

**City of Brandon Transit Route Planning and Long-Term Strategy  
Response from Age Friendly Brandon Committee of Council August 2024**

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## **Background**

**“The City of Brandon is developing a comprehensive public transit review** and long-term plan to better understand how transit could most effectively serve local travel needs and mobility patterns. The study will help shape recommendations for short, medium and long-term changes to the transit system to better support the mobility needs of the community.

The Brandon Transit Route Planning and Long-Term Strategy will involve outreach to residents, businesses, and active and interested community groups to determine how transit services could best be delivered in the future to serve local needs in a cost-effective and sustainable way.

The Route Planning and Long-Term Strategy for the City of Brandon is not just about mapping out current transportation patterns; it’s a comprehensive approach to envisioning a future where transit services are both inclusive and innovative. Our goals extend beyond a general assessment; we aim to:

- Evaluate our existing transit system, encompassing both standard and specialized services.
- Create a progressive vision for transit enhancements that resonate with the City’s Climate Action Plan and other related municipal policies and plans.”
- Engaging the community to ensure that this vision is reflective of their changing needs.
- Develop a detailed implementation plan that outlines how to achieve this vision.

The insights and feedback from this outreach will be pivotal in crafting service options that resonate with our community’s aspirations. These options will be shared with the public in Fall 2024, inviting further contributions and perspectives. Following this process, our team will create and finalize a draft route planning and long-term strategy with key stakeholders and bring them back to the community for feedback in Fall 2024.” *(This section was taken from City of Brandon/Transit website)*

## **Alignment with the Age Friendly Initiative**

The main goal of the Age-Friendly Initiative is to increase inclusion and decrease social isolation among older adults. An age-friendly world, as defined by the World Health Organization (WHO), is one that “enables people of all ages to actively participate in community activities and treats everyone with respect, regardless of their age.” (World Health Organization, 2018).

One of the eight key domains of the age-friendly model that supports healthy aging is transportation. Over the past 7 years, **Age Friendly Brandon has conducted several surveys, focus groups and consultative meetings with community residents to explore different aspects of transportation.** This report contains the responses of over 300+ participants. We have found there is a consistent ongoing trend in responses from the older adult community. As we present the results of our consultative process, we will highlight some of the key findings and recommendations.

To begin, we would like to share part of the **Checklist of Essential Features of Age-friendly Cities** related to Transportation as a whole, however understanding that our focus will be directed specifically to the items relating to public transit.

This checklist of essential age-friendly city features is based on the results of the WHO Global Age-Friendly Cities project consultation in 33 cities in 22 countries. The checklist is a tool for a city's self-assessment and a map for charting progress toward achieving age-friendliness to the highest degree possible.

- Public transportation costs are consistent, clearly displayed and affordable.
- Public transportation is reliable and frequent, including at night and on weekends and holidays.
- All city areas and services are accessible by public transport, with good connections and well-marked routes and vehicles.
- Vehicles are clean, well-maintained, accessible, not overcrowded and have priority seating that is respected.
- Specialized transportation is available for disabled people.
- Drivers stop at designated stops and beside the curb to facilitate boarding and wait for passengers to be seated before driving off.
- Transport stops and stations are conveniently located, accessible, safe, clean, well-lit and well-marked, with adequate seating and shelter.
- Complete and accessible information is provided to users about routes, schedules and special needs facilities.
- A voluntary transport service is available where public transportation is too limited.
- Taxis are accessible and affordable, and drivers are courteous and helpful.
- Roads are well-maintained, with covered drains and good lighting.
- Traffic flow is well-regulated.
- Roadways are free of obstructions that block drivers' vision.
- Traffic signs and intersections are visible and well-placed.
- Driver education and refresher courses are promoted for all drivers.
- Parking and drop-off areas are safe, sufficient in number and conveniently located.
- Priority parking and drop-off spots for people with special needs are available and respected.

In 2017, Age Friendly Brandon had the opportunity to work with Brandon University Bachelor of Nursing students to conduct an assessment of specific wards within the City. The project was titled **"Age-Friendly Communities in Brandon: Assessing the Built Environments of the Assiniboine and Riverview Wards September 2017- December 2017"**

The objective of the report was to examine evidence-based approaches and interventions used to create a healthy, age-friendly built environment identified throughout research and practice. The review identified clear characteristics that contribute and inhibit accessibility among individuals aged 55 and older in the Riverview and Assiniboine wards in Brandon, Manitoba.

