



Transit Advisory Committee

4th Quarter 2024

December 18th, 10:00am

Waseca; 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 | | Larry Baker – Albert Lea City Council |
| x | Joanne Brackey – SMART | v | Joyce Poshusta – Austin City Council |
| v | Garry Hart – CVS/SMART | v | Dan Sparks – Mower County |
| v | Chris Thompson – SMART | | Kari Hall – Mayo Health Systems |
| x | Don White – SMART | | Bonnie Buchanan – Jefferson Lines |
| | John Simonette – SMART | | Waseca County – Commissioner |
| x | Greg Krueger – Steele County | x | Kelly Sutlief – Waseca (passenger) |
| v | 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 - 2024 Data

Data for all counties combined	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	YTD
	no preschool												
PASSENGERS													
Albert Lea	5,568	5,452	4,861	5,891	5,118	3,585	3,728	4,511	5,378	6,335	5,173	0	55,600
Austin	11,028	10,348	9,060	11,049	9,754	4,164	4,472	4,991	10,013	12,059	9,537	0	96,475
Owatonna	4,097	4,018	3,483	4,118	3,844	2,305	2,341	2,403	3,400	4,314	3,350	0	37,673
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	1,387	1,318	1,271	1,372	1,281	1,155	983	825	1,371	1,638	976	0	13,577
TOTAL	22,080	21,136	18,675	22,430	19,997	11,209	11,524	12,730	20,162	24,346	19,036	0	203,325
HOURS													
Albert Lea	1,325	1,269	1,183	1,353	1,286	1,030	1,135	1,183	1,222	1,386	1,200	0	13,570
Austin	2,164	2,052	1,912	2,196	2,203	1,715	1,747	1,815	1,952	2,242	1,868	0	21,864
Owatonna	1,274	1,219	1,132	1,300	1,299	994	1,036	1,042	1,144	1,341	1,099	0	12,879
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	516	493	475	516	516	480	678	718	616	633	587	0	6,227
TOTAL	5,279	5,032	4,701	5,365	5,303	4,218	4,596	4,758	4,933	5,602	4,754	0	54,540
MILES													
Albert Lea	15,366	14,967	13,725	16,332	14,905	11,943	12,725	13,591	14,016	16,750	13,089	0	157,409
Austin	22,813	22,195	19,851	22,533	21,884	17,738	19,351	19,187	19,176	22,965	19,271	0	226,964
Owatonna	14,052	13,552	12,266	14,370	13,958	10,879	11,880	11,567	12,735	14,639	11,923	0	141,821
Blooming Prairie													0
Waseca	4,280	3,854	3,634	3,869	3,820	3,478	3,801	3,806	4,013	4,205	4,158	0	42,918
TOTAL	56,511	54,568	49,476	57,104	54,567	44,038	47,757	48,151	49,940	58,559	48,441	0	569,112

- Saw a great October for ridership
- Looking to add some service to Waseca starting the new year (extending reduced service to all day)
- Still dealing with some staffing challenges (especially northern counties)
- What's New
 - More buses
 - Received one of the 2022 buses, with second one being delivered today
 - Receiving two 2023 buses the first week or two of January
 - Anticipate remaining two buses from 2023 order later 1st Quarter 2024
 - 10th Anniversary
 - SMART continues to celebrate our 10 Year Anniversary
 - Last activity of the 10th Anniversary celebration was a drawing in each community – had passengers sign up last week, and drew the winners this past Monday (free monthly route pass or bag of Demand Response tokens)
 - Continue to highlight the work of SMART and public transportation via social media
- SMART Functional Updates
 - Albert Lea
 - Have hired Ashley as our Operations Manager overseeing Albert Lea (Freeborn County); she is taking over for Chris who will focus her time and efforts on a busy Austin (Mower County) area
 - Chris has been working with Mayo and Naeve Hospital to secure a grant for seniors in Freeborn county to get free rides (duplicate of service in Austin)
 - Has received a lot of media attention including the Star Tribune
 - Austin/Dispatch
 - Seen an uptick in passengers on our route buses
 - We have a long time employee retiring today – Has been on board for 10 years now
 - Call volume is up with dispatch
 - Staffing levels are decent – we have a couple openings that we are looking to fill (now with Chris retiring)
 - Owatonna/Waseca
 - Waseca –
 - Definitely on an uptick – have hired some additional staff
 - Working on training new staff and getting them licensed and ready for the road
 - Still looking to hire more staff yet
 - Looking to expand service with our demand service – expanding it from part of the day to a full day
 - Will look at expanding to our last and final demand service in early 2025 if staffing continues to improve
 - Continuing to help local schools
 - Owatonna
 - Staffing has improved some but still looking for staff
 - Services are busy and are staff are doing very well
 - The 'Santa for a Senior' event was a hit again this year and our staff purchased gifts for local seniors
 - Training / D&A
 - We're planning for a MNDOT audit for the Drug and Alcohol program this next year
 - Participated in a webinar that discussed mock testing so have some planned
 - Still hoping for a saliva test option at some point
 - Have a D&A conference in our area in 2025
 - Training has been going well with a new online program – it has been a learning process but getting better with each and every new hire
 - Had a great all-staff training in November in Austin
 - Had the Austin Fire Dept come and do training with all the staff
 - Had opportunity for dispatch to spend time with all the drivers from all four counties

- MNDOT Update
 - Capital
 - Vehicles
 - Vehicle Replacement
 - 2020-21 Bus Grants/Contracts
 - All buses received
 - 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
 - Received one bus (first bus 10/25, second bus arriving today)
 - 2023 Vehicle Replacement
 - Requested eight buses for replacement, was approved for four (award letter)
 - Two buses in Austin, two buses in Owatonna
 - Ordered four buses in early November, 2023 – two with I State and two with North Central
 - Working with I State on bus delivery for two buses for first week or two of January
 - North Central buses will likely be delivered first quarter 2025
 - 2024 Vehicle Replacement
 - Requested eight replacement vehicles, was approved for three
 - One Albert Lea, two Austin
 - Predicted price per MnDOT is \$204,300
 - Received approval to order today
 - 2025 Vehicle Replacement
 - Grant application submitted – requesting six buses
 - Still waiting to hear from state
 - Vehicle Disposition
 - Disposing of older buses as new ones arrive
 - 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 on the project – completing some last minute paperwork and will hopefully order bus early 2025
 - Facilities
 - Austin and Waseca facility approved through MNDOT grant – Future projects
 - As noted earlier – Received federal grant for these projects
 - Will work with MNDOT in coming weeks and months to determine timelines and requirements for project(s)
 - Other
 - Received funding through a 2024 Technology Grant for additional camera hardware that will assist managers with accessing video footage
 - Installation taking place this week (as we speak)
 - Submitted 2025 Technology Grant application for new routing software
 - Awaiting announcement of awards (like vehicle grant above)
 - Submitted Capital grant for staff support vehicle – possible approval in the near future
- 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
 - Update on grant process – looking to get additional funding from the state and/or federal government(s) to secure additional dollars for projects (100% or 80%, etc.)
 - Working through Cedar Valley Services training program – updated with online training program
 - Part of the 245D licensing requirements CVS follows with the state
 - Continue to plug away with SMART and our services

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?
 - None noted

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

- N/A

NEW items from TAC Members/Community Feedback?

- Any changes to testing with cannabis due to changes in law?
 - No changes at this point – continuing to monitor things
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2024 Meeting Dates:

Quarterly on 3rd Wednesday, 10:00 am, rotating city each quarter (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 11th, 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*

2025 Meeting Dates:

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** *All dates and In person opportunities for all meetings subject to change*

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