Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – December 5, 2023

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – November 21, 2023

Item No. 2 Accelerating the Implementation of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works and submitted the following to Council:

1. That the report be received as information.

2. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to include the area Councillor on consultation and follow up with industry stakeholders within the St. Boniface Industrial Park in regards to service expansions.

3. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to provide the Standing Committee with a verbal report on the communication strategy for the implementation of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan which details the schedule for the plan at its January 9, 2024 meeting.

4. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – November 21, 2023

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Lukes,

That the recommendation of the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works be concurred in and forwarded to Council.

Carried

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On November 21, 2023, the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service, with the following amendment:

- Add the following new recommendations:

    "2. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to include the area Councillor on consultation and follow up with industry stakeholders within the St. Boniface Industrial Park in regards to service expansions.

    3. That the Winnipeg Public Service be directed to provide the Standing Committee with a verbal report on the communication strategy for the implementation of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan which details the schedule for the plan at its January 9, 2024 meeting.

    4. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing."

and submitted the matter to the Executive Policy Committee and Council.

On September 11, 2023, the Standing Policy Committee on and Public Works granted an extension of time to its November 21, 2023 meeting for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on accelerating the implementation of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan, in accordance with the Strategic Priorities Action Plan.

Report – Standing Policy Committee on Public Works – November 21, 2023

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

STANDING COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION (continued):

On June 26, 2023, the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works considered the recommendation of the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee and directed the Winnipeg Public Service to:

1. Refer the following to the public engagement process for the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan:

    A. Consultation with industry stakeholders within the St. Boniface Industrial Park to explore opportunities for the redesign of transit routes 47 and 89 in order to establish service past 9:00 p.m. on weekdays, and extended service on Saturdays.

2. Report back to the Standing Committee at its September 11, 2023 meeting on accelerating the implementation of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan, in accordance with the Strategic Priorities Action Plan.

3. Report back to the Standing Committee at its November 6, 2023 meeting on the installation of a sidewalk and/or AT path along Black Diamond Boulevard from Mazenod Road through to Rue Camiel Sys Street.

Henry Klassen, Chief Operations Officer, Bee Maid Honey Ltd., submitted a communication in support of the matter.

COMMUNITY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On June 20, 2023, the East Kildonan-Transcona Community Committee passed the following motion:

BE IT RESOLVED that the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works be requested to direct the Public Service to:

1. Consult industry stakeholders within the St. Boniface Industrial Park to explore opportunities for the redesign of transit routes 47 and 89 in order to establish service past 9:00 p.m. on weekdays, and extended service on Saturdays.

2. Install a sidewalk and/or AT path along Black Diamond Blvd from Mazenod Road through to Rue Camiel Sys Street.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Accelerating the Implementation of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan in Accordance with the Strategic Priorities Action Plan

Critical Path: Standing Policy Committee on Public Works

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
B. Radstrom	G. Ewankiw	N/A	M. Jack

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Winnipeg Transit Master Plan (WTMP) was adopted by Council on April 29, 2021. The WTMP includes service, infrastructure, fleet, and policy elements, but at its core is a new transit service network. This report focuses on the transition to the new transit service network. The new network is based on the Primary Transit Network (PTN) as a network of “spines”, supported by a network of feeder routes throughout the city.

In 2021, Winnipeg Transit committed to launch the new service network along with its supporting infrastructure by 2026. Tri-level funding arrangements delayed the supporting infrastructure to the 2025-2027 construction seasons. In the 2023 budget, Council approved separate funding for the WTMP Planning and Implementation project, allowing staff to accelerate planning and design.

Winnipeg Transit is accelerating the launch of the PTN and feeder routes by the end of June 2025. This aligns with priority action #4.4 in Council’s Strategic Priorities Action Plan (SPAP) which was adopted by Council on May 30, 2023. This service change will be the largest in Winnipeg Transit’s history. This accelerated timeline for this component of the WTMP is the earliest feasible date for implementation.