Data collection involved environmental scans, three focus groups and four key informant interviews.

Data were categorized according to the six built environment domains: outdoor spaces and public buildings; transportation; housing; social participation; communication and information; and community support and health services. Data saturation was achieved when reoccurring themes emerged. The components and characteristics that are described, provide an auspicious foundation for the future development of aging policy and proposals to make the City of Brandon more supportive for individuals who are 55 and older, and ultimately benefit younger individuals in the future as they age.

A total of 74 residents in the Riverview ward and 52 residents in the Assiniboine ward were approached whereby their perceptions of the built environment were recorded, until common themes and perspectives became apparent.

#### Riverview Ward assessment

A major theme identified by residents of the Riverview ward included issues regarding public transportation. There is one bus route, Route 15, which provides public transport services to residents living in the Riverview ward. This route mainly includes bus stops along Princess Avenue East and Victoria Avenue East, with a few bus stops on connecting streets. It was observed through environmental assessments that there was an absence of benches or bus shelters along many of the bus stops on Princess Avenue East. The bus fare costs have been reported by residents as expensive due to the numerous transfers requiring an additional fare charge to access other areas of the city. Table 1 outlines the bus fare prices of the Brandon Transit system for the various bus passes available.

*Table 1. Brandon Transit Fares*

Ages	Bus Fares			
	30 Day Pass	10 Ride	Single Fare Ride	Handi-Transit
Adult	\$76.00	\$12.00	\$1.35	
Youth (6-17 years)	\$43.00	\$9.75	\$1.10	
Senior (60 years and above)	\$43.00	\$9.75	\$1.10	
Post secondary	\$48.00			
Set price for all ages: 0-60 Trips per month				\$4.00
61+ Trips per month				\$8.00

Table adapted from Brandon Transit

The Brandon Transit system also includes a SMART Card system that is a reloadable electronic card that can be loaded with pre-paid rides, in multiples of 10, or as a time-based pass, which is loaded with 30-day increments. There is a \$3.25 fee, which covers the card expense, set-up, and registration option. SMART Cards can be purchased at locations in Brandon including the

Transit Information Office, City Hall, Brandon Shoppers Mall guest services, Safeway in the Corral Centre, and Sobeys West End. SMART Cards can be reloaded at the Transit Information Office, Brandon Shoppers Mall, or City Hall. None of these locations however, are located in the Riverview ward. Therefore, residents without a vehicle or other means of transportation, mobility limitations, or access to bills and coinage would be unable to access and use the SMART Card system (Brandon Transit, n.d.).

The following comments are from residents of the Riverview ward regarding the Brandon Transit system:

- "The bus stop locations are limited and not really accessible to everyone."
- "Only one bus shelter in this part of the East End [area along Princess Avenue East and Percy Street]."
- "Oh, I drive my truck, not sure what I would do without it, probably make my wife drive. I never understood the buses here."
- "Bus prices are a little much."
- "People don't ride the bus like they once did."
- "...the bus fare is a little expensive, but it is something we need to purchase for the purposes of living and meeting our needs. We don't have a car, so sometimes when it is -40C outside in the dead of winter, waiting for the bus along the street is quite cold. There is one bus shelter on Princess Avenue East, but it is located a good walk away from our home. We make sure to dress accordingly, but sometimes the wind is strong."
- "Lions Manor is a great location, but if I want to go to the mall, I have to catch two different buses and pay a fee each time."
- "My friend rides the bus, and has been on it up to four hours, driving around the city when all she wanted was to go to the mall."
- "Boils down to money, if you are not mobile and can't walk that far, or drive, you need to take a cab which costs \$25.00 to go to Fairview for a visit and back. Can become very pricey if you are doing that 365 times a year. Bus can be a mobility issue too."
- "To register for the Handi-van one must get a doctor to fill out paperwork, it then costs \$4.00 to ride the Handi-van. "Handi-van would be better if they did a regular time. If someone has an appointment at a certain time, it can be difficult to make. Have to call the Handi-van service to pick you up when you are done." Need access to a phone or cellular device."

## Assiniboine Ward Considerations

Aspects of the Brandon Transit system were identified as factors of the built environment that inhibit age-friendliness. These include the TransCab system and traffic flow.

