.
- Add shade coverage to the shelter to provide relief from extreme heat events and options for passengers not wanting to wait in a semi-enclosed space.
- > Remove caulking between the glass to allow more air circulation in warmer temperatures.
- > Consider air conditioning to provide comfort while waiting for the bus in hot temperatures.
- > Consider using plexiglass instead of glass where glass breakage is a known issue.
- Position the shelter further away from the edge where grass or vegetation will be next to the platform to reduce erosion and weed control.
- Use a concrete base instead of allowing columns made of corrosive materials to touch the ground and deteriorate faster.
- Use contrasting colours between the ground surface and the shelter. This is important for people with low vision to be able to detect the structure. Another suggestion was to provide contrasting colours or patterning on the four corner columns of the shelter.
- Add a distraction pattern bordering the glass at mid-level height to prevent people from walking into it.
- Various colours were suggested by community members. Black was referenced as a preferred colour for aesthetics. Other comments suggested staying away from darker colours and using lighter colours for a lower heat island effect. Further suggestions to incorporate brighter colours that coordinated with the BRT route colours to aid with wayfinding and providing more vibrancy during our dark and cold winter months.
- Develop a smaller shelter design for locations where this design is too large to accommodate pedestrian traffic, i.e.: Broadway Avenue or stations without a sidewalk behind the platform.
- Require minimum of 1.2-meter-wide door opening for a person that is visually impaired, traveling with a cane, scooter, wheelchair, or service animal. A scooter or wheelchair also needs to be able to roll into the shelter, turn, roll through, and turn back out with ease.
- > Consider door openings on front and back sides of the shelter where appropriate.
- > Consider solar power options to heat the shelters.
- Consider different materials that have a lower embodied carbon footprint suggestion for a wood structure.

Lighting

There was limited feedback about the transit shelter lighting, as most participants did not experience the station at night. Participants who attended a meeting indoors before heading out to the station were shown night photos. There were concerns that the lighting could be vandalized and that the lights were too bright, making it difficult to see outside the shelter when the lights were on inside. Suggested improvements to the lighting include:

- Use recessed or flush mount lighting with tamper proof screws.
- Use lighting with dimming options.



Heaters

Participants appreciated radiant heaters being incorporated into the transit shelters. International students and people with disabilities were noted as being particularly affected by cold temperatures. There were concerns that heaters would be vandalized, they could leak toxic material if the tubes are broken, there was potential for fires to be started by material placed on the heater, and heating units might be stolen. Suggestions for improvements included:

- > Provide a dropdown grate with small holes over the heater to minimize access.
- Replacing the heater button with user occupancy sensors would avoid damage to the button.
- Use a plug-in heater instead of hardwiring it in to minimize labour costs that include having an electrician rewire heaters to install them.
- Use tamper proof screws.
- > Provide information on how to use the heaters including how long the heating is on for.
- Provide a second heater button that operates half of the heaters to reduce cost of heating and provide options for different users.

Speakers

Transit shelter speakers were not installed during engagement events; however, there was feedback on how they could provide benefits to the accessibility community. For participants that understood how a centre-running platform would work, there were significant concerns that audible announcements coming from multiple transit shelters in different directions would be confusing for people who are blind, have low vision, or with hearing loss. Suggestions for speaker announcements included:

- > Introduce a sound that will cue passengers that a bus is arriving.
- Announcements could be made by a significant voice (i.e.: Seth Rogen announces stops in Vancouver).
- > Audible announcements need to announce:
 - Which BRT route or local route bus is arriving?
 - How long until the next bus will arrive?
 - Which bus is arriving next?
 - Where is the bus heading?
- > Incorporate speakers outside the shelter to hear them at the opposite end of the platform.
- Announce "watch for buses on the right" or "watch for buses on the left" at centre-running platform stations.
- Important that audio artwork planned for stations does not interfere with transit operations information. Having both audio systems playing could be confusing for people with hearing loss.
- > Digital screen should include a speaker with a button to read what is on the screen.

Trench Drain

The trench drain reduced concerns for drainage issues on site, but from a user perspective participants were concerned that it could be slippery or that high heels or other objects could get caught in the cover. There were also concerns from a technical perspective that the trench drains are slippery and will get plugged with debris and ice.

Tactile Strip

The tactile strip was seen as an improvement to accessibility at transit stops, as they are a warning that you are at a higher curb and a cue that indicates you are at a BRT station. There were



concerns about the durability of the material and concerns about snow clearing challenges with the texture.

One participant noted that the noise produced by caning on the two types of tactile strip were different. The installation on the south end was louder and provided a clearer indication of a tactile strip. The installation on the north end could be misconstrued as ice due to its higher pitched sound when using a cane.

