



## Transit Advisory Committee

1<sup>st</sup> Quarter 2024

March 20<sup>th</sup>, 10:00am

Albert Lea; 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	Sherri Rasmussen – Albert Lea City Council
v	Joanne Brackey – SMART Transit	Joyce Poshusta – Austin City Council
x	Garry Hart – CVS/SMART Transit	Dan Sparks – Mower County
x	Chris Thompson – SMART Transit	Kari Hall – Mayo Health Systems
x	Ashley Yokiel – SMART Transit	Bonnie Buchanan – Jefferson Lines
x	Greg Krueger – Steele County	Waseca County – Commissioner
x	Troy Klecker – City of Owatonna	Kelly Sutlief – Waseca (passenger)
	Lenore Fries – Albert Lea (passenger)	v 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.

- Intros
- 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
no preschool													
<b>PASSENGERS</b>													
Albert Lea	5,292	4,733	5,837	5,013	5,115	4,690	3,756	5,511	5,348	5,533	5,282	4,877	60,987
Austin	9,359	9,098	10,962	8,350	10,892	5,513	5,078	5,703	10,351	11,123	10,158	9,196	105,783
Owatonna	4,212	4,163	4,312	4,278	4,587	2,862	2,507	2,965	4,370	4,577	3,865	3,551	46,249
<b>Blooming Prairie</b>													0
Waseca	1,975	1,878	2,272	1,954	1,985	1,279	996	1,010	1,266	1,263	1,296	1,131	18,305
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>20,838</b>	<b>19,872</b>	<b>23,383</b>	<b>19,595</b>	<b>22,579</b>	<b>14,344</b>	<b>12,337</b>	<b>15,189</b>	<b>21,335</b>	<b>22,496</b>	<b>20,601</b>	<b>18,755</b>	<b>231,324</b>
<b>HOURS</b>													
Albert Lea	1,178	969	1,291	1,182	1,300	1,120	1,082	1,225	1,224	1,341	1,212	1,185	14,307
Austin	1,938	1,778	2,231	1,827	2,182	1,730	1,667	1,861	1,975	2,147	1,984	1,916	23,232
Owatonna	1,143	1,044	1,249	1,117	1,252	1,036	1,003	1,081	1,192	1,194	1,159	1,141	13,610
<b>Blooming Prairie</b>													0
Waseca	683	624	745	625	714	709	598	538	476	517	467	474	7,170
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4,942</b>	<b>4,414</b>	<b>5,516</b>	<b>4,751</b>	<b>5,448</b>	<b>4,595</b>	<b>4,349</b>	<b>4,705</b>	<b>4,867</b>	<b>5,199</b>	<b>4,821</b>	<b>4,715</b>	<b>58,319</b>
<b>MILES</b>													
Albert Lea	15,364	13,880	16,774	13,955	15,304	14,128	12,344	15,136	15,316	15,970	14,625	13,675	176,471
Austin	22,466	20,869	25,477	20,094	23,890	20,697	18,361	22,195	21,972	21,635	22,056	20,768	260,480
Owatonna	15,223	13,977	16,375	14,331	15,769	13,420	12,112	14,053	13,945	15,239	13,445	12,676	170,565
<b>Blooming Prairie</b>													0
Waseca	5,431	4,966	5,755	5,047	5,300	5,288	4,087	4,335	3,834	3,793	3,815	3,769	55,420
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58,484</b>	<b>53,692</b>	<b>64,381</b>	<b>53,427</b>	<b>60,263</b>	<b>53,533</b>	<b>46,904</b>	<b>55,719</b>	<b>55,067</b>	<b>56,637</b>	<b>53,941</b>	<b>50,888</b>	<b>662,936</b>

- Saw some really positive months in 2023
  - September and October had good ridership numbers
- 2024 starting out good
  - Best January/February since 2020 (which were record years)