As of July 1, 2017, the City of Brandon adjusted the public transit routes. Since this change, residents living along the west end of Braecrest Drive and of this street in residential areas have been affected, as the previous bus stops have been removed. As an alternative, Brandon implemented a TransCab system to meet the transportation needs of these residents. The purpose of the TransCab system is to continue to provide public transportation by having residents phone 204-729-2241 at least one hour before required pickup, at which point a cab service, with no additional fare to the rider, will pick citizens up from their residence and drop them off at the nearest bus stop location. After being dropped off, residents are then able to proceed with using the public buses to get to their destination. To return home, residents are instructed to call the phone number previously listed or notify the driver of the bus or of their impending use of the TransCab system, so that a cab can be dispatched to deliver the citizens from the closest bus stop to their residence (Brandon Transit, 2017).

Similar systems to TransCab used in other communities that are comparable to Brandon to accommodate transportation needs of residents has been successful. Milton, Ontario a city with a population of approximately 110,000 persons has implemented a TransCab service (Statistics Canada, 2017; Milton Transit, n.d.). This program, which operates similarly to Brandon's, has advertised a proactive approach to engage in conversation with various community members regarding effectiveness of their current transit systems. Strategies this organization used to engage with community members to obtain feedback included: hosting ongoing formal community input sessions, creating an opportunity for input through an online message board, encouraging users of the transit system to complete hard copy or online surveys, and by posting draft plans on the website for review by community members (Milton Transit, n.d.).

Although there were negative comments noted regarding the changes and implementation of the service in Milton, Ontario, the transportation department of the city followed up and made a conscious effort to implement changes to reflect the needs of the served population (The Corporation of the Town of Milton, 2011). However, the implementation in the City of Brandon has not yielded the same positive feedback.

The dissatisfaction described from residents has focused on two main points. Firstly, a misunderstanding among residents accessing the bus system regarding the objective of the TransCab service. Residents reported being surprised to learn that the 'cab' picking them up at their residence does not deliver them to their destination, and instead to the nearest bus stop. The title 'TransCab' connotes that the 'cab' will provide service similar to that of a taxicab. The following comment demonstrates the misunderstanding experienced by residents:

- “If I am calling a cab to come and take me to a bus stop, why would I not call them and make them take me to where I want to go. I don’t want them to drop me off, so I have to wait even longer, it [the TransCab bus system] doesn’t really make sense. Plus, if I have to change at the downtown terminal it really doesn’t make sense to have that many stops.”

Secondly, residents described experiencing inconsistencies, listed below, in being picked up by the cab after being dropped off by the city bus. Residents reported this as a major challenge for using the TransCab system confidently and for some using the system at all. Residents reported:

- “In the North End the bus services are non-existent from Rosser Avenue to the number one highway, and between 18th Street North and 1st Street North. There is no bus service available in these areas except on either 18th Street North or 1st Street North. We are supposed to take transportation to and from bus stops in the middle of winter. This may result in long waits outside in frigid temperatures. Getting there to be picked up isn’t as bad, but when that bus drops you off and that cab isn’t there, then what?”

A resident reported on the inconsistency of being picked up by the TransCab system after getting off the bus

- “...I had a friend that had to walk all the way home. She was exhausted and almost ended up in the hospital because she isn’t well enough to make that long of a walk. What would have happened to her in the winter? She could have frozen to death. What will happen this winter?”
- “I don’t know about the cab system the bus service offers now. I’ve heard about the cab being late or forgetting to pick people up. I think you’re supposed to call or something when you get off the bus. I have a cell phone but not everyone does. I don’t use my phone much, mostly for emergencies, so it wouldn’t really work for me either if I did try and use it. It’s nice out, so I mostly walk to avoid the cab thing.”
- “I never use the bus because I still drive, but you don’t really see them up around here [Assiniboine ward] as much. When I do see them though they’re quite empty. What a waste of money really. The cost to keep such a big bus on the road, they need something smaller and more convenient and cheaper to run than such a big vehicle. I was shocked to see the buses being replaced with the same size of buses, can’t they make something smaller work better.”
- “Come to think of it, I don’t really ever see the buses up around my end [Assiniboine ward]. I don’t use the bus because my husband and I still have our licenses, but I don’t know where we would start to use those big buses. Maybe taxi around if we could afford it?”

