



Transit Advisory Committee
4th Quarter 2023
 December 20th, 10:00am
 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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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Kirk Kuchera – SMART Transit x Joanne Brackey – SMART Transit x Garry Hart – CVS/SMART Transit x Shelly Rockman – SMART Transit Chris Thompson – SMART Transit x John Simonette – SMART Transit x Greg Krueger – Steele County Troy Klecker – City of Owatonna | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lenore Fries – Albert Lea (passenger) Joyce Poshusta – Austin City Council Dan Sparks – Mower County x Kari Hall – Mayo Health Systems Bonnie Buchanan – Jefferson Lines Waseca County – Commissioner Kelly Sutlief – Waseca (passenger) x Jim Wolter – MNDOT OTAT |
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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

Data for all counties combined	January	February	March	April	May	no preschool			September	October	November	December	YTD
						June	July	August					
PASSENGERS													
Albert Lea	5,292	4,733	5,837	5,013	5,115	4,690	3,756	5,511	5,348	5,533	5,282	0	56,110
Austin	9,359	9,098	10,962	8,350	10,892	5,513	5,078	5,703	10,351	11,123	10,158	0	96,587
Owatonna	4,212	4,163	4,312	4,278	4,587	2,862	2,507	2,965	4,370	4,577	3,865	0	42,698
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	1,975	1,878	2,272	1,954	1,985	1,279	996	1,010	1,266	1,263	1,296	0	17,174
TOTAL	20,838	19,872	23,383	19,595	22,579	14,344	12,337	15,189	21,335	22,496	20,601	0	212,569
HOURS													
Albert Lea	1,178	969	1,291	1,182	1,300	1,120	1,082	1,225	1,224	1,341	1,212	0	13,122
Austin	1,938	1,778	2,231	1,827	2,182	1,730	1,667	1,861	1,975	2,147	1,984	0	21,317
Owatonna	1,143	1,044	1,249	1,117	1,252	1,036	1,003	1,081	1,192	1,194	1,159	0	12,469
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	683	624	745	625	714	709	598	538	476	517	467	0	6,696
TOTAL	4,942	4,414	5,516	4,751	5,448	4,595	4,349	4,705	4,867	5,199	4,821	0	53,604
MILES													
Albert Lea	15,364	13,880	16,774	13,955	15,304	14,128	12,344	15,136	15,316	15,970	14,625	0	162,796
Austin	22,466	20,869	25,477	20,094	23,890	20,697	18,361	22,195	21,972	21,635	22,056	0	239,712
Owatonna	15,223	13,977	16,375	14,331	15,769	13,420	12,112	14,053	13,945	15,239	13,445	0	157,889
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	5,431	4,966	5,755	5,047	5,300	5,288	4,087	4,335	3,834	3,793	3,815	0	51,651
TOTAL	58,484	53,692	64,381	53,427	60,263	53,533	46,904	55,719	55,067	56,637	53,941	0	612,048

- September and October saw modest gains over 2022 – about 3.5% for October
 - Still down from fall 2019 which saw some really large numbers (October 2019 was one of the largest months we had)
- Still battling staffing challenges – significantly less hours of service than four years ago due to reduced service
- Per city breakdown for October on ridership; 2023 less than 2019 (one of the best months ever):
 - Albert Lea – 1,000 less
 - Austin – 1,700 less
 - Owatonna – 1,500 less
 - Waseca – 1,300 less
- Per city breakdown for November on ridership; 2023 less than 2019 (more typical month):
 - Albert Lea – 130 less
 - Austin – 1,400 less
 - Owatonna – 900 less
 - Waseca – 1,000 less
- What's New
 - MPTA Fall Conference
 - Was held in La Crosse in October
 - Great sessions on what is new and upcoming
 - Cedar Valley Services Winter Activities
 - SMART participates with CVS on a senior citizen program that helps provide gifts to seniors without families – this now spans all four counties that SMART provides service to
 - SMART (and CVS) assists the Gift of Warmth in Austin – provides hats, gloves, scarves, etc. to people in need
 - Drop off location for items; CVS also provides location for packing items
- SMART Functional Updates
 - Training
 - Have had four new hires since we last met in September – they are all great and looking forward to having them on our team
 - Working with ongoing training for staff – CPR, Defensive Driving, etc.
 - Owatonna/Waseca
 - One new employee in each of the northern counties – going well
 - Optimistic going into 2024 with new staff and some solid applicants who have recently applied
 - Two new buses in Waseca which drivers are enjoying (more on buses below)
 - Austin/Albert Lea/Dispatch
 - Overall going well – little short staff in Austin (driver moving to dispatch opening up another position)
- 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 were delivered within a one-month period
 - Two in Owatonna, two in Waseca, one in both Albert Lea and Austin
 - Last four buses coming Q1 2024
 - Two in both Austin and Waseca
 - 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
 - Ordered four buses in early November – two with I State and two with North Central
 - I State buses could be delivered as early as summer 2024
 - North Central buses will likely be delivered late 2024 to early 2025
 - 2024 Vehicle Replacement
 - MNDOT vehicle solicitation closed mid-November
 - Requested eight replacement vehicles
 - Predicted price per MnDOT is \$232,000
 - 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
 - MNDOT recently brought on a consultant to assist with the procurement/purchase of the buses – should hear more soon
 - Bus Disposition
 - Working through process of disposing six buses (one bus will be used for parts)
 - Have had quite a few people express interest this past few weeks – working on accepting offers in the next week
 - Facilities
 - Austin and Waseca facility approved through MNDOT grant – Future projects
 - Working with MNDOT Consulting team on first steps for Austin and Waseca facilities
 - Some big changes with capital projects given potential funding opportunities – will know more in the coming weeks
 - Other
 - Completed the 2024 Operating Grant application – Was submitted in two phases this past summer
 - Received notification the Operating Grant was approved
- Big Picture – Down the Road
 - Resume normal service hours
 - Looking at services and resume as able (staffing)

- Cedar Valley Services Update
 - Excited to have new buses in the fleet for staff and passengers
 - Working through staffing challenges
 - Working with a nonprofit in Rice County – KCQ
 - January 1st the two organizations will merge together (bring KCQ staff on board with CVS)
 -

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?

2024 Program Goals – Ideas?

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

- Getting more involved in communities and/or government entities
 - Been an active fall/early winter with grants, buses, etc. – will review this in early 2024

NEW items from TAC Members/Community Feedback?

- Discussion regarding marketing plan with state
- Feedback on possible ridership loss to virtual medical appointments
 - Discussion regarding individuals working remotely, using delivery services, etc.

Proposed 2024 Meeting Dates (tentative):

Quarterly on **3rd Wednesday** ... 10:00 am rotating city (Zoom option available for all meetings)

Q1 = March 20th, 2024 ... 905 E 16th St, Albert Lea, MN (In Person/Zoom)

Q2 = June 19th, 2024 ... 2803 W Oakland Ave, Austin, MN (In Person/Zoom)

Q3 = September 18th, 2024 ... 140 32nd Ave. NW, Owatonna, MN (In Person/Zoom)

*Q4 = December 18th, 2024 ... 303 South State Street, Waseca, MN 56093 (In Person/Zoom)

* Held at Emergency Services Building – Waseca Community Room

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

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!