By launching the PTN in mid-2025, rather than 2026, some infrastructure upgrades will not be complete. Many critical elements for transit operations have already been constructed through road renewal projects. Other operationally-critical elements will be prioritized for the first part of the 2025 construction season, including updating or replacing over 4000 bus stop signs. Contingency plans are in place for other elements not complete by the launch date.

There are sufficient resources in approved budgets for service and infrastructure planning. There are not sufficient resources to undertake any new initiatives like service changes outside the master plan, and there may not be sufficient customer service resources to handle the number of customer questions in the immediate lead-up and follow-up to the network transition in 2025. A more detailed PTN Implementation Plan will be presented to the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works (SPC-PW) in mid-2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

At its June 26, 2023 meeting, the SPC-PW directed the Public Service to report back to the Standing Committee at its September 11, 2023, meeting on accelerating the implementation of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan, in accordance with the Strategic Priorities Action Plan.

At its September 11, 2023 meeting, the SPC-PW granted an extension of time to its November 21, 2023 meeting for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the matter.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no financial implications associated with the recommendations in this report.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

The Winnipeg Transit Master Plan (WTMP) was adopted by Council on April 29, 2021, as the long-range strategic plan for public transit in the City of Winnipeg. The WTMP sets a 25-year vision for Winnipeg Transit which includes plans for a completely new service network, infrastructure improvements, updates to Transit Plus policies, changes to fare policies and plans to transition to a zero-emission bus fleet. The transition to a new service network is at the core of the WTMP, and this report focuses on that element.

The new service network is based on the “spine and feeder” concept, first introduced in Southwest Winnipeg along with the launch of the BLUE rapid transit line in April 2020. The Primary Transit Network is a network of “spines” on major corridors, supported by a network of feeder routes throughout the city.

This service change will be implemented all at once. Most existing transit routes in Winnipeg will complete their final runs at the end of service one night, and the next morning new routes will begin service. This will be by far the largest service change that Winnipeg Transit has ever undertaken.

In 2021, Winnipeg Transit committed to launch the new service network within five years, i.e. by 2026. Winnipeg Transit now plans to accelerate that timeline and implement the Primary Transit Network (PTN) and supporting feeder network by the end of June 2025. This accelerated timeline is the earliest feasible date for implementation.

In May 2023, Council adopted its first Strategic Priorities Action Plan (SPAP). This plan identified a “Green & Growing City with Sustainable Renewal of Infrastructure” as one of its five key themes. Under this theme, Council identified accelerating WTMP implementation as one of the plan’s priority actions. This plan also identified outcomes Council hoped to achieve from the actions. Outcomes identified with accelerating WTMP implementation included increased service levels, frequency, reliability, and availability of Winnipeg Transit service.

Additionally, in September 2023, Council adopted a set of community impact key performance indicators (KPIs). Public Transit Trips per Capita was identified as one of the KPIs under the key theme “Green & Growing City with Sustainable Renewal of Infrastructure”.

The PTN is designed to increase ridership by offering direct and frequent service, every 15 minutes or better for the majority of the day, seven days a week. Increasing ridership is the most significant way Winnipeg Transit can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions in Winnipeg, and is consistent with the outcomes identified in SPAP as well as the community impact KPIs adopted by Council.

Included with the WTMP April 29, 2021, report, Council directed the Public Service to submit the Primary Transit Network Infrastructure (PTNI) capital project to the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) for Federal and Provincial funding. The PTNI project includes construction of the infrastructure required to support the new PTN. Funding for this project is budgeted in 2025 and 2026.

On March 22, 2023, Council approved the 2023 Capital Budget which included $2.2 million for the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan (WTMP) Implementation Planning & Design project which supports the redesign of the transit network by providing planning, design and implementation resources, as well as preliminary site works and minor land acquisitions as required. Since approval of this project, Transit has been able to accelerate work on planning the new service network and designing related infrastructure.

It is anticipated that the infrastructure design will progress to a preliminary level in 2024 using WTMP Planning and Implementation funding. To help achieve the accelerated timeline for the new network, as part of the 2024 Capital Budget Transit has requested a first-call on the 2025 PTNI funding. If approved, detailed design of PTN infrastructure would begin in 2024, with construction taking place from 2025 through 2027.

