

## DECISION REPORT

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### Dedicated Transit Support Workers Program

#### ISSUE

This report provides options for consideration for a dedicated transit support workers program.

#### BACKGROUND

The Standing Policy Committee on Transportation, at its meeting on held on March 7, 2023, received the [report](#) on Saskatoon Transit – Safety and Incident Report and resolved:

“That Administration report back on a dedicated transit support workers program. This should include any funding considerations in time for the 2024-2025 budget deliberations.”

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.

#### Current Status

Saskatoon Transit does not currently employ dedicated support workers to respond to incidents that occur on buses or in transit stops, shelters and terminals. Instead, a mix of internal and external support is relied on as outlined below.

#### City of Saskatoon Approach

##### *Service Supervisors*

Saskatoon Transit Service Supervisors are responsible for monitoring and supporting the transit system and providing supervision and support to transit staff. As part of this role, these individuals provide direction on issues and concerns noted by staff, attend incidents and collisions, perform workplace observations, address customer concerns and adjust service levels and routing in real time as required.

In response to issues of safety and security, Saskatoon Transit Service Supervisors monitor calls made to City of Saskatoon Emergency Services and attend incidents to provide support and follow up to the operator involved. In addition, Saskatoon Transit Service Supervisors ride transit routes and visit transit stops and terminals to monitor for issues and disturbances.

##### *Security Patrols*

The City of Saskatoon contracts security patrols to Commissionaires. As part of this contract, regular patrols in the Downtown Transit Terminal are undertaken. Security patrols occur every 30 minutes and start at 5:14 p.m. on weekends and 7:14 p.m. on weekdays running until end of service. These patrols coincide with the arrival and departure of buses, providing security while passengers are present in the Downtown Transit Terminal.

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### *Emergency Services*

Saskatoon Transit buses are equipped with radios which provide an operator a direct line to City of Saskatoon Emergency Services who dispatch fire, medical and police resources as required.

All calls made to Emergency Services are monitored by Saskatoon Transit Service Supervisors for additional response and support. Calls made directly to Saskatoon Transit Service Supervisors may be directed to Emergency Services for response.

### *Community Support Officers*

The Community Support Officers (CSOs) are a team of civilian officers who conduct year-round foot patrols in the three Saskatoon Business Improvement Districts of Downtown, Riversdale and Broadway.

The main duties of the Community Support Officers are to:

- provide a familiar, highly visible, and accessible uniformed presence, primarily through foot patrols, in identified areas of the city;
- assist community members in need by accessing relevant supports, such as health care, addictions and crisis counselling, and food and shelter, and contacts the appropriate community support agency when necessary;
- respond to requests regarding panhandling, loitering, public intoxication, and other related activities;
- responsible for the enforcement of relevant municipal bylaws and, when necessary, will contact other civic organizations such as the Saskatoon Police Service;
- establish and facilitate partnerships with local businesses, residents, and community support organizations to be aware of potential issues and areas of concern;
- assist with the identification of locally highlighted issues and collaborate with community support agencies, residents, and others to develop and implement resolutions to these issues;
- promote relevant social programs to members of the community in need; and
- provide support in the prevention of criminal activities and provincial offences.

Support from CSOs is relied on for incidents relating to mental health and addiction as reported to Saskatoon Transit Service Supervisors by operators. The CSOs respond and provide individuals with specific outreach resources or aid in the individual's safe transportation. CSO hours of operation are 8:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., Wednesday through Friday and 10:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. on Tuesdays and Saturdays.

### Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

Jurisdictions across Canada, similar in size to Saskatoon as well as partner agencies in the prairie provinces were contacted regarding the security, policing and outreach support they have in place. Responses were received from seven agencies: Regina, London, Calgary, Winnipeg, Halifax, Windsor, and Burlington. More details are available in Appendix 1.

### **OPTIONS**

Several options for providing dedicated transit support workers are detailed below.

#### Option 1 – Support Workers on Every Bus and Route

Support workers acting under a mandate similar to a CSO could be placed on each bus during all hours of operation. At approximately 353,000 service hours per year, this approach would require approximately 200 personnel for a total annual cost of \$12.3M to \$14.0M, based on costs of the current CSO program.

