



Transit Advisory Committee
2nd Quarter 2026
 June 17th, 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:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> x Kirk Kuchera – SMART v Joanne Brackey – SMART x Chris Thompson – SMART x Don White – SMART v Ashley Strand – SMART x Kevin Hemann – SMART Greg Krueger – Steele County Troy Klecker – City of Owatonna | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Larry Baker – Albert Lea City Council Paul Fischer – Austin City Council v Dan Sparks – Mower County v Sue Loch – Mayo Health Systems Bonnie Buchanan – Jefferson Lines Waseca County – Commissioner Kelly Sutlief – Waseca (passenger) 8798975 v Jim Wolter – MNDOT OTAT |
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x – in person; v – virtual

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 - 2026 Data

Data for all counties combined						
	January	February	March	April	May	YTD
PASSENGERS						
Albert Lea	5,416	5,527	5,880	5,854	5,139	27,816
Austin	11,421	11,333	10,482	11,871	10,499	55,606
Owatonna	3,270	3,626	3,761	3,744	3,293	17,694
Blooming Prairie						0
Waseca	1,860	1,726	1,664	1,814	1,635	8,699
TOTAL	21,967	22,212	21,787	23,283	20,566	109,815
HOURS						
Albert Lea	1,280	1,243	1,317	1,311	1,239	6,390
Austin	2,179	2,087	2,167	2,186	2,111	10,729
Owatonna	1,245	1,209	1,303	1,262	1,235	6,253
Blooming Prairie						0
Waseca	812	772	844	809	780	4,017
TOTAL	5,515	5,310	5,631	5,568	5,365	27,388
MILES						
Albert Lea	14,522	14,174	14,659	15,318	13,994	72,667
Austin	21,453	19,461	21,489	19,765	20,373	102,541
Owatonna	12,632	12,407	13,336	13,045	12,081	63,501
Blooming Prairie						0
Waseca	6,054	5,237	5,414	5,394	4,882	26,981
TOTAL	54,661	51,279	54,898	53,522	51,330	265,690

- Continue to have a good start to the year, ridership is up slightly over last year

- What's New
 - Community Engagement
 - Seat belt campaign – Encouraged passengers to take the time to buckle up on our bus; this was aligned with the national seat belt campaign
 - Participated in several community events – Community Connect, events for senior citizens and schools, and visited with some nursing homes as well as a recent Human Society drive
- SMART Functional Updates
 - Training / D&A
 - Working through a lot of training the last several months and will be doing a lot this summer
 - CPR, Defensive Driving, Passenger Assist, etc.
 - Working through 'Star Services' training as well
 - D&A is going well; we had a business in Owatonna shut down so have been looking at other options
 - Specifically working to identify places that offer flexibility with hours, etc.
 - Owatonna/Waseca
 - Owatonna
 - Added another PT staff since our last meeting
 - Additional hours are going well
 - Looking at PreK for this fall and will start planning later this summer
 - Attended a senior event recently in Owatonna – a high need was identified for seniors going to Rochester
 - Waseca
 - Overall things are going well
 - Several parents have reached out to schedule trips for their children attending summer school
 - Doing a presentation at the Waseca Senior Center later today
 - Austin/Dispatch
 - Austin
 - Participated in the Austin Community Connect event recently
 - Currently providing free trips to the Hormel Nature Center this summer – this is paid for by the 'Friends of the Hormel Nature Center'
 - Have had conversations with senior living places recently in how SMART can further assist seniors in our community
 - Starting to work on PreK for the fall (usually transport 150-200 students each year)
 - Fully staffed and going well
 - Dispatch
 - Fully staffed and going well
 - Have visited with a couple agencies recently and what they use for dispatch software
 - Albert Lea
 - Staffing is going well here as well
 - Lead Driver is getting fully trained
 - Been working with the 'Age Friendly' and 'Access to Care' on senior transportation
 - Worked with Albert Lea Schools and the truancy group to educate on public transportation
 - Gearing up for the Freeborn County Fair – offering free trips to and from the fair
- MNDOT Update
 - Operating
 - Working through the Operating Grant right now – deadline June 30th
 - Capital
 - Vehicles
 - Vehicle Replacement
 - 2025 Vehicle Replacement
 - Bus has been ordered – should receive later this summer (Aug)

- 2026 Vehicle Replacement
 - Ordered six buses earlier this month
 - First time in SMART history we will not be ordering a bus through the Forest River manufacturing facility (two new vendors – HLE and MicroBird)
 - 2027 Vehicle Replacement
 - Updating process next year to shorten time between ordering and receiving bus
 - Vehicle Disposition
 - Disposing of older buses as new ones arrive – sold three buses last month as the new ones had arrived
- Low-No Emission Grant – BETTER
 - SMART has signed the contract – will be meeting with ABC Bus Sales next week to check out a possible bus (MicroBird product we had hoped for will not be available before funds expire)
 - Ordering likely to take place this summer, with possible delivery early next year
 - Project also includes infrastructure and training for staff (and maintenance contractor among others) – working with MNDOT on this process now
- Facilities
 - Austin and Waseca facility approved through FTA grant (partnership with MNDOT)
 - Working through final touches of NEPA work for Waseca
 - Making adjustments with location in Austin
- Other
 - Submitted 2025 Technology Grant application for new routing software
 - Have signed the contract and awaiting final approval to begin solicitation (RFP process)
 - Have been looking at what options are out there that we can send RFPs to
 - Submitted 2026 Large Capital Grant Application for staff support vehicle
 - Signed contract and awaiting final approval to complete RFP process
 - Submitted Large Capital Grant Application for replacement staff support vehicle in the future – was submitted 9/30/25
 - Will be applying for Large Capital Grant in 2027 for replacement of Austin Support Veh.
 - Will be applying for Technology grant to help with updating our radio system (move to cell based versus current two-way system with repeaters)
 - This will reduce cost on installs and radios
- Big Picture – Down the Road
 - Facility projects
 - Work with MNDOT / FTA on Austin & Waseca facility projects
 - Cedar Valley Services Update
 - Continue to work on technology upgrades at CVS to help with safety and security as well as our partnerships with clients we do production work with
 - Preparing for our CARF accreditation later this fall
 - Large accreditation process that takes place every three years that is tied to our federal and state licensing (working with adults with disabilities)

2026 Program Goals – Ideas?

- Continue to streamline and simplify process and policies
- Continue to keep services up and running through staffing retention / filling open positions as needed
- Work with MNDOT / FTA on facility projects

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

- N/A

NEW items from TAC Members/Community Feedback?

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2026 Meeting Dates:

Quarterly on 3rd Wednesday, 10:00 am, rotating city each quarter (Zoom option available for all meetings)

~~Q1 = March 18th, 2026 ... 905 E 16th St, Albert Lea, MN (In Person/Zoom)~~

Q2 = June 17th, 2026 ... 2803 W Oakland Ave, Austin, MN (In Person/Zoom)

Q3 = September 16th, 2026 ... 140 32nd Ave. NW, Owatonna, MN (In Person/Zoom)

*Q4 = December 16th, 2026 ... 303 South State Street, Waseca, MN 56093 (In Person/Zoom)

* Held at Emergency Services Building – Waseca Community Room

** *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!**