

Saskatoon Transit Proposed Service Standards

ISSUE

This is a follow up to the information report titled “Process for Introducing or Expanding Transit Service within New and Developing Neighbourhoods”. This information report will formally introduce Saskatoon Transit’s proposed Service Standards and outline the forecasted new and/or expanding services to new neighbourhoods being proposed for 2022 and 2023 based on the proposed Service Standards.

Saskatoon Transit is seeking feedback and comments from the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation as it prepares to bring forward the proposed Service Standards for City Council approval during the 2022-2023 Business Plan and Budget Deliberations.

BACKGROUND

Prior to 2015, Saskatoon Transit did not have a formal Service Standard that could be used to establish a framework for introducing new and/or expanded service or to frame budget recommendations. Since 2015, Saskatoon Transit has been developing and refining a set of Service Standards that are presented in this report for information prior to submitting for approval during the upcoming budget deliberation process. These are the proposed Service Standards that will guide the level of service for the indicative budget development and used to develop new and/or expanded service that will be brought forward as part of the budget options package.

Service Standards are influenced by population growth, neighbourhood development and transit ridership statistics. The Service Standards will be used in conjunction with the City’s Official Community Plan (OCP), Strategic Plan, and sector or concept plan documents to provide new neighbourhoods with transit service that is planned to follow appropriate street routing, supports the neighbourhood and connects with existing service, which now includes High Frequency Corridors. The Service Standards also consider the future Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network, and provides adequate space for stops, shelters, and stations to meet accessibility standards.

CURRENT STATUS

The proposed Service Standards formally introduces the current levels of service which have been developed in practice and include three tiers (Tier 1 has 2 options; Introductory and On Demand Transit (ODT)). In ODT, buses respond to ride requests rather than following a fixed route. A customer can request a ride between any two transit stops in the service area and a bus will be routed to the customer. Customers can request rides through the Android or iOS app, through Saskatoon Transit’s booking website, by calling the Saskatoon Transit Customer Service Centre or by boarding an ODT bus and requesting a walk-on ride.

Tier 1 (Introductory) is provided when there is a road network that will support transit vehicles, completed transit routes in alignment with the Concept Plan, and the neighbourhood has at least 25% of its projected population. This is, historically, the first level of service a neighbourhood receives. Service hours are AM and PM peak only, Monday to Friday, 0700 to 1000 and 1500 to 1800 hours. This level of service is equivalent to 1,560 service hours annually.

Examples include:

- Route 22 City Centre / Confederation
- Route 25 North Industrial

Tier 1 (ODT) is a newly developing concept and can be provided when there is a sufficient road network to support ODT buses, completed transit routes in alignment with the Concept Plan, and the neighbourhood has at least 25% of its projected population. Service hours are between 0600 to 1800 hours, Monday to Friday. This level of service begins with the normal Tier 1 (Introductory) service hour allocation of 1,560 hours to which additional hours are added as the service area is extended over a larger part of the city. Examples include:

- North Industrial (supporting Route 14 North Industrial)
- Brighton

Tier 2 is the level of service that can be introduced once a neighbourhood has approximately 50% of the projected population, and only if ridership is increasing beyond the capability of the existing service. Continuous service AM to PM peak is Monday to Friday, 0700 to 1900 hours. This level of service is equivalent to 3,120 service hours annually. Examples include:

- Route 83 Stonebridge / Centre Mall
- Route 13 Lawson Heights / Broadway – when University is in full session

Tier 3 is the level of service once a neighbourhood reaches appropriate ridership and is 90%+ developed and populated or is exhibiting high ridership. If ridership is not increasing, Tier 3 service may be delayed until build-out reaches 100% or ridership levels have increased. Service is from 0600 to 0100 hours the next day, Monday to Sunday. This level of service is equivalent to 6,604 service hours annually. Examples include:

- Route 63 Hampton Village / Confederation Terminal
- Route 61 Blairmore – Confederation Terminal

