



Transit Advisory Committee

2nd Quarter 2024

June 19th, 10:00am

Austin; 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	v	Sherri Rasmussen – Albert Lea City Council
	Joanne Brackey – SMART	v	Joyce Poshusta – Austin City Council
v	Garry Hart – CVS/SMART	v	Dan Sparks – Mower County
x	Chris Thompson – SMART	v	Kari Hall – Mayo Health Systems
x	Don White – SMART		Bonnie Buchanan – Jefferson Lines
x	Kevin Hemann – SMART		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.

- Intros
- Updates
 - Stats

SMART Transit-Cedar Valley Services - 2024 Data					
Data for all counties combined					
	January	February	March	April	May
PASSENGERS					
Albert Lea	5,568	5,452	4,861	5,891	5,118
Austin	11,028	10,348	9,060	11,049	9,754
Owatonna	4,097	4,018	3,483	4,118	3,844
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	1,387	1,318	1,271	1,372	1,281
TOTAL	22,080	21,136	18,675	22,430	19,997
HOURS					
Albert Lea	1,325	1,269	1,183	1,353	1,286
Austin	2,164	2,052	1,912	2,196	2,203
Owatonna	1,274	1,219	1,132	1,300	1,299
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	516	493	475	516	516
TOTAL	5,279	5,032	4,701	5,365	5,303
MILES					
Albert Lea	15,366	14,967	13,725	16,332	14,905
Austin	22,813	22,195	19,851	22,533	21,884
Owatonna	14,052	13,552	12,266	14,370	13,958
Blooming Prairie					
Waseca	4,280	3,854	3,634	3,869	3,820
TOTAL	56,511	54,568	49,476	57,104	54,567

- 2024 starting out decent on the ridership end – slightly lower than last year
 - Best January/February since 2020 (which were record years); March was lower than previous year
 - Starting to shift focus on ‘Accessibility’ over ‘Ridership’ at state level – Importance of service over quantity
- What’s New
 - 10th Anniversary
 - SMART continues to celebrate our 10 Year Anniversary
 - Recently handed out commemorative magnets this month
 - Continue to highlight the work of SMART and public transportation via social media
 - Have more ideas we’ll plan for throughout the year
 - Hiring Frenzy
 - SMART has had some good luck lately with hiring
 - Three in Owatonna, one in Austin, and one in Waseca (with more interviews planned)
- SMART Functional Updates
 - Training
 - Owatonna has three new hires that Joanne has just been finishing up with, Austin has a new staff that started last week, and Waseca has a new one starting today; this has been keeping Joanne very busy given how much training is involved with new hires. This summer SMART is finishing up all CPR/1st Aid/AED classes plus trying to get refreshers caught up
 - Today Joanne is doing a class for Hiawathaland in Plainview; they have 40 drivers that need training, and they are using today’s holiday as a training day (Joanne is a certified trainer through RTAP)
 - Looking forward to summer drivers’ meetings and already getting ideas on topics for our all agency meeting in November
 - I have been doing more observations this spring and summer. It is always good talking points for safety and just reassuring the driver in any way we can
 - The MnDOT Rodeo is being held at Canterbury this year. We have 4 drivers attending. The event is to highlight drivers and their skills and gives them a great networking opportunity
 - Drug and Alcohol compliance will become more challenging I believe, with cannabis being legal in our state, but not under FTA
 - Austin/Albert Lea/Dispatch
 - Austin added a full time driver last week, and have an interview today for a potential driver (part time or sub)
 - Working through some preschool routes still – will start planning for the fall
 - Dispatch calls are down – typical for summer months
 - Looking to do a ribbon cutting in Albert Lea for our 10th Anniversary
 - Albert Lea is more quiet with the summer months – some drivers have been helping in Austin
 - Owatonna/Waseca
 - Hired Don as our Operations Manager over Owatonna and Waseca – replacing Shelly who left in March
 - Have a had a hiring frenzy as of late – Have hired three new drivers in Owatonna, including two full time, and one full time in Waseca
 - Increasing services in Owatonna and Waseca due to increase in staffing (Demand Response)
 - Looking forward to gearing up for preschool planning in Owatonna in the next couple weeks (applications locked July 1, planning routes for the first three weeks in July; close partnership with the UWSC)
- 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 fall
 - 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
 - Requested eight replacement vehicles, was approved for three
 - One Albert Lea, two Austin
 - Predicted price per MnDOT is \$204,300
 - 2025 Vehicle Replacement
 - Grant application due next Friday – will be requesting six 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, 2022, that MNDOT’s grant was approved
 - Tentative time for bus arrival is 2025
 - Working with MNDOT consultant on the project – regular meetings scheduled
 - Facilities
 - Austin and Waseca facility approved through MNDOT grant – Future projects
 - Working with MNDOT on federal grants – will have more info later this summer
 - Other
 - Received funding through a 2024 Technology Grant for additional camera hardware that will assist managers with accessing video footage
 - Have meeting tomorrow to discuss procurement for this grant
 - Will be submitting a 2025 Technology Grant application for new routing software
 - Getting help from MNDOT consultants with application process
 - Grant application due next Friday
 - Working on the 2025 Operating Grant application
 - Grant application due next Friday

- Big Picture – Down the Road
 - Resume normal service hours
 - As SMART continues to hire more staff, we will evaluate our services and resume previously suspended services as we are able
 - Cedar Valley Services Update
 - CVS is a private nonprofit and operates SMART; have facilities in Austin, Albert Lea, and Owatonna
 - Continue to look for staffing to better serve people with disabilities
 - Continue to work with the organization that CVS took over earlier this year (KCQ in Faribault)

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?

- Discussed updates from
- Will buses have additional signage regarding the new cannabis laws?
 - Currently SMART has not had any issues with this but will continue to monitor it and adjust as needed

**** Please note that the September TAC meeting date will be changed due to a MNDOT meeting scheduled for that date; an updated date will be sent out as we get closer.**

2024 Meeting Dates:

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*

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