



# ETSAB Presentation

## Inclusive Transit: BIPOC Experiences



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**Issue:**

How can we make Edmonton Transit Service a **more inclusive, safe and respectful space** for Black, Indigenous and People of Colour (BIPOC) transit users as well as BIPOC ETS staff?

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## Research:

ETSAB members conducted research into initiatives in other jurisdictions that have and are working to address systemic issues to make transit a safer and inclusive place for BIPOC individuals. This included:

- City of Toronto/Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)
- City of Seattle/King County/Sound Transit
- Information provided to ETSAB members from City of Edmonton staff on ETS operations.



## Research Findings:

- **Toronto Transit Commission**
- **Sound Transit**
- **Edmonton Transit Service**



# Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)

- After calls for action from community members, the TTC developed a *10-Point Action Plan* and a *Five-Year Diversity and Human Rights Plan*
  - Includes hiring an inaugural Director of Diversity and Culture
- The TTC also sponsored the first international chapter of the **Conference of Minority Transit Operators' (COMTO)** which is a US-based organization that provides a forum for senior-level minority/BIPOC professionals in the transportation industry.



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# Sound Transit/Seattle

- An investigation by the Seattle Times in 2019 found that while only 9% of riders of Sound Transit's commuter trains were Black, almost 22% of all persons tickets for fare evasion were black.
  - Furthermore, the likelihood of a Black riders were less likely to receive a warning for fare evasion and substantially more likely to receive a ticket or misdemeanor theft charge.
- A 2018 audit of Sound Transit determined that the cost to the organization to check for fare evasion was approximately \$6/person, representing nearly double the most expensive fare option.
  - Through this, alternate models of enforcement were developed, such as community service.

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# Edmonton Transit Service (ETS)

- ETSAB members wanted to incorporate first-hand, lived-experiences of BIPOC riders and staff of Edmonton Transit. A sample of those experiences can be found in the attachments of our report.
- Key highlights:
  - Examples of non-BIPOC members of the public choosing to stand rather than sit next to a person of colour.
  - Perception that fare checking occurs more frequently with BIPOC individuals than non-BIPOC persons.
  - BIPOC riders face racial slurs and often told to “go back to where you come from”.

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# ETS - TPO Interactions

- Through requests to City of Edmonton administration, we found that approximately 61.5% of the total interactions of Transit Peace Officers (TPOs) were with individuals that identifies as BIPOC.
  - This far outstrips what would be proportionate to regular population distribution (41.8% - 2016 Census)
- Subsequently, from 2016-2020, of all the TPO warnings/tickets issued to BIPOC individuals, 86% of the total warnings and 81% of total tickets were issued to Indigenous persons.
  - 5.4% of Edmonton's population self-identify as Indigenous (2016)



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# ETS - Fare Evasion

- A report by the CBC in 2019 indicated that 5,879 tickets for fare evasion were issued by ETS in 2018. The Student Legal Services of Edmonton highlighted that 2,514 of those fare evasion tickets were given to those with “no fixed address” in 2018 (42.8%).
  - Edmonton’s 2016 Homeless Count identified 51% of those struggling with homelessness in Edmonton self-identified as Indigenous.
- The current \$250 fine for fare evasion is approximately **72 times higher** than a single fare (\$3.50) and unnecessarily punishes those who are the least likely to be able to pay for a single-fare, not even considering a fare evasion fine.



# Recommendations



# Recommendations

1. **Implement BIPOC-friendly human resources practices within ETS.**
  - a. Consider hiring a Director of Anti-Racism and Inclusion similar to the TTC
  - b. Develop and implement specific **anti-racism training** for ETS staff members
  - c. Develop and maintain a baseline for BIPOC employment with ETS, including senior management staff that aligns with the demographics of Edmonton
  - d. Consider the sponsorship of a COMTO chapter in Edmonton for BIPOC ETS staff

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# Recommendations

## **2. Engage in proactive, ongoing communications with Edmontonians related to transit.**

- a. Public declaration that racism and hateful speech is not tolerated on ETS vehicles. These notices should be posted in highly visible locations at stations and on vehicles
- b. Incorporate Indigenous names and words into ETS infrastructure similar to what has been done with the Indigenous Ward Naming Knowledge Committee
- c. ETS reports/communications should be developed in multiple languages and distributed to local community groups
- d. Gather, track and share data related to BIPOC experiences on ETS through Open Data
- e. Engage with post-secondaries to advance debate on racial justice and systemic racism.

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# Recommendations

## 3. Deescalate fare enforcement

- a. Re-direct TPO priorities to safety and security and away from fare enforcement where possible.
- b. Align fare enforcement fines to similar fines for single-vehicle users (i.e. fare enforcement will be no higher than a parking ticket)
- c. In situations where a fare enforcement ticket is issued, develop alternate forms of payment such as payment through community services or referrals to wrap-around social services to avoid further penalizing people who may not be able to pay for a single-use transit fare

*“While racial slurs are not quantifiable like, say, he slapped her in the face three times, the emotional damage is irreparable and it lasts a lifetime. BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) are as entitled as everyone else is, as long as we have paid our bus fare, to enjoy a racism-free environment on the bus or LRT.*

*ETS needs to put policies in place where there are tangible consequences for racial harassment, racial profiling and use of derogatory terms on public transport. This is the humane thing to do.*

*Apologies do not work as the damage lasts a lifetime.”*

***- Lived experience of a young Black female transit user.***

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# Grandin Station

- Lastly, ETSAB would like to commend Edmonton City Council for their **swift and immediate** action related to renaming Grandin Station and removal of the mural from the downtown LRT station in light of the discovery of 215 Indigenous children found in unmarked graves at the site of a former residential school in Kamloops, B.C.
- We encourage the Edmonton City Council and City Administration to work with Indigenous communities and groups to come up with a new name for the station that **supports the ongoing effort of reconciliation** with Indigenous people.



# Thank you!

*We welcome any questions you may  
have*

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