



**Transit Advisory Committee**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Quarter 2022**  
 December 14<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am  
 Owatonna SMART; Zoom

Our mission is to provide safe, reliable, accessible and courteous public transportation services in response to the needs of our communities.

**Committee Members:**

- |   |                                 |   |                                       |
|---|---------------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| x | Kirk Kuchera – SMART Transit    |   | Lenore Fries – Albert Lea (passenger) |
| x | Joanne Brackey – SMART Transit  |   | Joyce Poshusta – Austin City Council  |
| x | Garry Hart – CVS/SMART Transit  |   | Jerry Reinartz – Mower County         |
| x | Shelly Rockman – SMART Transit  | x | Kari Hall – Mayo Health Systems       |
| x | Chris Thompson – SMART Transit  |   | Waseca County – Commissioner          |
| x | John Simonette – SMART Transit  |   | Kelly Sutlief – Waseca (passenger)    |
| x | Greg Krueger – Steele County    |   | Matti Gurney – MNDOT OTAT             |
| x | Troy Klecker – City of Owatonna | x | Barbara Schreiber – MNDOT OTAT        |

**Review of scope and mission for TAC**

Purpose: The purpose of a TAC is to provide guidance and advise transit staff in issues related to transit services, funding, marketing, service strategies, developing policy, special projects, and capital investments/projects. This committee/council is not a governing board, so do not have a legal authority to oversee the transit program, however, provide as a valuable resource to the transit program in developing and providing for transit services.

**Updates**

- Stats

SMART Transit-Cedar Valley Services - 2022 Data													
Data for all counties combined	no preschool												YTD
	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
<b>PASSENGERS</b>													
Albert Lea	4,245	4,276	4,815	4,899	4,517	3,814	3,375	4,625	5,144	5,285	5,233	0	50,228
Austin	9,402	10,282	10,221	9,867	9,895	6,074	4,353	5,317	9,509	10,129	9,477	0	94,526
Owatonna	3,430	3,413	3,670	3,431	3,671	2,534	2,377	2,806	4,220	4,454	4,157	0	38,163
<b>Blooming Prairie</b>													0
Waseca	1,775	1,899	2,207	1,830	1,908	1,535	1,014	1,146	1,774	1,869	1,989	0	18,946
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>18,852</b>	<b>19,870</b>	<b>20,913</b>	<b>20,027</b>	<b>19,991</b>	<b>13,957</b>	<b>11,119</b>	<b>13,894</b>	<b>20,647</b>	<b>21,737</b>	<b>20,856</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>201,863</b>
<b>HOURS</b>													
Albert Lea	1,189	1,111	1,291	1,130	1,159	1,109	1,021	1,168	1,209	1,233	1,167	0	12,784
Austin	2,012	1,922	2,075	1,937	1,995	1,707	1,561	1,769	1,958	1,989	1,981	0	20,906
Owatonna	1,045	994	1,054	1,007	1,048	988	958	1,036	1,219	1,219	1,186	0	11,752
<b>Blooming Prairie</b>													0
Waseca	774	732	837	732	767	802	740	785	683	691	652	0	8,195
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,019</b>	<b>4,759</b>	<b>5,256</b>	<b>4,806</b>	<b>4,968</b>	<b>4,606</b>	<b>4,279</b>	<b>4,758</b>	<b>5,068</b>	<b>5,131</b>	<b>4,986</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>53,637</b>
<b>MILES</b>													
Albert Lea	14,065	14,424	16,258	15,219	15,554	13,391	12,758	15,224	15,734	15,984	15,270	0	163,881
Austin	21,864	21,440	21,976	19,404	21,445	18,311	17,617	19,141	22,326	23,405	21,655	0	228,584
Owatonna	12,233	12,208	13,537	12,560	13,099	11,975	11,535	12,688	14,581	15,337	14,393	0	144,146
<b>Blooming Prairie</b>													0
Waseca	5,745	5,282	6,277	5,165	5,302	5,516	4,495	5,298	5,402	4,970	5,228	0	58,680
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>53,907</b>	<b>53,354</b>	<b>58,048</b>	<b>52,348</b>	<b>55,400</b>	<b>49,193</b>	<b>46,405</b>	<b>52,351</b>	<b>58,043</b>	<b>59,696</b>	<b>56,546</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>595,291</b>

- Ridership – On pace for approximately 218,000 trips (2022)
    - ~7% increase over 2021
- COVID-19
  - Update
    - No update at this time
    - Will remove as standing item on agenda – will add as needed
- Update
  - SMART held annual all-staff meeting (first time inviting all together since 2019)
    - Held at Austin’s Cedar Valley Services location
    - Law Enforcement officer was special guest – Discussion on physical violence and de-escalation
    - Great discussions regarding wheelchair securement, dispatching, and more
- SMART Functional Updates
  - Training
    - Two new hires just passed their CDL and Passenger tests
    - Recently hired two drivers who had their CDL with Passenger endorsements
      - Passenger endorsement is required for transporting people (buses)
      - Process of hiring employees without CDL credentials requires process – ELDT (Entry Level Driver Training), a federal requirement that started February, 2022
        - Minnesota has been ahead of the game with this – MNDOT and RTAP was instrumental in training program
    - Recently did a dispatch training in St. Cloud that was really productive – Great to hear feedback from other agencies and their staff about their challenges
    - Drug & Alcohol is going well – Wrapping up the year completing the required test
    - Fleet has been a challenge – buses are showing their age
  - Owatonna/Waseca
    - Waseca –
      - Lot of school-aged children that do not qualify for school buses are transported on SMART
        - Has had its challenges given the demand for it
      - Overall things are going very well with ridership
      - Staffing has been very challenging – At one point nearly 50% down for staffing (open positions versus filled positions)
    - Owatonna –
      - Driver passed the test yesterday – was happy as she was scheduled to drive a bus on her own 😊
      - Super happy with our facility – still hanging up announcement boards, etc.
      - PreK transportation has been going really well – SMART has developed really good partnerships with local schools and agencies working with families
        - In some cases, SMART is assisting with filling gaps that local bus company cannot cover
  - Austin/Albert Lea/Dispatch
    - Austin –
      - Staffing has been a challenge as well, but we are currently on pace to be fully staffed (fingers crossed)
      - If staffing continues, we will look at reduced services and look at expanding them back to normal
    - Albert Lea –
      - Local cab company is no longer operating so SMART is assisting with picking up more consumers
      - Drivers have been helping cover the Austin/Albert Lea Shuttle bus (due to staffing)
      - Looking to add stops to our shuttle service to make it more enticing for the two communities

