

Administration Response: Transit and Vulnerable Populations

Recommendation

That the June 15, 2021, City Operations report CO00598, be received for information.

Executive Summary

This report responds to recommendations and feedback provided by the Edmonton Transit Service Advisory Board (ETSAB) through the Transit and Vulnerable Populations EXT00535.

Administration is in the process of completing a three-year action plan to improve the Disabled Adult Transit Service (DATS) user experience, and implement recommendations from a program and service review including providing more training to DATS users to help them access and travel using the conventional transit service.

Administration has also developed a Corporate Accessibility Plan with actions that align with ETSAB's recommendations. Improving accessibility to public transit is a key to supporting ConnectEdmonton's Healthy City goal. Improving the customer experience is essential to Edmonton's transit network and a key component of a healthy and resilient city.

Report

Through the Corporate Accessibility Plan and ongoing Disabled Adult Transit Service (DATS) Action plan, Administration is aligned with all Edmonton Transit Advisory Board (ETSAB) recommendations:

1. That ETS Administration set up a training course for community volunteers at which representatives from seniors and newcomers organizations can become fully versed in the use of ETS services so that they can confidently convey that information to their clients who require it.
2. The course should include information on all aspects of using the ETS service including trip planning, getting on and off the bus, conduct while on the bus, fare

- products and how to acquire them as well as information on fare subsidy programmes.
3. Trainers and students under such a plan should not be charged for use of the service while participating in the programme.
 4. Once the programme is established it can be expanded to include other groups of organisations who serve vulnerable populations.

Administration Response:

Administration accepts the recommendations. Ongoing programs and work underway align with ETSAB's travel training goals through three existing activities:

1. Current Travel Training Program

Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) currently offers travel training to help youth, seniors and newcomers become familiar and more confident when navigating conventional transit journeys.

In preparation for the Bus Network Redesign, ETS met with seniors organizations, newcomers organizations and multicultural communications channels to ensure a diverse outreach approach. ETS provided information sessions on the new network and on demand booking and trip planning.

Administration plans to increase the number of staff available to provide travel training and accessible transit coordination with the community and further promote the service.

2. DATS Action Plan

Improving the DATS customer experience is essential to Edmonton's transit network and a key component of a healthy and resilient city. Council previously approved a three-year action plan to improve the DATS user experience, supporting ConnectEdmonton and the City Plan's Healthy City goal. The three-year action plan is on track to complete all nine actions to better improve paratransit service and customer experience.

A key component of the three-year action plan includes leveraging the fully accessible conventional transit fleet, including developing a robust no-charge travel training program that educates customers on how to use conventional transit service. The training program will be designed to build confidence in using the conventional transit service and support a wide variety of users in our community, including newcomers, seniors and those with a range of physical and mental abilities. Planning is underway to enhance travel training capabilities for paratransit clients to feel more empowered and comfortable using conventional transit, including the design of physical travel

training infrastructure in the next transit garage. Further, a review of increased integration with the conventional transit service will be completed by 2022.

3. Corporate Accessibility Action Plan

City Council approved the City's Accessibility Policy for People with Disabilities Policy C602 (Attachment 1) in September 2019. The Policy commits to facilitating continuous improvement in accessibility in all City of Edmonton services, programs, infrastructure, communications, and technology. A key outcome of the Policy is the creation of an aligned Corporate Accessibility Plan using feedback from people living with disabilities in our community, the general public, and City staff from across the organization. The Corporate Accessibility Plan is composed of accessibility action commitments from each City department.

The Corporate Accessibility Plan commits to the following actions, developed in response to feedback provided by citizen user panels of residents with a range of abilities to provide guidance regarding accessibility for current and proposed services, programs and features:

- Establish enhanced formalized consultation regarding vehicle and infrastructure features affecting the transit experience of users with disabilities.
- Review job-specific training programs for front-line staff to ensure that they include content on current disability awareness and customer service best practices specific to business-area services and programs.
- Review customer service standards, practices and procedures using the Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) process to ensure that they include consideration of the needs of people with disabilities and best practices for serving people with a range of disabilities.
- Review the design of and communication practices around pedestrian and transit access in construction zones to ensure safe access and movement with consideration of people with a range of disabilities.
- Implement robust and inclusive customer communications, public education and outreach plans to prepare transit customers of all ages and abilities for Bus Network Redesign changes after implementation.
- Provide consistent training for all Operators providing DATS service, including disability awareness, coaching and follow-up processes. Design and administer an enhanced training approach for all contracted service providers.
- Reviewing ways to ensure people with service dogs can board buses without issues.
- Exploring the possibility of increasing the availability of Wi-Fi at transit stations and vehicles and researching / promoting accessible technology to transit users.
- Ensure consistent training for all operators providing DATS service, including disability awareness, coaching and followup processes.
- Leverage the DATS Advisory Group to assess paratransit access: signage, pick-up locations, doors, facilities, loading and unloading zones, and bike lanes

to ensure all sites and access is fully accessible for both clients and DATS service providers.

- Review communications to paratransit users, including awareness and education is needed about DATS changes, services, rules, features and customer tools for users, caregivers and agencies servicing DATS users.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmontonians use public transit and active modes of transportation, Edmonton is a Safe City			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Edmontonians use public transit and active modes of transportation	Transit Ridership	48,275,563	85,640,000

Attachment

1. Policy C602 Accessibility for People with Disabilities

Others Reviewing this Report

- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- K. Fallis-Howell, Acting City Solicitor