

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

RECOMMENDATION

That the May 24, 2022, City Operations report CO01229, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

Council is being informed of implementation updates for the previously approved enhanced Transit Safety Plan.

Executive Summary

- This report provides an interim update on the implementation of the enhanced Transit Safety Plan outlined in OCM01037, and approved by City Council at the February 22/24, 2022, City Council meeting. Improving safety in all public spaces, including transit spaces, remains a top priority for City Administration. Recent incidents continue to illustrate the significant challenges faced in addressing this complex issue, and underscore the importance of creating safe and welcoming spaces for all.
- Safety has been identified as a critical factor in recovering and growing transit ridership. Transit ridership has recovered to between 66 to 69 per cent of normal levels, with total transit ridership reaching 3.6 million rides in April.
- In coordination with the City of Edmonton's tripartite partners, Edmonton Police Service and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Administration is diligently advancing the actions from the Transit Safety Plan.
- Implementation updates include ongoing hiring and resourcing of staff; phased reopening of transit washrooms; the creation of a refreshed Transit Peace Officer deployment model; and education and outreach activities, including drug poisoning prevention teams, safety information boards and communications in transit spaces, a marketing and communications campaign and development of a transit staff and rider awareness campaign. Evidence-based staffing levels based on the Transit Peace Officer deployment review are provided.

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

- In addition to impacting transit riders, social disorder including criminal activities in transit spaces, has contributed to significant occupational health and safety concerns for employees who work in these spaces. The current reliance on administrative controls and emergency response measures does not adequately meet the standard of safety for City workspaces.
- Administration is preparing an unfunded capital profile to install fare payment gates as access control for LRT platform areas in some stations, in preparation for the 2023-2026 budget deliberations.

REPORT

Safety and security in transit spaces remains a top priority and includes activities to create a safe transit experience for all, including transit riders, community members, City staff, and contractors.

Transit ridership has recovered to between 66 to 69 per cent of normal (pre-pandemic) levels, with total transit ridership reaching 3.6 million rides in April 2022. Efforts to improve transit safety are strategically aligned with numerous overarching corporate strategies and policies, including ConnectEdmonton, City Plan, the Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy, and the Downtown Vibrancy Strategy.

Safety is one of the key service deliverables identified in the Transit Strategy (approved by Council in 2017), and has been identified as a critical factor in recovering and growing transit ridership.

The framework supporting the implementation of the Transit Strategy has six elements:

- **Mass transit planning and transit network design** includes elements related to the transit network and mass transit plans. Creating higher frequency transit service corridors encourages more transit ridership, resulting in more active streets and a greater presence of fleet and riders. This helps create natural surveillance.
- **Environmental design** focuses on the built environment, including transit infrastructure as well as other elements of the transit journey (roadways, sidewalks, parking areas, fleet, etc.). It also includes crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED).
- **Enforcement and security personnel** include personnel assigned to support a safe transit experience. In Edmonton, security personnel consists of three key layers: security guards - deployed at 21 transit locations; Transit Peace Officers - deployed across the entire transit network; and Edmonton Police Service (EPS) - service requested on an ad hoc or emergency response basis. In addition, the 24/7 Transit Control Centre staff has oversight for the management of a safe, reliable transit system.
- **Policies, procedures, standards and guidelines** refers to policy tools such as Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+), Council-approved city policies and bylaws, Occupational Health and Safety, as well as operational policies and procedures governing transit safety and security. There are two bylaws related to transit spaces: Bylaw 14614 - Public Places, and Bylaw 8353 - Conduct of Transit Passengers. The Council-approved Transit Service Policy (C539A) and Edmonton Transit Fare Policy (C451H) also impact safety and security. The service policy outlines service standards to guide transit service decisions related to coverage, frequency and planning. The fare policy outlines principles to guide faring decisions and follows a needs-based approach for equitable faring pricing.

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

- **Education and outreach** focuses on internal and external education, community engagement and outreach, as well as communications and marketing efforts. In Edmonton, education and outreach includes the work of Transit Peace Officers, Community Outreach Transit Teams (COTT), and bystander awareness, education and intervention campaigns.
- **Technology and equipment** is located throughout the network and on the fleet to support riders and staff, as well as protect the security of transit assets. Examples include bus operator shields, almost 4,000 surveillance cameras across the system and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) for staff and contractors.

