

GBA+ REPORTING

PROJECT/INITIATIVE NAME: Transit Safety and Security

Branch Community Standards and Neighbourhoods
Social Development
Edmonton Transit Service
Office of the Chief of Staff

Department Community Services
City Operations
Office of the City Manager

Date: January 27, 2022

1. DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT OR INITIATIVE

COVID-19 has impacted transit agencies across North America and stay-at-home measures have caused a decline in transit ridership levels. Lower transit ridership has resulted in fewer people in transit areas and therefore less natural surveillance in transit facilities. At the same time, there is an increasing number of homeless people in our city and the drug poisoning epidemic means a number of homeless folks are using drugs in public spaces including streets and transit stations. Those circumstances also make transit centres attractive to criminals who take advantage of vulnerable people. Taken together, these elements have created conditions that lead to transit riders feeling uneasy and, at times, unsafe.

2. OVERVIEW OF GBA+ IMPACT

Administration continues to examine best practices and work with entities that receive funding to pursue innovative solutions that reduce barriers for those who need support,

GBA+ PROCESS

3. REFLECT

Perspectives of the project team:

- Highly educated
- English speaking and reading (First and second languages)
- Mix of Canadian-born and immigrants to Canada
- Majority of the group identifies as female and is cis-gendered
- Have access to stable housing
- Mixture of frequent and occasional transit users
- Lived experience in low income household
- Employment status: All have stable, full-time work, currently many of which are working remotely and

may not be using transit and/or public spaces as frequently

Perspectives missing:

- People currently experiencing homelessness and/or substance use disorders.

4. RESEARCH

Quantitative and qualitative research findings were taken from monthly surveys that ETS undertakes to assess rider satisfaction with a third party research provider. Survey research inherently does not reach all participants (i.e. they need to have access and awareness of the survey, have a means to complete the survey such as a phone, computer and internet access, they have to read and understand the language of the survey, etc.). Thus, despite our best efforts for a representative sample, there can be voices left out of traditional research methods. The City continues to integrate with key community stakeholders and partners to strengthen community engagement and awareness for all users of transit and transit spaces.

Informal research on social media has provided the project team with another perspective into the experience of transit riders.

5. ENGAGE

In 2019, Administration presented CR_6899, Policy for Helping Vulnerable Residents During Extreme Weather Incidents, and shared insights gathered from individuals who accessed Central LRT Station overnight. Three themes emerged:

1. Some individuals thought emergency shelters were full or could not access them due to being banned previously.
2. Some individuals slept in shelters when Central LRT Station was closed/unavailable; however, they left emergency and temporary shelters when the station became an option.
3. Community centres like Boyle Street Community Services were seen as providing adequate shelter during the day.

Multiple, regular surveys are completed throughout the year for ETS ridership.

6. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6a) Finding statement(s):

1. Compared to bus-only riders, LRT riders tend to have more people in the 25 to 44 years old range and fewer youth (under 24).
2. LRT riders tend to be higher income than bus-only riders.
 - 32 per cent of LRT riders have a household gross annual income of \$100k or more, compared to 18 per cent of bus-only riders.
 - 32 per cent of bus-only riders have a household gross annual income under

6b) Equity Measure Recommendation(s):

1. Individuals who are homeless continue to be assisted to find adequate shelter as LRT stations do not provide adequate sleep conditions and there are concerns around health and safety, cold temperatures, limited amenities including washrooms and the coordination of food and water for those staying overnight.
 - a. Request ongoing funding allocation for the Community Outreach on Transit Team (COTT)
 - b. Continue with building and staffing