- “The bus system needs to be improved in the North End. The only route comes down Braecrest Drive and then down Knowlton Drive. If you live in the back portion of the trailer court, or in Monterey Estates, or even near Village Drive, you are limited. I have a vehicle and a lot of my neighbours do too, but if you’re older and can’t drive for whatever reason, the bus routes cut down on where you can go and how long it takes to get around the city.”
- “When we moved here, we were excited to use the bus service. Then before we knew it they took our bus stop away. We never really pursued it after that, I’m not sure where the closest bus stop is. For us it doesn’t matter because we can drive our car wherever we need to go, but there is that co-op housing. I am not sure what they do because I’m sure there is a bunch of people living there that don’t drive.”
- “I just think about the people that can’t afford a vehicle and wonder how they get around if the bus stop isn’t near their house.”

The concerns expressed by residents was reinforced by the Assiniboine Ward Councillor Jeff Fawcett and Brandon’s Planning, Property and Buildings Department who reported that the current bus system and routes require improvement, however, it is an ongoing learning process for both parties. The current design of the public transportation system does not provide residents of Assiniboine ward equitable access to businesses and services throughout Brandon.

A similar project was completed in 2018, titled **Age-Friendly Community Assessment of the Built Environment University Ward September – December 2018**

The goal of this project was to assess the built environment within the University Ward and provide recommendations of how the area could be more age-friendly. The recommendations provided in this report are designed to create a safer environment for older adults to allow them to age in place and live independently in their homes.

Participants in this study included 107 community members accessing the amenities within Brandon, Manitoba. The majority (82%) of our participants were approached at activity centres such as Seniors for Seniors and Prairie Oasis. Participants attending sports activities in the Healthy Living Centre (HLC) were also reached. To increase variability, a random sample of people were given questionnaires in areas where a lot of seniors can be found. Examples of these areas were: fast food chains, hospital lobby, and clinics. Even though the target area was the University ward, information was gathered from people living outside these boundaries that may have a general opinion regarding the eight domains. The ages of participants ranged from 50- years-old to 94-years-old. The majority of them were between the ages of 70-79 (45.45%) (see Figure 1). Participants were chosen by convenience sampling. Participants completed the survey voluntarily; no incentives were provided to those who took part of the survey. No one was intentionally excluded based on gender, race, or income status to prevent discrimination and/or biases. Community members below fifty years old were not included in the assessment.



## Transportation Barriers:

### Safety

- “Bus drivers do not always wait for passengers to be seated before driving off.”
- “I am too slow to get on and off the bus. The driver never waits for people to be seated before taking off again.”
- “My clients are unable to take the bus because they cannot stand in a stationary position while they wait for the bus that sometimes arrives late. There are no benches at the bus stop near their houses.”
- “Sidewalks are not cleared in a timely manner, and when they are, they leave a remaining layer of snow that often turns into ice.”

### Affordability

- “The cost of bus fares is fairly reasonable. However, purchasing monthly SMART cards can still be difficult for some seniors to afford.”
- “The cost of food and transportation keeps going up.”
- “An estimated taxi ride from Crocus Plains High School to Boston Pizza on Highway 1 (8.7kms one way) costs \$20-25 (personal communication, 4- way Taxi, 2018).
- “A wheelchair accessible taxi (not Handi-transit) charges a flat rate of \$20 per ride in Brandon.”

### Accessibility

- “Buses are not always on time, as stated by a number of users of Brandon’s transit system. Several people explained that the buses are often late or come early and do not wait there for the scheduled pick up time. This is especially frustrating in winter when it is extremely cold standing in the snow waiting.”
- “Bus stops are not scheduled frequently enough (as reported by participants). The 30-minute service only runs from 1000-1800 hours, Monday – Saturday and hourly from 0600-1000, 1800-2320. Sundays have a limited schedule of hourly stops from 0900-1920. This makes it especially difficult for those out on Sunday nights – requiring an additional, more expensive, cost of a taxi.”
- “Buses are not accessible from 2320-0600 (with the exception of Sunday service hours).”

- “I attend Seniors for Seniors, sometimes access to other places is difficult due to physical limitations.”
- “The frequency of transport stops is acceptable in reference to City size. However, there are not enough benches, most stops have no shelter, are not well lit, or are poorly situated. Some benches are placed down a hill; therefore, the people that need to sit on them, cannot get to them.”

