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April 6, 2026

Standing Policy Committee on Transportation
Saskatoon City Council
VIA EMAIL

6.2.1 – First Avenue Bus Rapid Transit (Link) Concept Changes

Dear Councillors and Committee Members,

We have reviewed the concept plan before you today which provides for a BRT corridor along First Avenue between 19th Street and 25th Street.

The reduced on-street parking presented in this iteration of the plan is concerning. However, on balance, we believe the case for First Avenue as a BRT corridor remains strong given the alternatives:

- First Avenue provides a direct north-south BRT route through downtown with a direct connection to the Sid Buckwold Bridge and freeway.
- Among Saskatoon's downtown avenues, First Avenue between 19th Street and 25th Street has the fewest number of private enterprises that open directly onto the street. For those that do, there are adjacent or on-site alterative access points for customers, employees and/or deliveries.
- In contrast to other downtown avenues, First Avenue has not seen major renovations or significant streetscaping improvements in recent years. In this way, there will be no loss of capital investment. On the contrary, BRT development and its funding could bring enhancements to its public realm.
- First Avenue is best positioned to link Downtown with Riversdale, North Downtown strategic infill, and the existing Warehouse District.
- Midtown Plaza supports the project on First Avenue as a downtown destination, large employer and City Centre anchor.
- As Saskatoon grows towards 500,000+ people, the route supports potential growth and densification along First Avenue, and west and north of First Avenue.
- Saskatoon's new event and entertainment facilities will be located west of First Avenue with BRT playing a major role in the success of those projects.
- Aligned with the City's Imagine Idylwyld Plan, locating key transit infrastructure on First Avenue will support densification along Idylwyld and First Avenue as well as locations west of Idylwyld into Riversdale and other areas north of 22nd Street.

Key Outlier – Capitol Music Club

While most commercial enterprises on First Avenue have alterative or secondary access points, the Capitol Music Club is an outlier.

The Chamber facilitated direct talks between the Club's owners and city officials where the business conveyed how the elimination of First Avenue parking, proximate to the business, would make the loading of large scale, event-related equipment logistically impossible. There is no rear access. The laneways adjacent and behind the building are narrow and inaccessible.

As an event centre that produces and hosts dozens of shows and special events every month, it is a real and practical challenge that threatens the viability of the Capitol Music Club into the future.

We believe the problem can be solved by eliminating the left-hand turn onto 24th Street West to extend the driving lane and allow for a limited number of on-street parking spaces in proximity to the business. We believe this could be a viable option since:

- There are no active retailers, restaurants or offices that require the same level of on-street access to their locations.
- The impact would be negligible for enterprises on 24th Street West since all properties have parking inventory and loading capability onsite, behind or adjacent to their buildings.
- Extending a left-hand turn by another block would not unreasonably inconvenience drivers or impede traffic flow.

Importantly, by ensuring the Capitol Music Club remains viable and accessible to its touring shows and rental customers, it will provide much-needed animation, activity, vibrancy (read: safety) on a stretch of First Avenue that will need it, particularly during off hours.

When the cost-benefits of this change are weighed, it makes sense – for the business, for downtown and for the future of First Avenue.

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you to discuss further, if helpful.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jason Aebig, CEO