Transit Security in Context

Transit agencies across North America are working on plans to recover and grow ridership while navigating the impact of complex social issues in our communities. Heightened by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been an increased awareness of many complex issues of marginalization that intersect with public transportation in municipalities. Examples include Indigenous, Black and racialized peoples' experiences with racism or hate motivated assaults; timely access to service for persons with disabilities; service gaps for those who work late night shifts; newcomers who are making Edmonton home; the number of people in need of safe sheltering and housing support; the need for increased mental health supports; as well as a drug poisoning crisis. Reports to the Transit Control Centre about drug poisonings in transit facilities continue; in the three-month period from January to March 2022, 227 reports were submitted. In the last six weeks, security guards deployed naloxone 52 times in transit facilities. All these compounding issues are leading to conditions where people feel uneasy and, at times, unsafe while in transit spaces or needing access to transit service.

Investments in LRT and transit service are critical to Edmonton's future, for the development of a modern, globally competitive city with a transportation system that meets the needs of a diverse, dynamic, and growing population. To meet the goals outlined in The City Plan, including greenhouse gas emission reductions targets, it is critical to recover and grow transit ridership, and achieve transportation mode shifts. Service improvements, including safety enhancements, are a key lever to increasing transit ridership and mode shift. Transit Centres and LRT stations are intended to be busy and vibrant - they facilitate the transportation of large volumes of riders between their homes, workplaces, schools, shopping, events, and other activities in a manner that is convenient, reliable, and safe.

To improve safety for all, focus is placed on addressing problematic behaviour that contributes to disorder and interferes with a safe transit experience. In 2019, City Council approved Policy C620 - Supporting Vulnerable People During Extreme Weather Conditions to formalize the City's role in ensuring appropriate response to safeguard the health and lives of Edmontonians who are marginalized. Dignity, safety, connections to resources and supports are prioritized during extreme weather responses.

Policy C620 and the enhanced Transit Safety Plan outlined in OCM01037 reaffirmed that LRT stations are not equipped to function as temporary shelters and do not uphold the principles of this policy. LRT stations are unsuitable for use as shelter spaces given their lack of basic amenities such as washrooms, adequate heating, and connections to important social supports. Interim

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

gathering spaces are needed for marginalized Edmontonians who are sheltering and gathering in transit facilities, particularly during cold weather months. For example, some jurisdictions have created warming centres to serve as gathering spaces to keep people safe during cold weather months.

Transit Safety Plan Implementation Updates

On February 24, 2022, City Council approved the enhanced Transit Safety Plan, described in OCM01037, which outlines a holistic set of actions to further improve safety and security in public transit spaces throughout Edmonton. Since the Transit Safety Plan was approved, Administration has been working to implement the plan through the actions outlined below.

Resourcing the Transit Safety Plan

Hiring is underway for the Director, Transit Safety position and Administration anticipates that the person will be in their role by July 2022. This role will report to the tripartite leadership committee outlined in the Transit Safety Plan, comprised of the City Manager, Police Chief and Executive Director of Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society. Once in place, the Director will regularly convene the tripartite leadership committee, advance the Memorandum of Understanding between the partners and the unified command structure model, and lead strategies and actions to further improve safety.

The additional COTT members are anticipated to be active by July 2022. Hiring is also underway to add additional coverage in the Transit Control Centre to provide better oversight from Transit Security Dispatchers - this will ensure timely responses to calls and texts received from riders through the Transit Watch program, as well as oversight for the enhanced washroom safety plan as outlined in this report.

Further to the February 2022 report, a capital project is being developed for consideration to install access control fare gates at several LRT stations to restrict access between the concourse and platform levels to fare paying riders. If funding is approved in 2022, Administration anticipates that work would begin in 2023 and be fully completed and installed by 2024. Detailed design work and assessments on the fare gate installations will need to be completed before any construction work can commence.

Washroom Update and Safety Plan

On May 2, 2022, Administration reopened 11 of the 18 recently closed transit washrooms using a phased approach which provides the opportunity to monitor and adjust as needed before reopening the remainder of the washrooms on May 30, 2022. To improve washroom safety, Administration has implemented additional controls which include enhanced oversight, enhanced cleaning and signage for drug poisoning supports and resources such as sharps containers. In addition, a washroom attendant is temporarily providing additional support at the Central LRT station washroom.

