

Saskatoon Transit – Safety and Incident Report

ISSUE

This information report provides an incident summary concerning occurrences on buses and around transit facilities for reported data from 2017 to 2022.

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting held on July 25, 2022, considered a motion of Councillor Kirton, and resolved:

“That Administration provide a safety report and incident summary concerning occurrences on buses and around transit facilities.”

At its meeting held on March 1, 2021, the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation received an information [report](#) on Saskatoon Transit – Locations of Reported Assaults on Operators and other Reported Negative Interactions.

City Council, at its Regular Business Meeting held on November 30, 2020, considered the Transit Operator Barrier Retrofit and Addition to Bus Specifications [report](#).

CURRENT STATUS

Prior to 2020, incidents occurring on buses and around transit facilities 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.

The utilization of Automated Vehicle Location (AVL) software has increased the amount of information that can be associated and tracked for each incident reported.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Information regarding negative interactions on buses and around transit facilities have been tracked and logged from 2017 onward and were reviewed for this report. Saskatoon Transit has defined a negative interaction as one that involves up to three of the following 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 operator’s 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.

Appendix 1 includes details of all reported incidents on buses and around transit facilities between 2017 and 2022.

Negative Interactions Including Operators and the Public

As shown in Appendix 2, the number of reported negative interactions where an operator was directly impacted by a member of the public, either on the bus or off the bus, increased sharply between 2018 and 2020. This was followed by declines in 2021 and 2022. The following table provides a yearly breakdown.

Year	Incidents Reported	Per/Million Rides
2017	51	5.88
2018	51	5.43
2019	76	7.90
2020	130	27.97
2021	102	23.90
2022	59	12.05
Total	469	11.30

The most common attributes associated with negative interactions that included an operator are Verbal Altercation, Acts of Aggression, Intoxication, and Fare Dispute totalling 79% of all negative interactions. The rate with which each negative attribute occurred is outlined below. A negative interaction may have up to three attributes assigned, causing the total number of instances in the chart below to differ from the number of reported negative interactions above.

Type	Incidents	Per/Million Rides	Percent
Act of Aggression	91	2.19	14%
Assault	55	1.33	9%
Body Fluid	31	0.75	5%
Fare Dispute	84	2.02	13%
Harassment	23	0.55	4%
Intoxicated	83	2.00	13%
Road Rage	19	0.46	3%
Sexual Harassment	6	0.14	1%
Verbal Altercation	251	6.05	39%

Negative Interactions Involving Transit Passengers

As shown in Appendix 3, the number of negative interactions reported by Saskatoon Transit staff involving transit passengers, and not including the operator, has increased sharply since 2019. The following chart details the total number of incidents reported by

Saskatoon Transit – Safety and Incident Report

Saskatoon Transit staff involving passengers on transit buses (i.e., incidents that occurred between passengers while on the transit bus).

Year	Incidents Reported	Per/Million Rides
2017	9	1.04
2018	6	0.64
2019	10	1.04
2020	172	37.01
2021	302	70.77
2022	432	88.25
Total	931	22.44

The most common attributes associated with negative interactions involving passengers only are Intoxication and Verbal Altercation, totalling 80% of all negative interactions. The rate with which each negative attribute occurred is outlined below. Again, a negative interaction may have up to three attributes assigned, causing the total number of instances in the chart below to differ from the number of reported negative interactions above.

Type	Incidents	Per/Million Rides	Percent
Act of Aggression	47	1.13	5%
Assault	36	0.87	3%
Body Fluid	81	1.95	8%
Fare Dispute	10	0.24	1%
Harassment	27	0.65	3%
Intoxicated	594	14.32	57%
Road Rage	0	-	0%
Sexual Harassment	9	0.22	1%
Verbal Altercation	237	5.71	23%

Negative Interactions Involving Members of the Public at Transit Terminals and Stops

As shown in Appendix 4, the number of negative interactions reported by Saskatoon Transit staff involving members of the public at transit terminals and stops has increased since 2019. The following chart details the total number of incidents reported by Saskatoon Transit staff involving members of the public at transit terminals and stops (i.e., incidents that occurred between members of the public outside of the transit bus).

Saskatoon Transit – Safety and Incident Report

Year	Incidents Reported	Per/Million Rides
2017	6	0.69
2018	1	0.11
2019	1	0.10
2020	89	19.15
2021	105	24.60
2022	133	27.17
Total	335	8.07

The most common attributes associated with negative interactions involving members of the public at transit terminals are Intoxication and Verbal Altercation. The rate with which each negative attribute occurred is outlined below.

Type	Incidents	Per/Million Rides	Percent
Act of Aggression	40	0.96	11%
Assault	31	0.75	8%
Body Fluid	13	0.31	4%
Fare Dispute	0	-	0%
Harassment	11	0.27	3%
Intoxicated	202	4.87	55%
Road Rage	5	0.12	1%
Sexual Harassment	1	0.02	0%
Verbal Altercation	67	1.61	18%

Negative Interactions in Other Transit Properties

Saskatoon Transit has surveyed other transit properties in the Prairie Provinces as well as similar sized properties across the nation regarding negative interactions. Of the responses received, most noted the level of negative interactions with riders have remained the same. Incidents of harassment, verbal altercations, acts of aggression and assaults were the categories most often noted to be trending up.

Barrier Update

Saskatoon Transit received funding approval from City Council on November 30, 2020, for a driver safety barrier phase-in program on fixed-route transit buses. The first phase of purchases and installs is complete with 47 of the 129 buses in service retrofitted. The remaining barriers have been ordered and are expected to be installed in the spring 2023. All future fixed route transit buses will be ordered with factory installed barriers.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS

There are no other implications.

NEXT STEPS

Saskatoon Transit will continue to encourage operators to report all negative interactions and track and monitor the data, specifically undertaking a comparison of reported incidents involving operators on the bus prior to the installation of the operator barriers and after installation of the operator barriers.

Saskatoon Transit will continue using a range of methods including physical barriers, operator training in incident de-escalation, targeted media campaigns, and internal fare enforcement policies to provide a safe environment for Saskatoon Transit bus operators and passengers.

APPENDICES

1. All Reported Incidents Concerning Occurrences on Buses and Around Transit Facilities for Reported Data from 2017 to 2022
2. Negative Incidents Including Operators and the Public for Reported Data from 2017 to 2022
3. Incidents Involving Passengers for Reported Data from 2017 to 2022
4. Incidents Involving the Public at Terminals and Stops for Reported Data from 2017 to 2022

Report Approval

Written by: Mike Moellenbeck, Operations Manager, Saskatoon Transit

Reviewed and

Approved by: Terry Schmidt, General Manager Transportation and Construction