Station Platform

The platform length was not considered to be an issue; however, some were concerned about the depth of the platform. Staff indicated that the standard 4.0-meter-wide platform, combined with the tactile strip, and depth of the information display and transit shelter do not leave enough room for pedestrians. Many commented that the width of the tactile strip should not be included in the minimum accessible space for pedestrians. In locations with no sidewalk behind the platform, the clear space in front of the shelter and information display is used for pedestrians to walk through to continue down the street, which could cause congestion. The following improvement was suggested for station platforms:

Meet the City of Saskatoon sidewalk standards of between 1.8 to 2.5 meters of clear space, depending on the adjacent road classification.

Seating

Seating was not installed when participants were attending the tours; however, participants were informed that benches would be installed both inside and outside of the transit shelter, and were asked to imagine what that might look like. Most participants suggested that benches should be incorporated into BRT stations, with suggestions to:

- Not install seating inside the transit shelters to reduce vandalism of lighting and heating components and reduce congestion and capacity inside.
- Install benches that provide older people with extra supports to help them stand up from a seated position.
- Higher quantities of benches in locations where platforms are larger to accommodate higher pedestrian traffic.
- > Spring loaded seating inside the shelter to reduce congestion when not in use.
- > Mount on the concrete, not on the paving stones.
- Consider seating options that deter people from sleeping on them including benches with fixed arms in the centre, single seating, or a lean to.

Waste Receptacle

The waste receptacle at the pilot station was reinstalled from the former transit stop and was not intended to represent the choice for a BRT station; however, it still provided the opportunity to receive feedback. Feedback on waste receptacles includes:

- > Provide options to recycle bottles/cans through a bottle cage.
- > Move the waste receptacle closer to the back of the station to create more standing space.
- Supply waste receptacles at BRT stations along 22nd Street for needle disposal.

Wayfinding

The presence of the larger transit shelter and tactile strip were good indicators for users that they had arrived at a BRT station. Users appreciated that the digital e-paper display supplied information on when the next bus arrives; however, the information was not always correct. The information provided on the e-paper display was good; however, some felt the text was too small. More detailed



wayfinding information was absent, and users were wanting more information to understand where there were, where the next bus is going and being able to recognize a station from a distance. Suggestions for improvements included:

- > Indicate station location on the shelter including direction of travel (i.e.: NB, EB, SB, WB).
- > Instructions on how to use the heater and how to read the next bus arrival information.
- > Station needs BRT and local transit route information for the entire transit network.
- > Transit shelters coloured based on BRT routing colour.
- > Colour coding and graphic cues will be especially useful for people who don't speak English.
- Develop multiple ways to show that you've reached a transit stop for people who are blind or have low vision.
 - Mount signs on a pole with a different profile or texture than a yield sign, stop sign, etc.
 - Large print font, information lower on the sign and braille options
- Wayfinding on the platform to identify a consistent location where the bus will stop to pick up passengers.
- Digital screen suggestions included:
 - Show where the bus is going, direction of travel, important destinations.
 - Use a moving symbol on the to show how far along the route the bus is.
 - o Incorporate delay information when they occur.
 - Increase text size and font thickness, especially for the diagonal text showing route information.

Public Art

There were comments on how to incorporate art into the overall BRT station to create a sense of place, reduce vandalism and create a more inclusive opportunity for everyone. Suggestions included:

- > Adding patterns and decorative elements in the glass or upper interior panels.
- Incorporate art into major stations to create uniqueness.
- > If using Indigenous languages, incorporate English translation to provide interpretation.
- > Use vinyl wraps to add art to the information display to reduce vandalism.

Advertising and/or Advertising Panel

Community members were concerned about sightlines and the impact of advertising to adjacent properties. Advertising was seen as an eyesore with many questioned the need for advertising at the detriment of property owners, pedestrians and transit riders. There were positive comments that the bench-style advertising currently used by Saskatoon Transit was not planned to be used for the BRT stations. Staff and transit riders were concerned about vandalism and obstruction of sightlines to approaching buses. Comments included concerns about advertising taking away from the aesthetic of the space and a desire to not include advertising on the transit shelter glass. It was also noted that the advantage of supplying advertising included the ability to generate revenue and promote or advertise City services. Suggestions for improvements to advertising and/or the advertising panel include:

- Preference for no advertising or advertising restrictions in front of schools, churches or on streets with high concentrations of local businesses.
- Prioritize art over advertising.



Missing Infrastructure

The following infrastructure was suggested for added value at BRT stations:

- Cycling Infrastructure Include bike lockers or bike racks for a park and ride experience for cyclists and to promote active transportation. Some commented that bike racks were not seen as a suitable alternative to bike lockers as cyclists are looking for options that provide more security.
- Cycling Infrastructure Pedal pumps were suggested as a great amenity for BRT stations. They are well used on 20th Street.
- Micromobility There were questions relating to extending the use of e-scooters to station locations.
- Wi-Fi Students, newcomers and other community members suggested wi-fi would supply better access to notifications for anyone that has a device but doesn't have a data plan.
- Ticket vending machines Transit riders and other community members indicated a desire to pay for transit at BRT stations prior to boarding buses to save time loading passengers.
 - Suggestion to include on-site ticketing or reloading of transit cards at key BRT station locations across the city to provide better access to transit passes for people not using the mobile app.
 - Can transit ticketing be integrated into existing parking pay stations?
- Emergency Button Incorporate an emergency call button or pay phone into the station design.

