

April 29, 2019
Saskatoon City Council
222 3rd Avenue N
Saskatoon, SK

Re: Agenda Item 10.3.2 Bus Rapid Transit Route and Configuration for Nutana [File No. CK. 4110-2]

Dear Saskatoon Councillors,

I would like to express my support for a BRT that operates on Broadway, with a station located either at Main or 12th street. If the Broadway route is not chosen, we are running the risk of a “Hockey arena on the edge of the city” level of misstep.

Saskatoon is a young city, full of people who have travelled the world and experienced different ways of living. Saskatoon is not a megacity like Toronto, but that doesn't mean that we can't pursue ideas that make us unique while also recognizing that the problems we face are not unique at all.

We need to provide viable, equitable alternative transportation solutions for our city to grow in a manner that does not repeat the sins of the past. There is no reason that Saskatoon cannot create a transportation system that fuels a cultural hub that becomes the envy of cities across Canada. The only thing that is stopping us is a lack of excitement for the future.

The BRT is a city-wide ecosystem that is affected by decisions made from one area to the next. If a poor choice is made for the Broadway route, this will affect the Downtown route and will in turn effect feeder routes.

A strong and viable public transportation system gets you to where you want to go, when you want, in a reasonable amount of time. Those of us that have visited other cities that have a well-oiled public transportation system will understand this. When I get off a train, bus or tram, I should be dropped off in the heart of where I want to be. Not dropped off in the peripherals or in some foreboding and underlit parking lot.

A single terminal on 8th and Broadway or 8th and Idywyld does nothing to service businesses, provide full value to riders, add to the vibrancy of Broadway or give the BRT system the best chance for success.

We know how hard it is to get people to walk in our city. It's the reason the massive parking lots at Preston Crossing, Blairmore and University Heights exist. Even in the height of summer when walking is enjoyable people won't do it. Locating the BRT terminal 800 meters or a kilometre from the river and 300 meters from the 'heart' of Broadway increases the opportunity for failure.

People's driving decisions are based on the chance to park out front of the place they want to visit. Say I drive my vehicle to Broadway and end up having to park far away, the chance that I could park closer to my final destination is enough of an incentive for most to drive instead of taking the bus. Who doesn't

like to brag about getting the parking spot right outside of the restaurant? If the bus is always the best 'parking spot' it increases the value of riding one.

The BRT will only succeed if those who can currently afford to own a vehicle are enticed to ride the bus, not because of reduced costs, but because it gets them where they want to go. Price is not the deciding factor for many of whether or not they ride the bus. If that were the case, I would ride the bus more often. I can afford not to take the bus, but at the same time dropping a vehicle expense would make a significant difference to my bottom line. My spouse and I would live off one vehicle if the bus system was more reliable and took us to the places we want to go. I am not unique in this regard. What do you think happens when I have more free cash? Liberal purchases of cold-smoked steaks and premium coffee beans become more palatable to my wallet.

The concern from business owners on Broadway are misguided. I am their target market and I do not ride the bus. That is the problem. I understand their ideas that a bus system will not help them based on current perceptions but that is not what we are planning for. Nutana parking is at maximum capacity, how else do these business owners expect to get more people to their shopping district without other forms of transportation?

Those who don't ride the bus right now are the ones you want to be dropped off on your front door. They do not ride the bus because they can afford not to based on its current performance. Can Broadway businesses afford to turn them away?

The result, if we do this right and are bold, will be something that isn't quantifiable. The way we interact with our community changes our perception of it. Visitors will remark on how electric the city feels as people whiz by on bikes, walk down the street or jump on and off buses in vibrant shopping areas. It's that feeling of 'constant movement' that creates excitement and intrigue. A cultural spark occurs the more visible and interactive we become with each other. We have all experienced those moments where the power of the crowd elevated the experience. The more we share our urban spaces, the stronger our spaces will become.

There is a repressed demand for a different type of urban living in Saskatoon. A simpler kind of living designed around walkability, urban amenities and enhanced community connectivity. Broadway stands to lose a cultural flourish if we let the BRT run down Idywyld. We are taking people away from the street because we fear the unknown.

Buses will not ruin Broadway's character or harm businesses. Having a Broadway BRT will serve Saskatoon positively for decades to come.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jay Brown
Ward 10 Resident
Saskatoon, SK