### **Age Friendly Brandon Action Plan Item 6) C: Community Engagement re: Brandon City Plan. January 2023**

In 2022 the City of Brandon began working on the updated 30-year vision for the City. Age Friendly Brandon was invited to participate in the City Plan review process and to find ways to enhance the capture of information from the older adult sector of the Community.

Age Friendly Brandon adopted the following action item in their 2022/2023 Action Plan: Item 6) C. Participate in community engagement events to seek public feedback that may relate to the City of Brandon Development Plan, in partnership with the Advisory Committee for the provincial Community Engagement Network process.

Also in January 2022, “the Government of Manitoba announced the creation of the department of Seniors and Long-Term Care. A key focus of this new department is to lead the development and implementation of a provincial seniors strategy. Through this strategy, the Government of Manitoba aims to make the province an ideal place to age and ensure that: Seniors can live a healthy and active life, safely and independently and in their own homes and community for as long as possible. Support and resources are available for the transitions between living settings; from living independently in their own home and community to living in another setting. Quality, dependable and affordable supports are available when independent living is no longer possible.”

The Province of Manitoba developed several phases to support the public consultation process. The first phase was by surveys, followed later through a number of Community Engagement Networks (CENs) within Manitoba. One of the CENs established was in Brandon and was led by Brandon Seniors for Seniors Co-op Inc. in partnership with Alzheimer Society of Manitoba, a retired public health nurse and representation from City of Brandon. The CEN sessions in Brandon were significant as it helped gather important information from age 55+ adults in Brandon. The details have been shared with the Province of Manitoba. The CEN recently shared this Brandon-related data with Age Friendly Brandon, in hopes, that the information can be used to support the City of Brandon 30-year plan.

Group facilitators and observers included Rob Lavin (Brandon Seniors for Senior Co-op and a Committee member of Age Friendly Brandon), Liz McLeod (Manitoba Alzheimer Society Westman Region), Lorna Cowan (retired public health nurse) and Amanda Fast (prior Prairie Oasis).

The Network engaged with a total of 81 seniors at six different locations as follows:

June 16, 2022, location: Brandon Seniors for Seniors Co-op Inc., 5 participants

June 22, 2022, location: Lions Manor, 10 participants

July 20, 2022, location: Riverbank Discovery Centre, 7 participants

August 22, 2022, location: Parkview Senior's Housing, 15 participants

September 26, 2022, location: Brandon Senior's Co-op (620 McDiarmid Dr.), 15 participants

October 17, 2022, location: Westman Seniors Housing Co-op (2150 Brandon Avenue) 29 participants.

Engagement Sessions were kept to 2 hours in length with a maximum of 30-40 participants per session allowed incorporating the use of PowerPoint and flip charts.

The sessions focused on the following themes: 1) Transportation, 2) Housing, 3) Social Inclusion, 4) Communication and Information, and 5) Community Support and Health Services.

## **Theme 1 – Transportation RESULTS**

Themes are broken into sections based on the frequency items were reported taking into consideration that responses have been consolidated from all locations, as follows:

Most Frequent Occurring items for specific theme,  
Moderate Occurring items, and  
Specific items of interest/concern

NOTE: asterisks (\*\*\*) appearing throughout the “results” section indicate a higher level of frequency for this item.

Most Frequent Occurring items for specific theme:

### **A) City Transit**

“Why do we need more transportation?” “If the buses are only charging \$1.35 per ride (a very reasonable price) why are seniors not taking advantage of this?”

- A long ride to get to a simple stop. \*\*\*
- Safety concerns/comfort level. \*\*
- Access difficult to schedules and information on bus routes as requires technology to find online or it is difficult to find a paper copy. \*\*
- Weekend bus routes – 1/2 hour is preferred.
- Brandon bus will pick-up and take to other bus stop however this is not efficient or convenient.

On Demand Bus for daily service 6 pm to midnight (terminated pilot project)

- Wait times vary and may be too long, people may miss the appointment or event.
- This type of transport might be good for regular appointments that can be planned.
- A lot of participants were unaware of the on-demand bus service.
- Required more advertising.

Opportunity to have some dialogue with City of Brandon to discuss transportation options for seniors in community

- Better rates, free rides for seniors.
- More buses and transfers?
- Buses that take seniors to certain key places on key days (like the mall, Corral Centre, Riverbank Discovery Centre).