Future actions being worked on include exploring the implementation of motion detection technology which will identify the potential for a drug poisoning incident in need of emergency

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

support to the 24/7 Transit Control Centre. ETS is reviewing technology solutions and will determine a path forward by September 2022.

Transit Peace Officer and Security Guard Deployment Model Review

In addition to the above actions, a Transit Peace Officer deployment model review is being undertaken to ensure effective deployment of Transit Peace Officer teams. Calls to the Transit Control Centre have increased 400 per cent since security guards were added to the transit system. As a result of increased reporting, there has been a 54 per cent increase in events dispatched to Transit Peace Officers. As such, the demand to respond to calls for service has meant the ability for the Transit Peace Officer team to conduct crime prevention patrols has been reduced by half.

With the addition of two three-year term sergeant positions created through the Transit Safety and Security report (OCM01037), the Transit Peace Officer team was able to develop a new deployment model. The new deployment model will see 35 percent of Transit Peace Officer resources dedicated to foot patrol and COTT by July 2022, to increase their capacity for proactive patrols.

Starting May 22, 2022, Edmontonians will start to see the Transit Peace Officer foot patrol teams referred to as Transit Community Action Teams (TCAT), as a more consistent presence on the LRT and platforms throughout the transit network. These teams will consist of 11 Transit Peace Officers and will work split shifts between 7 a.m. and 1:00 a.m. Using a theory of change and evidence-based practices, TCAT will use a high-visibility and high-engagement deployment model aimed to reduce and prevent crime and disorder in assigned hot spots. Details can be found in Attachment 1 Transit Peace Officer Deployment Theory of Change. The TCAT foot patrol program was designed using existing Transit Peace Officer staffing levels, except for the addition of the two temporarily funded sergeant positions. Administration will be reviewing and evaluating the outcomes of the TCAT program.

In order to maintain a problem solving and proactive approach, Administration has been assessing evidenced-based staffing levels to meet the current and future safety needs in the transit system that includes 27.7 km of track (but when monitored for both north and southbound trains at the same time, staffing increases to 55 km of track), 25 transit centres and 18 LRT stations. For comparative insights on evidence based safety and security staffing levels, a jurisdictional scan has been completed on Transit Peace Officer authorities (Attachment 2).

As part of the Transit Peace Officer deployment model review, Administration is also reviewing the other layers of personnel support, including security guards and dispatch, in the transit safety and security framework to ensure resources are integrated and aligned with the work of Transit Peace Officers. Since the implementation of the security guard layer, conditions and challenges within the transit system have evolved and as a result a reassessment of how these resources are used is important. A preliminary analysis of the current state TPO staffing and potential future staffing models has also been undertaken. This re-evaluation will ensure that resources deployed in transit are achieving optimal safety outcomes for transit users, Edmontonians, City staff, contractors and security guards themselves.

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

In addition to the Transit Peace Officer deployment review, City Bylaw 8353 - Conduct of Transit Passengers is being assessed to ensure it is providing the proper authority for Transit Peace Officers and Edmonton Police Officers to address inappropriate conduct throughout the transit system. The intent is to ensure that Officers have appropriate tools to address disorder and ensure safety for all.

Education and Outreach

To further implement the enhanced Transit Safety Plan, Administration is undertaking a number of coordinated actions related to education and outreach.

1. **Drug poisoning prevention teams** will be added, partnering with community health resources to provide support in transit facilities and LRT stations. These teams will be in place for June - September, 2022. Together, Administration and EPS have also added more outreach and engagement activities throughout the transit system. EPS has integrated their transit presence with crime disruption and beat teams on an ad hoc basis, and coordinated with Transit Peace Officer teams.
2. **Safety information boards** will be implemented in transit centres and LRT stations to communicate safety features, reporting tools and how to use them. This initiative was highlighted by students in a MacEwan University course on Interaction Design which focused student projects on transit safety and security. The information boards will be similar to those promoting COVID-related information posted in transit stations and will be installed in June and July.
3. A **communications campaign** will begin in June, with the aim of increasing ridership by reengaging Edmontonians with transit, and emphasizing transit as a preferred choice of travel to move around as COVID-19 restrictions are lifted and normal business operations resume. This program will support the Transit Safety Plan through implementation of space activations in transit using ETS Street Team Ambassadors. This campaign is being further advanced through partnerships with multiple organizations, such as business associations, major events and city attractions.
4. An **bystander awareness campaign** for riders and a training program for transit operators to support safe intervention of safety concerns is being developed to be implemented by the end of 2022, led by ETS. While this work emerged from the *Edmonton: Safe City* community collaboration report with a focus on gender based violence, a bystander awareness campaign should address the many intersecting identities of riders that may result in them being targets of violence.

