

Saskatoon Transit – Locations of Reported Assaults on Operators and other Reported Negative Interactions

ISSUE

At the November 30, 2020 City Council Regular Business Meeting, Saskatoon Transit received funding approval for a driver safety barrier phase-in program on fixed route buses. As part of this approval, additional information was requested regarding the assaults and negative interactions that have occurred with operators on Saskatoon Transit buses.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting held on November 30, 2020, considered the Transit Operator Barrier Retrofit and Addition to Bus Specifications report and resolved, in part:

- “3. That Administration report back at the appropriate time on more detail on the 28 locations of the assaults on operators identified in the report. To not create an unnecessary sense of concern, the locations do not have to be route specific and can be reported as Downtown Terminal, Downtown Route, Confed Terminal, 22nd St Route, etc, and
- 4 That Administration report at the appropriate time on data on any other assaults or negative interactions with operators that have happened.”

Prior to 2020 incidents were reported on paper forms, usually after a shift unless there was a call for assistance over communications channels. With the introduction of new modules in the Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) software, the process has been automated and simplified.

CURRENT STATUS

To respond to this request, all incidents from 2017 through 2020 were reviewed. Saskatoon Transit Administration (Administration) believes the changes to reporting, combined with reminders and instructions to Operations staff to report all incidents, have led to an increase in reported incidents beginning in 2020. The Administration believes this increase in reporting is providing a more accurate view of what is occurring on the road.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Locations of Reported Assaults on Operators

An assault is when physical contact is made with an Operator. This includes spitting, hitting, touching, spraying substances, or throwing objects.

The 28 assaults within the driver’s compartment mentioned in the November 30, 2020 Transit Operator Barrier Retrofit and Addition to Bus Specifications report were

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identified from 2017 through 2020. The locations of these incidents are noted on the attached 2017-2020 Saskatoon Transit Reported Assault Heat Map (Appendix 1).

Reported Negative Interactions and Reported Incidents

Information regarding negative interactions have been tracked and logged from 2017 onward and were reviewed for this report. The number of reported negative interactions with operators by year are:

Year	Reported Negative Interactions with an Operator
2017	51
2018	51
2019	76
2020	130
Total	308

Of the 308 interactions:

- 28 involved assaults on an operator within the driving compartment.
- 9 involved an assault on an operator outside of the driving compartment.

Saskatoon Transit has defined a negative interaction as one that involves up to three of the following negative attributes:

- Act of Aggression – an action made with the intent to cause harm or intimidate.
- Assault – physical contact made with an Operator or person.
- Body Fluid – blood, spit, urine, or feces.
- Fare Dispute – a passenger refusing to pay fare after being advised by the Operator.
- Harassment – a continued, and unwelcome behaviour directed towards an Operator.
- Intoxicated – a passenger suspected of being under the influence of alcohol or drugs impacting passenger or operators feeling of safety.
- Road Rage – exchanges by motorists directed towards the Operator.
- Sexual Harassment – comments or conduct of a sexual nature.
- Verbal Altercation – exchange between passenger and Operator involving shouting and/or swearing.

As noted above, 308 negative interactions with operators occurred between 2017 and 2020. The rate with which each negative attribute occurred during negative interactions involving operators is noted below.

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Negative Attribute	Instances Involving an Operator	Frequency of the Total of Negative Interactions
Act of Aggression	48	12%
Assault	37*	9%
Body Fluid	20	5%
Fare Dispute	54	13%
Harassment	15	4%
Intoxicated	72	17%
Road Rage	8	2%
Sexual Harassment	5	1%
Verbal Altercation	155	37%

*In the previous report, 28 assaults were reported within the operator's compartment. A further 9 assaults occurred outside of the bus, mostly in the Downtown Terminal. These were not included since the barrier, being discussed, would not have prevented the incidents from occurring.

As stated above, a negative interaction may have up to three attributes assigned, causing the total number of instances in the chart above to differ from the number of reported negative interactions.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial, privacy, legal, social, or environmental implications identified.

APPENDICES

1. 2017-2020 Saskatoon Transit Reported Assault Heat Map

Report Approval

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