



Transit Advisory Committee

1st Quarter 2023

June 21st, 10:00am

Austin 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:

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|---|--|--|
| 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 | Dan Sparks – Mower County |
| x | Shelly Rockman – SMART Transit | Kari Hall – Mayo Health Systems |
| x | Chris Thompson – SMART Transit | x Bonnie Buchanan – Jefferson Lines |
| x | Kevin Hemann – SMART Transit | Waseca County – Commissioner |
| x | Greg Krueger – Steele County | Kelly Sutlief – Waseca (passenger) |
| | Troy Klecker – City of Owatonna | x Jim Wolter – 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 - 2023 Data					
Data for all counties combined					
	January	February	March	April	May
PASSENGERS					
Albert Lea	5,292	4,733	5,837	5,013	5,115
Austin	9,359	9,098	10,962	8,350	10,892
Owatonna	4,212	4,163	4,312	4,278	4,587
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	1,975	1,878	2,272	1,954	1,985
TOTAL	20,838	19,872	23,383	19,595	22,579
HOURS					
Albert Lea	1,178	969	1,291	1,182	1,300
Austin	1,938	1,778	2,231	1,827	2,182
Owatonna	1,143	1,044	1,249	1,117	1,252
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	683	624	745	625	714
TOTAL	4,942	4,414	5,516	4,751	5,448
MILES					
Albert Lea	15,364	13,880	16,774	13,955	15,304
Austin	22,466	20,869	25,477	20,094	23,890
Owatonna	15,223	13,977	16,375	14,331	15,769
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	5,431	4,966	5,755	5,047	5,300
TOTAL	58,484	53,692	64,381	53,427	60,263

- March was a really solid month – ridership was as close to pre-COVID as we’ve seen
- April had a holiday and less school days which lowers trip count, while May was a nice rebound

SMART Transit-Cedar Valley Services - 2022 Data

Data for all counties combined					
	January	February	March	April	May
PASSENGERS					
Albert Lea	4,245	4,276	4,815	4,899	4,517
Austin	9,402	10,282	10,221	9,867	9,895
Owatonna	3,430	3,413	3,670	3,431	3,671
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	1,775	1,899	2,207	1,830	1,908
TOTAL	18,852	19,870	20,913	20,027	19,991
HOURS					
Albert Lea	1,189	1,111	1,291	1,130	1,159
Austin	2,012	1,922	2,075	1,937	1,995
Owatonna	1,045	994	1,054	1,007	1,048
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	774	732	837	732	767
TOTAL	5,019	4,759	5,256	4,806	4,968
MILES					
Albert Lea	14,065	14,424	16,258	15,219	15,554
Austin	21,864	21,440	21,976	19,404	21,445
Owatonna	12,233	12,208	13,537	12,560	13,099
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	5,745	5,282	6,277	5,165	5,302
TOTAL	53,907	53,354	58,048	52,348	55,400

- Every month but April we saw gains over 2022
- What's New
 - SMART was part of a documentary series titled COVID Confessions
 - Filmmaker Alec Fischer contacted SMART in the fall of 2021
 - SMART staff traveled to Minneapolis in November, 2021
 - Docuseries covers 40 industries with interviews of over 330 individuals
 - Film premiered at a 'Red Carpet' event on May 24; released on YouTube on May 25
 - Docuseries has led to Emmy nominations and national recognition (Alec was named to the top *30 Under 30* in media list by Forbes)
 - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mO37cCjau0s>





- CTAA National Roadeo
 - Owatonna Lead Driver Julio Zavala Lopez traveled to Oklahoma City in May to compete at the 32nd Annual National Community Transportation Roadeo (traveled with Operations Managers Joanne Brackey – Training and Compliance, and Todd Brackey – Fleet and Facilities)
 - Punched his ticket to National Roadeo as a winner of the Minnesota 2022 Roadeo in Austin (1st Place in Small Bus competition and Driver of the Year Award)
 - 67 total drivers from all over the United States
 - Julio won the Most Spirited Driver Award – voted by his peers as the most friendly and helpful