<p>\$40k per year, compared to 16 per cent of LRT riders.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Employment status - more LRT riders tend to be employed full time and part time than bus-only riders, and among bus-only riders there are higher proportions of people who are unemployed or unable to work. 4. More than 2,800 individuals in Edmonton are experiencing homelessness. 5. Nearly 60 per cent of homeless individuals are Indigenous, despite being only 5 per cent of the overall population. 6. Of the more than 2,800 individuals experiencing homelessness. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Approximately 690 individuals are children - either dependents or independent youth. o Approximately 42 percent of homeless individuals identify as female. 7. Some homeless individuals have thought emergency shelters were full or could not access them due to being banned previously. 8. Some individuals slept in shelters when Central LRT Station was closed/unavailable; however, they left emergency and temporary shelters when the station became an option. 9. Community centres like Boyle Street Community Services were seen as providing adequate shelter during the day. 10. The drug poisoning crisis has seen significant increases in medical calls on ETS property. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> o Calls for medical aid have increased 819% since 2017 with TPOs attending nearly 1500 calls in 2021. 11. 10% of the calls for TPO service involve check on people's welfare (almost 8000 in 2021) 	<p>public washrooms</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> c. Review and enhancement of the Encampment Response in 2022. d. Continue with affordable housing initiatives and advocacy efforts. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. Continuing with the Safe City YEG initiative, as making transit safer for women and girls makes it safer for everyone. Including upcoming work on the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls Calls for Justice b. Bystander Awareness Training 3. Evaluate if the temporary shelter bus was successful and resources allocated effectively. 4. Administration to provide Indigenous-led trauma-informed training to employees and leadership. 5. Evaluate the equipment and role of those who respond to medical calls on Transit property.
--	---

7. IMPLEMENTATION

In this section, record:

- *How you will implement/have implemented the equity measures, including timing (e.g. some may be implemented immediately, some noted for the future).*
- *If possible, identify any resources (eg. staffing, materials, etc) that will be allocated to implement equity measures.*

REMOVAL OF BARRIERS FOR THE HOMELESS

As a limited funder of the homeless-service sector, the City endeavours to include contractual provisions in its agreements with agencies to best ensure the removal of barriers to access for vulnerable persons experiencing homelessness, including the development of Council approved shelter standards for the emergency shelters in Edmonton. While we are not the primary funder, all efforts are being made to support the adoption and implementation of the shelter standards to improve equitable access of these spaces to people experiencing homelessness. The City is working with the Alberta Government, Ministry of Community and Social Services to adopt the shelter standards as part of funding agreements.

Since 2019, the City's response to Extreme Weather Response has been guided by the following principles:

- Safety First: The health and safety of individuals is of paramount importance.
- Connected: All efforts will be made to align the City of Edmonton's response with existing efforts and resources, with a focus on connecting people to the supports that best meet their needs.
- Respectful: All individuals are served with dignity and respect.
- Efficient and Effective: Responses, community plans, and protocols are robust and time tested, based on proven best practices.
- Housing First: All efforts will be made to ensure that those who are experiencing homelessness are connected to supports to find permanent, safe and affordable housing.

TRANSIT

- Ongoing GBA+ analysis of the safety and security system on ETS.
- Equity analysis of the transit network is underway.
- Anti-racism review of low income transit fare programs is underway.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

- Provided trauma-informed training to Community Standards and Neighbourhoods extended leadership team. The course was delivered by Native Counselling Services of Alberta.
 - Planned extension to frontline teams in 2022.
- TPOs have been trained in advanced first aid, AED deployment, and Naloxone administration. TPOs are frequently on scene to medical incidents before responding healthcare professionals and routinely administer Naloxone.
- A tripartite arrangement between Social Development, Community Standards and Neighbourhoods, and ETS supports a shelter shuttle bus between many of the transit centres and LRT stations, and emergency shelter locations. This bus runs between December and April, and provides transport to more appropriate sheltering options for those in need.

SAFECITY - YEG

- Transit Watch implemented
- Bystander project
- Infrastructure projects for ETS will use a GBA+ perspective

8. EVALUATION

In this section, record:

- *Your plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the project/initiative, including the effectiveness of equity measures implemented.*

Measures of success and evaluation will be worked through as an action item at the Tripartite and working group tables.