	January	February	YTD
<b>PASSENGERS</b>			
Albert Lea	5,568	5,452	11,020
Austin	11,028	10,348	21,376
Owatonna	4,097	4,018	8,115
Blooming Prairie			0
Waseca	1,387	1,318	2,705
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>22,080</b>	<b>21,136</b>	<b>43,216</b>
<b>HOURS</b>			
Albert Lea	1,325	1,269	2,594
Austin	2,164	2,052	4,216
Owatonna	1,274	1,219	2,493
Blooming Prairie			0
Waseca	516	493	1,009
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5,279</b>	<b>5,032</b>	<b>10,311</b>
<b>MILES</b>			
Albert Lea	15,366	14,967	30,333
Austin	22,813	22,185	44,998
Owatonna	14,052	13,552	27,604
Blooming Prairie			0
Waseca	4,280	3,854	8,134
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>56,511</b>	<b>54,558</b>	<b>111,069</b>

- Continue to see gains year over year since COVID
- Biggest challenge now is reduced services due to staffing/reduced service
- What's New
  - 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary
    - SMART turned 10 years old this year
    - Worked with MNDOT consultant on marketing plan – includes several ideas to highlight anniversary
    - Doing various activities throughout the year to highlight SMART's accomplishments
      - Handed out special 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary bags to passengers early in the year
      - Promoting our 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary on social media (weekly posts)
      - Meeting with local governmental groups throughout our service area
        - Have met with city councils in three of four cities, and commissioners in two of four (Mower County scheduled next week)
      - Have ideas to continue promotion throughout the year
        - Currently looking at special 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary magnets for this spring or summer
- SMART Functional Updates
  - Training
    - Working on training for staff – CPR and Defensive Driving
      - CPR yesterday which went well (Joanne's favorite training to do)
    - Working with MNDOT/RTAP for the Spring Workshop
      - Helping with planning for the annual workshop and determining breakout sessions and topics
  - Austin/Albert Lea/Dispatch
    - Overall a good year for the southern counties
      - Dispatch and Albert Lea are fully staffed

- Austin has a couple openings that we are working to fill
  - Ridership is going well, especially in Albert Lea with our Route Bus
    - Taxi service shut down which has caused an increase need for transportation services
  - Meeting more with the city on transportation discussions – working to address to the growing needs
- Owatonna/Waseca
  - Shelly Rockman has retired from full time employment and taken a position with the school district
  - Continue to be short drivers which is impacting service
  - Working to fill driver positions and manager 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
          - Last four buses hopefully coming soon ??
            - 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
          - Hoping to see these buses sometime this summer
        - 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
          - MNDOT initially approved no buses
            - Later received email about one bus – #132 (Austin)
            - This week received email about two additional buses - #127/#312
            - \*\* These were due to lower prices than originally discovered (\$204,300)
- 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
- Working with MNDOT consultant on the project – regular meetings scheduled
- Bus Disposition
  - Disposed of six buses late 2023
- 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
  - Received funding through a Technology Grant for additional camera hardware that will assist managers with accessing video footage
  - Looking to submit a 2024 Technology Grant application for new routing software
    - Will utilize MNDOT consultants to assist with application process
  - Have timeline for various grant opportunities through MNDOT and will begin working on them later this spring (2025 Operating, Vehicle Replacement, etc.)
- Big Picture – Down the Road
  - Resume normal service hours
    - Looking at services and resume as able (staffing)
  - Cedar Valley Services Update
    - Completed merger with KCQ in Faribault (75 workers, 5 staff)
    - Worked through another CARF accreditation (three year) last month
      - Required for the various programs CVS offers

#### 2024 Program Goals – Ideas?

- Continue to streamline and simplify process and policies
- Fill open staffing positions throughout agency and resume suspended services
- Any other goals/ideas?

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

- N/A

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

- Discussion regarding ‘Floater’ drivers between two counties (northern two; southern two)
  - Counties do share *some* staff between counties, but it’s not regularly used
- Advertise SMART on sides of buses – Promote service and 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

#### Proposed 2024 Meeting Dates:

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

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

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

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

\*Q4 = December 18<sup>th</sup>, 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*

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