- SMART Functional Updates
 - Training
 - CTAA
 - Was a great experience – a total of six days
 - Attempted to be a judge but was unable to due to too many others already signed up
 - Was able to learn a lot about the Roadeo that we can utilize at our local state Roadeo
 - Some really good training opportunities throughout the week

- Had a great Expo that had some really cool and new stuff regarding transit (vehicles, technology, etc.
 - Would highly recommend the event
 - Training
 - Held a new hire training yesterday with SMART staff (also had staff from another agency as Joanne is a state RTAP training)
 - Will be holding a CPR training in July (evening class to help with scheduling)
 - Have a new hire starting in early July
 - Drug & Alcohol
 - Going good!
 - Owatonna/Waseca
 - Really struggling with staffing in northern counties – both cities are feeling a pinch
 - Continues to be the biggest challenge
 - Owatonna –
 - Great story about a passenger who recently turned 100 – She remains highly independent thankful to SMART who transports her around town and to the store
 - Waseca –
 - Austin/Albert Lea/Dispatch
 - Austin –
 - Have an interview tomorrow
 - Assisting some area programs with trips on Demand Response services
 - Albert Lea –
 - Recently lost two really seasoned drivers (FT & PT)
 - Replaced them already (one transfer from Austin)
 - Assisting some area programs with trips on Demand Response services
 - Dispatch –
 - FT dispatcher retired in March and has been replaced
- MNDOT Update
 - 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 May, 2022
 - Ordered five replacement buses (from 2021 capital grant; one in Austin, one in Owatonna, and three in Waseca)
 - 2020-21 Bus Contracts received amendments due to pricing increases
 - Expecting select buses to be delivered as soon as late spring/early summer
 - Scheduled to receive four buses this summer (mid-July hopefully)
 - Two buses scheduled to arrive mid-fall, with last four buses coming Q1 2024
 - 2022 Bus Grant/Contract
 - Approved for two buses from 2022 Vehicle Replacement grant; one in Austin, one in Albert Lea
 - Two buses have been ordered through North Central
 - 2023 Vehicle Replacement
 - Requested eight buses for replacement, was approved for four (award letter)
 - Two buses in Austin, two buses in Owatonna
 - Significant price increase:

- Nearly 40% over 2022 ordering price
- Increase of 101% from 2021 ordering price
- Recently received notice of yet another increase – Now approx. 115% increase over original 2020 price
 - Likely order buses later this fall
- 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, 2022, that MNDOT’s grant was approved
 - Tentative time for bus arrival is 2025
- Facilities
 - Owatonna facility
 - Open House went very well – great turnout from MNDOT, Cedar Valley, and some passengers
 - Austin and Waseca facility approved through MNDOT grant – Future projects
 - Austin scheduled for 2025; Waseca scheduled for 2026
- Other
 - Have started initial planning for 2024 - will start piecing together the 2024 Operating grant application soon – Has been delayed due to historic Transportation package that was passed this last legislative session (extra dollars for transit)
 - Grant application was posted on MNDOT site today (6/21/23)
 - 3% increase for 2024
 - 5% local share for 2024
 - Due 7/31/23
 - Awarding set for October
- Big Picture – Down the Road
 - Resume normal service hours
 - Looking at services and resume as able (staffing)
 - Cedar Valley Services Update
 - Parent company for SMART – Has been doing transit for nearly 20 years now
 - Transportation is important aspect of helping disabled individuals in the community
 - Continue to deal with staffing challenges
 - Struggled with transportation while local taxi company in Albert Lea was not operational – new one is up and running now

2023 Program Goals (carried over from 2022)

- 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:

- Austin Twin Towers – Residents are not fully aware of service hours on evenings and weekends
 - Memo created for Twin Towers – Indicates services, hours, etc.

NEW items from TAC Members/Community Feedback?

- N/A

2023 Meeting Dates (tentative):

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

~~Q1 = March 15th, 2023 ... 905 E 16th St, Albert Lea, MN (In Person/Zoom)(original date changed)~~

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

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

*Q4 = December 20th, 2023 ... 303 South State Street, Waseca, MN 56093 (In Person/Zoom)

* Changed to 3rd Wednesday due to Christmas holiday, held at Emergency Services Building

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

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