- Albert Lea school has had families set up transportation for their children
    - Dispatch –
      - Working through some software challenges
  - MNDOT Update
    - November TAC Meeting
      - Reviewed survey results – MNDOT working to better relationships between agencies and OTAT
    - ATP Transit Presentation
    - Capital
      - Vehicles
        - Vehicle Replacement
          - 2020-21 Bus Grants/Contracts
            - Ordered six replacement buses (from 2020 capital grant; two in Austin, two in Albert Lea, one in Owatonna, and one in Waseca)
              - Received first bus from 2020 order in mid-May, likely another year before we receive any more new buses
            - Ordered five replacement buses (from 2021 capital grant; one in Austin, one in Owatonna, and three in Waseca)
            - Received new info at Fall Conference and immediately following:
              -
          - 2022 Bus Grant/Contract
            - Approved for two buses from 2022 Vehicle Replacement grant; one in Austin, one in Albert Lea – Initiated procurement process and currently in holding stage (ordering buses soon?)
          - 2023 Vehicle Replacement application submitted in September
            - Requesting eight replacement buses
        - Low-No Emission Grant – BETTER
          - Worked with MNDOT and three other agencies to apply for an exciting opportunity to bring an electric bus to SMART
          - “Buses Electrified To Travel Efficiently in Rural” MN Communities application was completed the last week of May
          - Notice was received mid-August that MNDOT’s grant was approved
            - Tentative time for bus arrival is 2025
      - Facilities
        - Owatonna facility
          - Moved in October 27
          - Open House to take place in early spring
        - Austin and Waseca facility approved through MNDOT grant – Future projects
          - Austin scheduled for 2025; Waseca scheduled for 2026
      - Other
        - Vehicle Maintenance Software
          - Will proceed with Fleetio for software
- Big Picture – Down the Road
  - Shared Mobility Opportunity
    - During Fall Conference SMART learned that our routing software provider backed out of the project (four of the seven agencies in the project use the same vendor)
    - App will now operate as a ‘Planning App’ as opposed to one that will schedule trips
  - Region 10 Local Human Services – Transit Coordination Plan 2022
    - Shelly and Kirk are part of committee with other agencies in SE MN assisting towards updating the regional coordination plan between MNDOT and transit agencies
    - Plan has been completed and was voted on by MNDOT District 6 ATP Thursday, November 10
      - \* Quick review of plan; will email official plan out when available (at a later date)
  - Cedar Valley Services Update
    - Own and operate SMART – Operate in three of the four counties SMART serves

- Still working on challenges with staffing
- Continue to bring back consumers (adult with disabilities that CVS serves and assists)
  - As staff get added, more consumers can get added
- Cab company closing created a big challenge – Large majority of consumers who work in the community do not have their own transportation so rely on public transportation and cab company

#### **2022 Program Goals (carried over from 2021)**

- Continue to keep staff and passengers safe
- Continue to streamline and simplify processes and policies
- Work to grow ridership out of COVID Pandemic
  - Gain rider trust
- Any new goals/ideas?

#### **TAC Members/Community Feedback from Last Meeting to Re-visit:**

- Mayo – Organizational plan regarding passenger mobility issues
  - Discussions among senior leadership to develop formal policies regarding how to assist patients with severe mobility issues
    - Large agreement among staff that Mayo will not exceed their scope of training to assist patients with severe mobility issues
    - Discuss what resources can be used to assist these individuals

#### **NEW items from TAC Members/Community Feedback?**

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#### **2022 Meeting Dates:**

Quarterly on 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday ... 10:00 am rotating city (Zoom option available for all meetings)

Q1 = March 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2022 ... 905 E 16<sup>th</sup> St, Albert Lea, MN (Zoom only)

Q2 = June 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 ... 2803 W Oakland Ave, Austin, MN (Zoom only)

Q3 = October 12<sup>th</sup>, 2022 ... 140 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave. NW, Owatonna, MN (Zoom only)

Q4 = December 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022 ... 303 South State Street, Waseca, MN 56093 \*

\* Changed to 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday due to Christmas holiday, held at Emergency Services Building

\*\* *In person opportunities for all meetings subject to change based on current guidelines, etc.*

#### **2023 Meeting Dates (tentative):**

Q1 = March 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2023 ... 905 E 16<sup>th</sup> St, Albert Lea, MN (In Person/Zoom)

Q2 = June 21<sup>st</sup>, 2023 ... 2803 W Oakland Ave, Austin, MN (In Person/Zoom)

Q3 = September 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023 ... 140 32<sup>nd</sup> Ave. NW, Owatonna, MN (In Person/Zoom)

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**Thank you all so much for your continued support and advocacy on behalf of public transportation in our region!**