Types of Service	Population (build-out)	Service Hours	Service Hours
Tier 1 (Introductory)	25% +	AM & PM peak periods only M-F	1,560 hours
Tier 1 (ODT)	25% +	AM to PM peak M-F	1,560 hours up to 3,120 hours
Tier 2	50% + (ridership & demand is increasing)	AM to PM peak M-F	3,120 hours
Tier 3	90% +	Full Service 0600 to 0100 hours M - Sun	6,604 hours

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Through peer agency networks that included Edmonton, Calgary, Regina and Winnipeg, Saskatoon Transit recognized the need for comprehensive Service Standards. The proposed Service Standards contain all transit levels of service including ODT and will support Saskatoon Transit in fulfilling the guidance for transit contained in the revised OCP, where and how this service is delivered, and at what level.

The Service Standards will provide Saskatoon Transit with the following:

- a framework to measure and monitor pre-2015 routes as well as the newer service offerings. In some cases, these trigger points may recommend a reallocation of service or a reduction in frequency;
- measurable trigger points for the introduction of new service to new neighbourhoods, including the use of ODT services as a Tier 1 option;
- provide a baseline for neighbourhoods currently receiving Tier 1 (Introductory or ODT) service and their preparedness for Tier 2, as well as whether neighbourhoods currently receiving Tier 2 service should be considered for an expansion of service to Tier 3;
- provide the ability to analyze service levels, identify new service hour packages and effectively present recommendations for potential service hour packages including service for new and developing neighbourhoods; and
- a guide for those services considered part of the indicative budget, to maintain service at current levels.

The new Service Standards will provide a path towards:

- providing equitable transit services across the City;
- identifying and capturing potential efficiencies;
- optimizing transit services;
- supporting the creation and use of baseline Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for measuring and annual reporting on service metrics and efficiency; and
- provide a baseline for funding.

The proposed Service Standards were developed in conjunction with Planning and Development and are in line with the best practises of agencies across Canada. Many direct lessons were taken from Edmonton Transit and provide a consistent and effective approach for continuous improvement, ensuring service is introduced in a timely and equitable manner.

Assuming that adequate infrastructure is in place, based on the proposed Service Standards, Saskatoon Transit anticipates two new neighbourhood Tier 1 service hour packages will be recommended for the 2022-2023 budget cycle:

- Kensington; and,
- Aspen Ridge.

Prior to this report, Saskatoon Transit met with the Bus Riders of Saskatoon (BRS) to review the proposed Service Standards and to receive their feedback.

The proposed Service Standards are attached in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 contains a list of Working Definitions of Transit Terms.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

All future expansions, for new or expanding service, will have financial implications and will require budget approval and will be presented at the appropriate Business Plan and Budget Deliberations, whether for Tier 1 (Introductory), Tier 1 (ODT), Tier 2 or Tier 3.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

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

NEXT STEPS

Based on the feedback and comments from the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation, Saskatoon Transit will continue to prepare to bring forward the proposed Service Standards for City Council approval as part of the 2022-2023 Business Plan and Budget Deliberations.

Saskatoon Transit will continue to review the Growth Monitoring Report and updated information from Planning and Development to identify population growth and infrastructure readiness for service expansion for new or expanded service areas.

As part of the 2022-2023 budget cycle, Saskatoon Transit will bring forward an information report prior to the budget deliberations outlining the forecasted new and/or expanded services to new neighbourhoods, including recommendations, based on forecasted growth from Planning and Development and the proposed Service Standards for new and/or expanded service.

APPENDICES

1. Saskatoon Transit Service Standards
2. Working Definitions of Transit Terms

Report Approval

Written by: Cory Shrigley, Customer Support and Engagement Manger,
Saskatoon Transit

Reviewed by: James McDonald, Director of Saskatoon Transit
Kerry Tarasoff, Chief Financial Officer

Lynne Lacroix, General Manager, Community Services

Approved by: Terry Schmidt, General Manager, Transportation and Construction