



City of Moose Jaw

COMMUNICATION # CC-2020-0309

TITLE: Transit Service

TO: City Council

FROM: City Manager

DATE: November 25, 2020

PUBLIC: PUBLIC DOCUMENT

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Para-transit service continue with no changes and that per ride para-transit rates increase to \$1.00 from \$0.50 effective February 1, 2021; and

THAT Saturday transit service be discontinued for a one-year period to determine impacts and needs, effective February 1, 2021; and

THAT a business case be prepared in time for the 2022 budget to determine if a return to 30-minute routes is feasible; and further

THAT per ride transit rates increase to \$2.00 from \$1.25 effective February 1, 2021.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Transit and para-transit are very important services, however, very expensive and Moose Jaw has a service that has attempted to fit many needs regardless of cost. Providing a service that is not utilized to its fullest extent is not a cost that a City can continue to provide. The service, to meet the requirement of the Budget Policy, should be one that meets the needs of the majority of customers, is attractive for use, and is focused on the times that there are sufficient customers.

BACKGROUND

Moose Jaw Transit has historically been somewhat of a customized transit service that meets a full range of regular transit services and specialized service to locations. The subsidy that is required to provide six day a week service is projected to be almost \$1.2 million in 2020 and increasing to \$1.3 million in 2021.

Saturday ridership has historically been low. During the initial phases of the Pandemic, Saturday service was discontinued with a dial a ride service in place. There was little usage with an average of two calls for service per Saturday. When full service returned in September, 2020 an average of 180 passengers used Saturday service. This equates to a per trip cost of \$8.39.

The remainder of the service, while low, has a per trip cost of \$7.10 and an average daily passenger count of 500 including the school extra routes. Total annual ridership post-pandemic is 135,000 as compared to 235,000 pre-pandemic.

Routes were changed from 30 minutes to 40 minutes in 2015. That made the transit schedule more difficult to understand and believed to have reduced ridership. It is not a service that is considered effective by the public if it takes an extended period of time to get to the desired destination.

Rates were decreased in 2017 in an unsuccessful attempt to increase ridership with the only impact being a reduction in revenue. Regular transit was reduced from \$3.00 to \$1.25 per ride and para-transit was reduced from \$3.00 to \$0.50 per ride.

As well, there has not been a focus on this service, and this is an expensive cost centre of almost \$1,500,000 annually that deserves a higher level of scrutiny. This has been corrected with the full integration of Transit into the new Public Works & Utilities Department as well as the migration of the previous Manager of Transportation position to the new position of Transit Supervisor.

DISCUSSION

Transit and Para-transit are important services to the Community and should be maintained as this will become even more important as the City grows, prospers and attracts new residents. However, this expensive service at present cannot be one that is customizable and with such low ridership on Saturdays must be considered for rationalization.

Rationalization in this circumstance would see that customization or routes that are considered under-utilized would be discontinued. This is similar to what was done in 2018 with the Pla-Mor Palace being closed during the day, Monday to Friday, as there were only minimal clients which could be accommodated in another facility.

Saturday ridership averages less than 180 passengers per day and there are multiple buses and routes that are running empty or with minimal passengers. Dial a Bus service was available on Saturdays from March to September with less than one or two passengers per day that took advantage of that service. Discontinuing Saturday service would appear to have the least impact upon ridership and the experience earlier in 2020 would indicate that the 180 people were able to find other means of transportation from March to September. The City did also consult with a number of groups with regards to Saturday service and received mixed messages with newcomers to Canada generally purchasing a vehicle as soon as possible while students seemed more likely to use a Saturday service, but somewhat seasonal or in limited numbers.

Therefore, it is proposed for a one year trial period that transit service be focused on a Monday to Friday service from 6:15 am to 5:30 pm with routes further rationalized such as enhancing routes to include the Yara Centre and Mosaic Place and discontinuing service to locations where ridership is extremely low. It is further proposed that during this trial period, a business case would be prepared to determine if it is feasible to return to 30-minute service as a means to make transit more attractive, user friendly, and enhanced to encourage ridership.

It is recommended that regular transit per trip rates be increased to \$2.00 which is still the lowest price in Saskatchewan from the major Cities that provide transit and lower than the previous \$3.00 amount per rider.

Para-transit is a tremendous service, however \$0.50 a rider is an unfair subsidization rate when the cost of the service is \$12.00 per trip. Therefore, it is recommended that para-transit rates be increased to \$1.00 per ride.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Reduction of Saturday Service	\$80,000
Increase of Regular Transit Rates	\$93,000
Increase of Para-transit Rates	\$15,000
Net Impact Reduced Expenses/Increased Fares	\$188,000

OPTIONS TO RECOMMENDATION

Status Quo	\$0
Provide Dial a Bus Service on Saturdays	\$20,000 or \$200 per ridership
Discontinue Transit	\$1,300,000
Discontinue Transit and Para-Transit	\$1,700,000

PRESENTATION

Mr. Jim Puffalt, City Manager, will provide a brief overview of this report.

REPORT APPROVAL

Written by: Jim Puffalt, City Manager
 Reviewed by: Tracy Wittke, Assistant City Clerk
 Approved by: Jim Puffalt, City Manager
 Approved by: Fraser Tolmie, Mayor

To be completed by the Clerk's Department only.

Presented to Regular Council or Executive Committee on _____.

Resolution No. _____

Report Approval Details

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Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Nov 26, 2020

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:



Tracy Wittke



Jim Puffalt



Fraser Tolmie