Privately funded bus/van \*\*\*\*

- Seek out funding or subsidies to establish public or private venture to acquire bus/van for "Senior Transportation" like those used by (Riverheights Terrace, Rotary Villa, Victoria Landing)

#### Moderate Occurring items:

B) 55+ Ride the bus day \*\*

- Create a day that seniors ride the bus for free with several stops to include various businesses – stops at the Discovery Centre, Daly House Museum, S4S, POSC, as well as a stop for lunch. May incorporate Provincial/City tours.
- May get seniors familiar with riding the bus and eliminate the anxiety of the first time riding the bus.
- Involved organizations may include City of Brandon, Age Friendly, etc.

C) Access Transit

- Discussed the "handi-transit" as a source of transportation for seniors.
- Must apply for usage.
- They come directly to your house.
- Consideration to be given to "accessible" bus for those with disabilities as the 24 hour advanced booking is much too long.

D) Taxi verses bus

- Concerns with taxi service due to language barriers and drivers not familiar with City thereby arriving at wrong locations.
- Consideration for senior discounted rates. (May be available through ABC and 4-Way by requesting a senior rate during each ride.)

Specific items of interest/concern:

- E) Emergent transportation
  - What is available other than ambulance?
  - Services are not well known
- F) Loss of Driver's License
  - Can be very traumatic for an individual.
  - Process is difficult to understand. Information re MPI "Drive Safe" (also Driver Fitness Dept) should be made more readily available? For example, posted fact sheets in grocery stores, malls, bulletin boards, etc. This could also include general information that would be useful to seniors – events, upcoming activities, etc.
  - Costs of tests can be onerous – if one is required to re-test to prove capacity
- G) Location of Bus Stops
  - Previously there had been a bus stop in front of Parkview but it was removed. Now seniors must walk five blocks to stand at the nearest stop.
  - Is there an opportunity to have a bus stop closer to 2105 Brandon Ave Co-op as current bus stops only available at 18th street and 26th street. Crossing the road at this Seniors co-op is concerning as there is no sidewalk and should require crosswalk or a 4 way-stop.
  - Bus stop at Walmart not an any age friendly bus-stop location.
- H) Safety and Transportation to attend programming/events
  - Discussion that although seniors may want to go to non-profits for activities or to volunteer, they lack the transportation to get there. Transportation becomes a big issue when it is not in-house activities. Transit on demand only runs after 6 pm which is not a convenient time for seniors to do things. Expensive by taxi. Seniors would like to be included in community and social activities however they feel they need the transportation to do so. \*\*\*
  - Keystone has been keeping their gates locked – seniors cannot walk over for activities or do any walking through the grounds or walking paths.
  - Would love to do the activities and events ran at the Riverbank Discovery Centre however do not have the transportation to get there.
  - Nighttime is difficult and scary for seniors

**Age friendly Action Plan Item 7) B: Develop WCG-TV Access Programming to Highlight Age friendly Initiatives**

In April 2024, the Age friendly Committee of Council, in collaboration with Brandon Seniors for Seniors Co-op, Alzheimer Society of Manitoba and Brandon University, received grant funding from Age Friendly Manitoba 2.0, launched by the Manitoba Association of Senior Communities (MASC). This funding supports the development of several 30-minute vignettes by Westman

Communications Group depicting various aspects of age-friendliness in Brandon. One vignette will examine transportation in the City of Brandon. This vignette will showcase the rider experience, dispel myths about public transportation and raise public awareness about transportation options.

Age Friendly Brandon Committee members Susan Boyachek, Doug Fraser and Sylvia Barr participated in the **Manitoba Age Friendly “Connecting with Manitoba Age Friendly Communities” workshop May 7, 2024**. Participants were to highlight a success story from their community. A Stonewall Councillor shared the acquisition of two new EV buses for the Stonewall & Area Mobility Service along with associated funding as one of their significant achievements.

**Age Friendly Brandon Committee members Nancy McPherson, Susan Boyachek and Doug Fraser held a Teams meeting with Wally Melnyk, CAO Town of Stonewall and Lisa Vieville, Stonewall & Area Mobility Service (SAMS) Coordinator, on July 17, 2024.**

Note: Actual details/dollar figures should be considered approximate numbers for discussion purposes only.