Hiring the necessary staff that possess the training and qualifications to appropriately provide outreach and support will require significant time and resources. The roll out of this option would need to be incremental and could focus initially on routes with higher numbers of instances and then roll out in stages to the entire network as staffing resources allow.

#### Option 2 – Targeted and Rotating Support

Location and route specific data associated with incidents reported by Saskatoon Transit staff could provide a deliberate approach to dispatching support workers. As in Option 1, support workers acting under a mandate similar to a CSO could be introduced using the following two sub-options which can be separate or stackable.

##### Option 2A - Terminals and Stops

A significant number of incidents occur at two terminals. Support workers could be stationed at these locations to provide support as the need arises. Based on 20 hours of daily operation from Monday to Saturday and 13 hours on Sunday, and one staff member at each of the two locations, the total annual cost for this option is \$481,300 to \$547,700, based on the current costs of the CSO program.

##### Option 2B – Targeted Bus Routes

Support workers could be dispatched with a focus on routes with higher frequencies of incidents. Five support workers rotating through buses operating on these routes could provide support as the need arises. Based on 20 hours of daily operation from Monday to Saturday and 13 hours on Sunday, and five support workers on buses, the total annual cost for this option is \$1.2M to \$1.4M, based on the current costs of the CSO program. The number of support officers could be scaled up or down based on available funding and/or the level of support desired.

#### Option 3 – Status Quo

Saskatoon Transit would continue to rely on a mix of internal and external support for response to issues as they arise as outlined in the Current Status and City of Saskatoon Approach section in this report.

Option 4 – One City Approach Community Support Program

The Saskatoon Fire Department and Community Services have recently initiated a review of the current Community Support Program Service Delivery Model with participation from the Street Activity Steering Committee. Reporting on status of the review, options for going forward with the program and financial implications are planned to be brought forward to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services Committee (PDCS) in advance of the 2024-25 Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

Option 4 proposes that options and financial considerations for support workers for Saskatoon Transit be included for consideration through a one-city holistic approach within the current community support program service delivery review being undertaken by the Saskatoon Fire Department and Community Services.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation recommend to City Council:

1. That next steps for provision of a transit support workers program be considered through Option 4 – One City Approach Community Support Program be approved;
2. That Saskatoon Transit participate in the review of the current Community Support Program Service Delivery Model alongside the Saskatoon Fire Department and Community Services; and,
3. That Administration report back on options with funding considerations for transit support workers as part of the report on the review of the current Community Support Program Service Delivery Model in advance of the 2024-25 Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

**RATIONALE**

Due to the similarities in roles and areas of focus, Administration recommends that consideration for support workers for Saskatoon Transit be included in the scope of the review of the Community Support Program Service Delivery Model as part of a one-city approach to community support workers service delivery. Participation of Saskatoon Transit in this review will allow for inclusion of transit in an integrated Community Safety Plan based on community need which will provide opportunities for synergies and efficiencies where it is needed most in the community.

The Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) formed a Transit Safety Taskforce in June 2022 to address root causes of violence on transit and advocate for real-world solutions. On April 24, 2023, CUTA released the finalized set of recommendations developed by CUTA's Transit Safety Taskforce for improving safety measures on transit systems, as well as engaging with all levels of government and partnering organizations to address broader societal issues that play out on public transit. A link to the backgrounder with the recommendations is available [here](#).

The recommendations developed by CUTA's Transit Safety Taskforce as well as options outlined in this report could be considered for transit, in whole or in part, as well as other options identified through the program review work that will be brought forward to PDCS in the coming weeks. Saskatoon Transit is also reviewing the recommendations of the CUTA Transit Safety Taskforce for consideration in enhancing transit safety.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no financial implications determined at this time. Financial implications for options for transit support workers will be included in the future report to PDCS in advance of the 2024-25 Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget deliberations.

### **ADDITIONAL IMPLICATIONS/CONSIDERATIONS**

There are no additional implications or considerations at this time. Additional implications and considerations will be brought forward in future reporting.

### **COMMUNICATION ACTIVITIES**

There are no communication activities planned at this time. Any required communication activities will be considered and brought forward in future reporting.

### **APPENDICES**

1. Approaches in Other Jurisdictions

#### Report Approval

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