

Saskatoon Transit Frontline Employee Safety Plan Update – April 2025

ISSUE

This report provides an update on the Saskatoon Transit Frontline Employee Safety Plan launched in June 2024 to improve workplace safety and foster a culture of safety within Saskatoon Transit.

BACKGROUND

At the start of 2024, Saskatoon Transit employees experienced an increase in aggressive and violent incidents. In response to this increase in incidents, Saskatoon Transit management and Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 615 developed and released the Saskatoon Transit Frontline Employee Safety Plan in June 2024. This plan was a commitment to undertake 17 initiatives to improve workplace safety and foster a culture of safety within Saskatoon Transit. See Appendix A for the Saskatoon Transit Frontline Employee Safety Plan.

CURRENT STATUS

All initiatives identified in the plan have been addressed and implemented except for roll out of the updated Respectful and Harassment-free Workplace policy, which is in progress. Saskatoon Transit's priority continues to be improving safety for employees and riders by reducing the risk of negative interactions. The goals are to maintain order on the bus, reduce negative interactions and provide employees with the skills and tools they need to de-escalate situations.

DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS

Program Accomplishments

Prevention and Security

1. Increased uniform presence by assigning more Saskatoon Transit supervisors at terminals and on the buses and contracted commissionaires for regular patrols at the Downtown, Centre Mall, Market Mall and Confederation Mall terminals.
2. Introduced Fire Community Support teams at terminals and on the buses, adding six new positions. With the Fire Community Support teams fully staffed, Saskatoon Transit and the Saskatoon Fire Department (SFD) will continue to deploy targeted and rotated resources on routes and at terminals with a higher rate of incidents. Saskatoon Transit and SFD management meet regularly with ATU and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) to review the effectiveness of the Fire Community Support Workers program.
3. Hired a dedicated Transit Security Advisor to liaise with the Fire Community Support team and other partners and develop a long-term security plan.
4. Ran a public marketing campaign featuring Saskatoon Transit frontline employees to increase the profile of bus operators in the community.
5. Installed CCTV cameras at the Downtown terminal. Work continues on the installation of CCTV cameras at the Confederation Mall terminal.

6. Participating in Saskatoon Police Service (SPS) and SFD's Community Approach to Community Safety and Wellbeing initiative. This initiative takes a community-based approach to address the root causes of complex social issues.

Processes and Procedures

7. Developed and implemented a Transit Rider Ban process and introduced the new corporate Customer Conduct Standard for reporting customer abuse experienced by customer service staff.
8. Documented and communicated the Fare Enforcement Standard and role clarity for bus operators to reduce the risk of negative interactions with operators and passengers.
9. Developed and communicated an Incident Reporting Standard and process for reporting negative interactions.

Training and Education

10. Developed and initiated delivery of enhanced customer service and de-escalation training for all frontline employees.

Responding to Serious Incidents

11. Streamlined the process for an operator to report an incident to the Saskatoon Police Service.
12. Hosted an in-person mental health professional two to three times every month for walk-in visits at the Civic Operations Centre and Access Transit office for employees.
13. Developed a new dashboard for tracking negative interactions and reporting trends.
14. Advocated the Ministry of Justice for tougher sentences for assaults under the Criminal Code against Saskatoon Transit employees.

Culture of Safety

15. Developed a standard for developing and delivering the Safety Talk program.
16. Increased communications about workplace safety initiatives.

Negative Interactions

The total negative interactions were higher in 2024 than in 2023, peaking in April and May with more instances of public intoxication and acts of aggression. The second half of 2024 showed improvement in some areas after the Saskatoon Transit Frontline Employee Safety Plan was initiated. Monthly negative interactions involving either the operator or passenger-on-passenger began declining in July. Of note, there were no operator assaults from July to December, compared to six from January to June. There has been one operator assault in Q1 of 2025.

The most prevalent reoccurring factor in the 2024 negative interactions between an operator and a customer was the operator asking the customer about fare payment, questioning the rider about their destination or asking them to leave the bus, resulting in

the customer responding negatively. This reinforces the position that enforcing fare payment increases the risk of negative interactions.

Saskatoon Transit management will continue to communicate the importance of following the fare enforcement standard and schedule operators for the new Service Ambassador training program, which includes a de-escalation component.

Administration will be providing additional details on reported negative interactions in the 2024 Saskatoon Transit annual report scheduled to be presented to the Standing Policy Committee on Transportation in Q2 of 2025.

Employee Engagement

Saskatoon Transit employees participated in a survey in February 2025 to measure awareness of and satisfaction with the initiatives in the Saskatoon Transit Frontline Employee Safety Plan. Employees are aware of the plan, and most feel that more time and additional efforts on these initiatives will help improve safety. Views to date are mixed, with employees reporting equally feeling more safe and less safe since June 2024, with many reporting no change in feelings of safety at work since the plan launched.

Some initiatives were introduced at the beginning of January 2025, so the impact may not be visible until there is more communication, training and engagement. Saskatoon Transit will continue to engage with employees about workplace safety and involve employees in continuous safety improvements.

Public Perception Surveys

Saskatoon Transit has surveyed riders about safety on transit with push notifications through the Transit app's "Rate my ride". Approximately 1,600 individuals responded to the survey each week. Transit app is actively used by more than 23,000 unique monthly riders.

The table below shows the results of the surveys for three, one-week periods between November 27, 2023 and December 1, 2024. The results of the surveys showed an increase in people who felt "not so safe" and decrease in people that felt "very safe" in the survey time from May 13 to 19, 2024, which was at the peak of negative incidents in 2024. This data shows a correlation that people feel less safe when there are more negative interactions.

Perception	November 27 to December 3, 2023	May 13 to 19, 2024	November 25 to December 1, 2024
Very Safe	51%	43%	55%
Fine	47%	53%	42%
Not so Safe	2%	5%	3%

NEXT STEPS

The implementation of the Saskatoon Transit Frontline Employee Safety Plan in June 2024 and Fire Community Support Program in July 2024 has shown some early successes in meeting the goals of improving safety at Saskatoon Transit. However, more work needs to be done to achieve the goal of all riders and employees feeling very safe on transit. Some of the next steps towards this goal include:

1. Continue to follow up on incidents and improve where possible based on employee feedback and investigation outcomes.
2. Prioritize the list of improvements identified in the employee survey and work with ATU, the Saskatoon Transit Occupational Health Committee and employees to improve safety.
3. Continue to collaborate with the SFD, ATU and IAFF on implementing and refining the Fire Community Support program for Saskatoon Transit. Saskatoon Transit will support the Saskatoon Fire Department with its report to City Council in Q3 of 2025 on the effectiveness of the Fire Community Support program.
4. Continue to meet with the City of Saskatoon Inter-Agency Support Team, a multi-disciplinary group with members from the SFD, SPS, Saskatoon Transit and Corporate Security, to discuss and mitigate current safety and security issues affecting Saskatoon Transit.
5. Extend the City's customer conduct standard "Respect is expected" public awareness campaign with Saskatoon Transit employee images on stickers and posters at Saskatoon Transit facilities and buses, and digitally on the City's website and social media channels.
6. Participate in the corporate rollout of a new reporting tool for the Respectful and Harassment-free Workplace policy, which is the only incomplete initiative in the plan.
7. Explore options for improving the customer experience by giving customers the ability to discretely and in real time report safety and security issues to a dispatch centre via text message.

APPENDICES

1. Saskatoon Transit Frontline Employee Safety Plan

Report Approval

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