4.2 Bus Rapid Transit Operations

Running a BRT system requires managing staff, buses, BRT station infrastructure and users of these spaces. Participants supplied the following feedback.

Snow Clearing and Transit Shelter Maintenance

There was a lot of feedback that an elevated level of maintenance will be needed to support an attractive facility that people want to use. Snow clearing was one of the top concerns, with comments that the current standard for snow clearing at transit stops often does not meet the expectations of passengers. Snow clearing around the transit shelter and tactile strip were seen as a challenge. We also learned that heaters may cause the snow to melt inside the shelters and freeze when the heaters turn off, creating slippery conditions. Vandalism of heaters and lighting were concerns based on the current products and installation selected. Suggestions for improved service included:

- Coordinate snow removal and clean-up maintenance with BID's already doing this work in their boundaries (snow removal).
- > Require specialized equipment to do snow clearing to reduce damage to the infrastructure.

Lighting Operations

Operations concerns with lighting included high-power consumption and vandalism from people using transit shelters to sleep in.

- > Turn the lights off when transit service ends for the evening.
- > Reduce brightness of lighting inside transit shelters.



Heater Operations

There are significant concerns that transit shelters with heat will be used by the homeless population, deterring transit users from using them. Participants wanted to know if the heaters would be operational in all months of the year as inclement weather can occur at any time if you are not dressed appropriately. The following feedback was provided:

- > Allow heaters to be used year-round.
- > Turn heaters off outside of transit service hours.
- > Decide what level of service will be provided when the heaters are being used for sheltering.
- Suggestion to align the operations of the heaters with the City's cold weather strategy to save lives.

Security and Safety Operations

Security cameras were not installed at the time of engagement. Participants often asked what would happen when vandalism, loitering, encampments or crime was occurring at BRT stations. Suggestions to improve security and safety included:

- > Incorporate an emergency call button or pay phone into the station design.
- Coordinate security footage with Midtown Mall and the University of Saskatchewan where security staff are already employed.
- > Position heated shelters only at locations where transit supervisors could be stationed.
- > Require payment before entering the station to reduce loitering and encampments.

Station Boarding Location

It is important for anyone with a physical disability to know where to be ready to get on the bus. It often takes more time to navigate a space or board the bus and drivers may pass by if it appears that nobody is waiting to board. Participants suggested that there should be standard procedures to have transit operators pull up to the front of the platform, waiting for the bus in front of them to exit first if needed.

5 Evaluation

Participants that attended in-person and who filled out the online survey were asked open-ended questions on what people liked, what they thought should be changed and infrastructure they felt was missing. These answers were grouped and themed, based on the relevant piece of infrastructure it was related to and by Saskatoon Transit staff, other internal staff, and community group or individual.

Participants who filled out the survey were asked to rate the comfort, safety, size and usability of the station infrastructure between strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree or I don't know. The results were tallied to show percentage of participants that agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

6 Limitations

Accuracy and comprehensive engagement may have been limited by the completeness of the pilot station at the time of engagement, the location of the pilot station, the scope of the standard curbside station design, misinterpretation of information or survey questions.



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The pilot station was not entirely complete prior to engagement beginning, as some components were not installed or required repairs. Benches, security cameras and speakers were not installed, and modifications or repairs were ongoing throughout the engagement process. A tree was not planted at the time of engagement events. Feedback on these elements is limited or may be inaccurate due to changes made later.

Saskatoon Transit staff were not supplied a tour due to a snowstorm on the event day, and because most had used the pilot station. This may have led to misinformation about the pilot station.

Several factors may have led to low interest in the tours. The site location may have made it less appealing to visit the pilot station to provide feedback as it was not in a central location or in a location that stakeholders are familiar with. Inclement weather conditions may have reduced participation during open house events.

The pilot station mimics a standard curbside station design. Efforts were made to explain to participants how a centre-running platform would look and function differently. For this reason, there is limited feedback specific to the design of centre-running stations.

The engagement team noticed an anomaly when collecting survey data. Feedback in-person and through the online survey contradict each other about the size of the information display. It is likely that participants misunderstood and assumed the question was asking if the digital screen inside of the information display is an appropriated size, as the previous online question referenced the digital screen. Best discretion was used when evaluating this feedback. Photos of infrastructure specific to the questions would have been beneficial when creating the survey.

7 Next Steps

Pilot station engagement is complete, and the technical review of the station continues. The feedback and lessons learned throughout construction and the technical review, will be reviewed to inform a final design. Accessibility changes will be reviewed with those with lived experience of accessibility and accessibility experts who attended the pilot station tours. The final design and operations requirements will be decided by the City of Saskatoon Bus Rapid Transit project team, Saskatoon Transit staff and the Director of Saskatoon Transit as needed.