Highlights of the discussion include:

Serves a population of approximately 20,000 residents. (Stonewall, RM's of Rockwood, Woodlands & Rosser)

SAMS current fleet consists of:

Two 14 seat passenger buses (or 10 seat & 3 wheelchair)

One 8 passenger bus (or 6 seat & 1 wheelchair)

One 3 passenger Mini-van (used with seats or wheelchair)

Total operating budget \$250,000 with fuel making up \$50,000

Revenue is subsidized by participating municipalities and billing is not on a cost recovery model. 1/3 of revenue is generated by users, 1/3 of revenue is provided by Province, 1/3 (up to 45%) of revenue provided by partnering municipalities.

Current complement of 8 part time drivers with always having 6 on call.

Protocol is to give priority for medical requests however will also take bookings for social and recreational activities. Works with 55+ group to complete several day trips per month.

Information on ride request is gathered through telephone discussion while booking – no medical referral is necessary.

Prefer as much notice as possible but has never said “NO” for any request, including same day requests. Maximum wait time for pick ups following a drop off is approximately 45 minutes.

Approximately 4 years ago (2019/2020) received approval from Federal Government on 80% funding under the **Rural Transit Solutions Fund** to:

Replace two vehicles (ICE to EV)

Installation of charging stations

Housing of vehicles.

Original grant request is to replace two ICE 14 seat buses with two EV buses (however that may be altered to two different styles prior to deliver). Buses are generally renewed on a 10-12 year basis.

Total application was 1.7 million

Federal contribution is 1.3 million

Subsequent Provincial contribution \$150,000 (Climate Change Fund)

Municipal contribution \$250,000

Municipality considers this a cost neutral expenditure as \$300,000 was earmarked to replace two vehicles on the ongoing vehicle turnover commitment.

Grant application was developed in conjunction with Ecowest.

Once charging infrastructure is in place, restricted access will be established for SAMS operational requirements. Public and/or fleet use will be made available outside of these restricted times.

Concerns:

- Range of batteries currently rated at up to 300 km. (A range of 200 km may present an issue for Stonewall to Winnipeg runs.)
- Lack of charging infrastructure throughout area
- Recent downscaling of EV manufacturing

Delivery of vehicles planned for Fall 2024 and to include maintenance training.

Municipality appreciates they are a first in this model and are very supportive of sharing further details of the project.

## **Key Findings / Recommendations for Action:**

1. Challenges with accessibility of public/access transit
  - Develop a subsidy program for those on fixed incomes i.e. reduced rates during non-peak hours
  - Develop handi-van service that more closely models that of the Town of Stonewall than that of the City of Winnipeg.
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> option to consider “older adult” bus service using vans similar to that currently used by assisted living residences.
  - Shuttle service between senior residences and popular stops.
  - Free shuttle service between one pick up location (ie mall) and destination (ie Riverbank Discovery Centre) during special events such as Canada Day or Multicultural Day.
2. Safety while on transit and at bus stops
  - What should we do about this?
3. Limitation in number of stops and length of rides too long.
  - Conduct public consultation regarding bus routes, number of stops, length of trips and related amenities including bus shelters
  - Conduct an environmental scan of features of public transportation systems in similar type of Age friendly communities in Canada i.e. Moose Jaw
4. Access Transit needs to be more accessible and more inclusive to the older adult population
  - Medical questionnaire for Access Transit needs to be revised (considered too much red tape, too restrictive and/or discriminatory).



### **Questions to be considered for August 15, 2024 Board Meeting**

- Provide a brief overview of the public transit and access transit system.  
le #buses/drivers, ridership, budget, forecasts
- Is there a current 5 or 10 year plan and how often are environmental assessments completed?
- Do you foresee the Review resolving some of the concerns provided within this report.
- Do you foresee the opportunity to develop pilot projects such as “older adult shuttle service” or “downtown dash bus in conjunction with vehicular restrictions.”
- Has there been any investigation into the transition to EV buses and associated sources of funding?
- Will there be opportunities to make Access Transit more accessible to a larger user group by enhancing services?
- What impact has the growing population had on the transportation services? What are the trends in the next 5 or 10 years as the population continues to grow?
- Is there a plan for increased marketing/education to ensure everyone understands existing services?
- What opportunities to work with the Age Friendly Committee of Council do you anticipate going forward?