When launching the PTN, several infrastructure upgrades will not yet be complete. Fortunately many critical elements for transit operations have already been constructed through road renewal projects, in collaboration with the Public Works Department. Other operationally-critical elements will be prioritized for the first part of the 2025 construction season. Contingency plans will be in place in the event work is not yet completed by the launch date.

The most critical infrastructure component is to replace over 4000 bus stop signs, including a transition plan for conveying accurate route information on the existing route network until the day before launch, and for conveying accurate information on the new network immediately on the first morning of the new system. This work will be completed before the launch date.

Other infrastructure to be constructed starting in 2025 includes passenger amenities, shelters, platform upgrades, active transportation connections, and other related elements. While it may be inconvenient for this work to be incomplete before the new network is launched, the public has made clear that they prefer the new service network to be implemented as soon as possible.

The implication of this acceleration is that some infrastructure will not be completed before service begins. For example, where transit loops are not complete, some feeder route buses may travel a few extra blocks to find a suitable place to turn around. This will lead to slightly longer trip times and slightly lower frequencies until a loop is built. Where permanent operator comfort stations are not yet constructed, portable toilets could be used in their place. In other

cases, bus shelters or real-time arrival display boards would be added after service begins to new or upgraded bus stops.

Under approved budgets, Council has authorized capital funding for two relevant term staff positions: one scheduler and one infrastructure project manager. Transit has also realigned previously existing staff positions to hire a new communications officer. With these positions in place, along with assistance from consulting engineers and planners, there are sufficient resources to undertake the service and infrastructure planning.

There are, however, insufficient resources to undertake any new, permanent initiatives, and there may be insufficient resources to handle the quantity of customer questions that are likely to arise in the immediate lead-up to the transition and the follow-up period afterwards. Transit plans to identify these issues in more detail in the implementation plan report and future budget submissions. There will likely be a need for more customer service staff.

In order to launch the PTN in 2025, Winnipeg Transit has assembled an implementation team, consisting of five working groups: Service, Infrastructure, Communications, Data and Technology. The general activities of each of the working group are outlined below.
A more detailed PTN Implementation Plan will be presented to the Standing Policy Committee on Public Works(SPC-PW) in mid-2024.

Service
The primary activities of the Service team are to finalize the feeder network, consisting of the connector, community, limited-span routes, and on-request service areas, as outlined in the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan, throughout the City. The feeder network will be the focus of a public communications program within the next four to six months.

Route numbering and naming is being finalized. Draft schedules are being developed to confirm the fleet, staffing, and service hour requirements for the launch of the new transit network. Detailed schedules, including shift schedules for around 1,000 bus operators, will be finalized after Council considers the detailed implementation plan.

Concurrently with the PTN detailed service planning, Winnipeg Transit staff are developing an evaluation process for handling new service requests, as part of a transition to a new cyclical annual service planning framework outlined in the WTMP. This new framework is expected to take effect starting in 2025, with the first annual plan presented in 2026. Because it offers much greater flexibility in developing and modifying routes and schedules, the spine and feeder model is more conducive to this approach than the legacy transit network.

Infrastructure
The Infrastructure team is in the process of completing a bus stop inventory and accessibility review across the PTN. This will lead into a prioritization framework for accessibility and amenity improvements. Bus stop design will follow accessibility design standards and include amenity upgrades such as shelters and benches. It is anticipated that both the bus stop accessibility audit and PTN stop inventory will be complete by January 2024. New PTN bus stop standards will be developed based on these two foundational projects. A PTN infrastructure program for prioritized bus stop improvements, accessibility, and intersection changes will be designed and integrated into the 2025-2027 construction programs, in conjunction with other City departments as much as possible.

Data and Technology
The focus areas for the Data and Technology teams are to ensure the PTN is integrated into existing data systems, particularly with staff and vehicle scheduling, and customer information systems (real-time information, Navigo, and TeleBUS). The feeder bus network and the PTN route numbering and naming conventions will need to be confirmed before updating existing data systems. Staff are also conducting additional modelling and analysis using the regional transportation model, which helps estimate the passenger volumes along each new route.

