



Transit Advisory Committee

3rd Quarter 2023

September 20th, 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)
	Joanne Brackey – SMART Transit	x	Joyce Poshusta – Austin City Council
x	Garry Hart – CVS/SMART Transit		Dan Sparks – Mower County
x	Shelly Rockman – SMART Transit	x	Kari Hall – Mayo Health Systems
x	Chris Thompson – SMART Transit		Bonnie Buchanan – Jefferson Lines
x	Julio Zavala Lopez – SMART Transit		Waseca County – Commissioner
x	Greg Krueger – Steele County		Kelly Sutlief – Waseca (passenger)
	Troy Klecker – City of Owatonna		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	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	YTD
PASSENGERS													
Albert Lea	5,292	4,733	5,837	5,013	5,115	4,690	3,756	5,511	0	0	0	0	39,947
Austin	9,359	9,098	10,962	8,350	10,892	5,513	5,078	5,703	0	0	0	0	64,955
Owatonna	4,212	4,163	4,312	4,278	4,587	2,862	2,507	2,965	0	0	0	0	29,886
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	1,975	1,878	2,272	1,954	1,985	1,279	996	1,010	0	0	0	0	13,349
TOTAL	20,838	19,872	23,383	19,595	22,579	14,344	12,337	15,189	0	0	0	0	148,137
HOURS													
Albert Lea	1,178	969	1,291	1,182	1,300	1,120	1,082	1,225	0	0	0	0	9,346
Austin	1,938	1,778	2,231	1,827	2,182	1,730	1,667	1,861	0	0	0	0	15,211
Owatonna	1,143	1,044	1,249	1,117	1,252	1,036	1,003	1,081	0	0	0	0	8,924
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	683	624	745	625	714	709	598	538	0	0	0	0	5,236
TOTAL	4,942	4,414	5,516	4,751	5,448	4,595	4,349	4,705	0	0	0	0	38,717
MILES													
Albert Lea	15,364	13,880	16,774	13,955	15,304	14,128	12,344	15,136	0	0	0	0	116,885
Austin	22,466	20,869	25,477	20,094	23,890	20,697	18,361	22,195	0	0	0	0	174,049
Owatonna	15,223	13,977	16,375	14,331	15,769	13,420	12,112	14,053	0	0	0	0	115,260
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	5,431	4,966	5,755	5,047	5,300	5,288	4,087	4,335	0	0	0	0	40,209
TOTAL	58,484	53,692	64,381	53,427	60,263	53,533	46,904	55,719	0	0	0	0	446,403

- Summer was slow per usual (slower time of year in regards to ridership)
 - 7.5% increase over 2022; still lower than 2019 (pre-COVID)
- Moving into busier season (fall/winter) to wrap up 2023; staffing and reduced service will continue to be biggest barrier to achieving higher ridership numbers
- What's New
 - MPTA State Bus Roadeo
 - Austin Lead Driver Kevin Hemann and Owatonna Lead Driver Julio Zavala Lopez participated in the 36th Annual Minnesota State Bus Roadeo
 - SMART contributed four judges to help facilitate the event



Joanne Brackey Kicks-off The Roadeo Event



Course Marshall Todd Brackey Walks Drivers Through Course



SMART Team at the 2023 MPTA Roadeo Banquet
L-R: Todd Brackey, Kevin Hemann, Joanne Brackey, Julio Zavala Lopez, Shelly Rockman, Kirk Kuchera

- SMART Functional Updates
 - Training
 - Joanne is currently out of the office – notes from Joanne:
 - Working through new staff training (one Owatonna, one Waseca)
 - Planning upcoming staff meetings –
 - Dispatch Meeting in October
 - All-Staff Meeting in November
 - Mower County Sheriff's Dept. assisting with drug/marijuana presentation
 - Owatonna/Waseca
 - Coming up on 1-year anniversary (October 27th); very proud of the building and love the looks of it, both inside and outside
 - Starting to get an influx of applications this last couple weeks – looking forward to bringing people in for interviews
 - Working through two new staff – one in Owatonna and one in Waseca
 - Patiently waiting for new buses
 - Waseca County paper reached out to SMART to provide two unique stories for their readers – one that will be more informative, and one that will be a human-interest story after talking with drivers and passengers
 - Marching Band parade is this weekend and SMART is participating – looking forward to the event (participated in the past)
 - Austin/Albert Lea/Dispatch
 - Working through staffing challenges – mostly fully staffed
 - Working on preschool routes and getting as many students to school as possible
 - Austin has 15 preschool routes currently – will likely add some students from the waitlist in the coming days/weeks
 - Purple Route is only service that is currently reduced – service ends at 5:00pm on weekdays
 - Will only reinstate evening hours if fully staffed
 - Looking forward to dispatch meeting coming up in October
- 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
 - Six buses have arrived in the cities – should see two in next week, four more within 2-3 weeks
 - 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
 - Austin and Waseca facility approved through MNDOT grant – Future projects
 - Austin scheduled for 2025; Waseca scheduled for 2026
 - Working with MNDOT Consulting team on first steps for Austin and Waseca facilities
- Other
 - Completed the 2024 Operating Grant application – Was submitted in two phases this past summer
 - Awarding of contracts set for October
- Big Picture – Down the Road
 - Resume normal service hours
 - Looking at services and resume as able (staffing)
 - Cedar Valley Services Update
 - Continue to provide work training for adults with disabilities in three counties – Mower, Freeborn, and Steele
 - Continue to deal with staffing challenges – bringing back consumers to work in the communities
 - Continue to utilize SMART for transportation

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:

- Come up with new ways to help with retention
 - What can we do as an agency to ensure staff feel belonged and want to stick around
 - Work-based activities and programs to get employees together
 - Highlight staff at county board meetings, etc., etc.

NEW items from TAC Members/Community Feedback?

- Getting SMART more involved in communities and/or government entities
 - Discussion
 - Could touch base with schools/school board to discuss SMART
 - Public Safety committee meetings to discuss transit
 - Reach out to local daycare centers, etc.
 - Continue to create awareness of SMART and what we do for the communities

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!**