By the end of 2023, staff will confirm the key performance indicators that will be utilized to conduct the post PTN launch evaluation report to inform refinements to the transit network and Council reporting in 2025 and beyond.

Communications
With support from the City's Office of Public Engagement, Winnipeg Transit staff are developing a multistage communications program for the PTN launch. The first phase will focus on the refinements made to the connector, community, limited-span routes and On-Request service areas since WTMP approval in 2021, and in accordance with Council direction at that time. There will be specific communications with the accessibility community, and for residents who will have new transit service and bus stops introduced on their street. It is anticipated the both online and in-person sessions will occur. The feeder bus network and PTN Implementation Plan will be presented to Council in mid-2024.

The second phase of communications will cover the period leading up to launch: After the finalization of the feeder bus network, staff from this working group will be focused on a communications strategy informing residents of the city-wide changes resulting from the implementation of the PTN network. Communications methods that could be utilized through the second half of 2024 and into 2025 leading up to the new network launch could include:

- Online: Detailed materials on the City's website on the new network, including online tools like Navigo that residents could use to plan their trips after the PTN launch.
- Passive: Signage on transit vehicles, stops, and shelters throughout the transit system informing them of the new transit network and launch date.
- Drop-ins: In-person drop-in information sessions throughout the City at key transit stops, city facilities and with key stakeholder groups. Printed and online materials would be provided at the drop-in sessions.
- Mail drops: Information materials directly mailed to residents who reside on streets with new service that will be introduced on their street as a part of the new PTN.

There will also be internal communication for transit operators and other internal staff to familiarize them with the new network, and offer training as required.

In the days following the PTN launch, it is anticipated staff will be positioned at key transit hubs to assist with customer inquiries and trip planning. Communications materials will be created for 311 operators to assist with answering inquiries and collecting feedback on the new routes and service. Winnipeg Transit will collect service performance data, KPIs, and customer feedback to determine near and long-term refinements for the new transit network.

More information on communication plans will be outlined in the PTN Implementation Plan that will be presented to Council in mid-2024.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement **Date:** October 25, 2023

Project Name:
Accelerating the Implementation of the Winnipeg Transit Master Plan in Accordance with the Strategic Priorities Action Plan

COMMENTS:

There is no financial impact as this report is for information only.

Laurie Fisher October 25, 2023
Laurie Fisher, CPA, CA
Manager of Finance & Administration

CONSULTATION

N/A

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

OurWinnipeg 2045

Goal: Environmental Resilience, Objective 2: Prioritize sustainable transportation as the mobility options of choice.

> Prioritize sustainable transportation as the mobility options of choice. Transition to a sustainable transportation system that safely and efficiently moves people, goods and services, increases access to a variety of affordable mobility choices, encourages less reliance on personal vehicle travel, reduces travel time, mitigates congestion and related greenhouse gas emissions, and supports the development of denser, better-connected, healthy and complete communities.

Policy 2.9: Reduce Road Congestion

> Increase the efficiency, convenience and usage of the active and public transportation system, to improve air quality, provide a viable alternative to the automobile, and reduce current and future road congestion.

Winnipeg Transit Master Plan

Network Goals:

> Enhance Customer Experience
> Increase Ridership
> Improve Downtown Mobility
> Complement Land-Use Development
> Improve Multi-modal Mobility
> Ensure Transit is Inclusive
> Continuously Innovate
> Balance Investment with Affordability

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

This report is in accordance with the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (WCAP) as per Direction 3.1 Increase Use and Efficiency of Public Transit Systems (p.46).

Relevant actions include: Deliver continuous improvement in transit service with a focus on customer service, reliability, and route connectivity, and public education (found on page 46 of the WCAP).

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Goal 5(a) Transportation System Equity is Enhanced – the affordability and accessibility of transportation and transit service is increased.

Goal 5(b) Transportation System Equity is Enhanced – improvements to transportation and transit infrastructure and services prioritize areas of higher poverty, and increased interconnectivity to employment and affordable goods and services.

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Transit
Division: Service Development
Prepared by: Kevin Sturgeon, Senior Transit Planner
Date: October 27, 2023