Occupational Health and Safety

As an employer, the City of Edmonton has responsibilities to keep employees safe as outlined in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) legislation and City policies. These responsibilities include ensuring employees have the skills and training needed to do their jobs safely, preventing violence and harassment in the workplace, informing employees about hazards they may encounter while performing work, setting up safe work practices, providing safety equipment and meeting requirements under the OHS Code. In order to meet these obligations, the City must

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

assess hazards and risks by occupation and task, and apply effective controls to reduce risks to a reasonable level.

With increased disorder in transit spaces, job-related hazards have significantly changed for employees and contractors working in these spaces over the last two years. Employees in transit spaces include transit operators, Transit Peace Officers, tradespersons and custodial employees. In addition, security guards and some custodial resources are contracted to provide service in these spaces. Administration continues to review and update hazard assessments and related action plans to ensure the control measures intended to address physical and psychological health and safety are effective. Administration has also engaged employees to gather information and discuss safety-related issues through activities such as focus groups, job shadowing, one-on-one discussions and team meetings. Some of the control measures established to mitigate identified risks include working in pairs for enhanced situational awareness; security guard patrols to deter problematic behaviour, respond to drug poisoning incidents, and report disorder incidents to the transit control centre; increased Transit Peace Officer patrols for greater enforcement and to deter security disorder; CCTV cameras for monitoring and post incident investigation; and standardized and consistent trauma peer response support for injury management.

Administration has re-evaluated risk levels in hazard assessments and controls. The current reliance on administrative controls and emergency response measures does not adequately meet the standard of safety for City workspaces. Any serious risks need to be eliminated or an engineered solution as well as administrative controls and personal protective equipment (PPE) to bring the residual risk to an acceptable level (low-moderate, or low). While physical violence hazards remain the most serious risk level, psychological risk is the most prevalent risk in transit workspaces. The most serious risks are unprovoked violence; fatigue due to the increased mental task load of maintaining safety awareness and vigilance when trying to complete a task; stress and erosion of mental health due to continual exposure to drug and alcohol use and associated effects; responding to drug poisoning incidents in transit spaces; and stress due to swearing, yelling, threatening, racial slurs, aggressive posturing, unpredictable behaviours and bodily fluids in the work area or towards employees.

Due to an escalation in safety incidents and employee disclosures to the Government of Alberta's Occupational Health and Safety Contact Centre, Administration is conducting an Employee Safety Analysis to verify the effectiveness of the existing controls and actions taken. This activity is ongoing and will be concluded by June 2022. To date, early analysis indicates that hazard controls are falling short of legislative obligations to mitigate identified risks to employees who work in transit spaces regularly. Administrative controls (that change the way people work) do not eliminate the hazards of crime and disorder that staff face every day in these spaces.

Additional control measures to support employee health and safety need to be added and are suggested in Attachment 3, including:

1. Elimination of open drug use in City owned and operated facilities.
2. Active hazard management to remove risks from public spaces.

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

3. Reinforce the need for proof of payment when using transit service.
4. Revisit the duties of security guards related to Occupational Health and Safety requirements on transit property as outlined in the Transit Peace Officer and Security Guard Deployment Model review underway.
5. Prioritize the employee experience by continuing to engage employees on working conditions via a hazard assessment process, and utilize the Joint Health and Safety Committees to provide another forum to share employees experience.
6. Establish key performance metrics to monitor and measure performance related to Occupational Health and Safety.

Early insights from Administration's Employee Safety Analysis also include:

- On a city-wide basis, approximately 624 incidents (191 on or nearby transit property) of violence and severe disorderly behaviour were reported through the corporate reporting system from December 2020 to December 2021. Approximately 20 per cent (129) of these reports resulted in injury.
- During a similar time period, approximately 120 incidents (defined as incidents less severe than those identified through the corporate reporting system) on or nearby transit property were reported through an informal process (to-date, approximately 170 incidents have been identified overall).

Based on employee interviews, incidents have been under-reported due to the high volume of disorderly activity in transit work spaces, and the time and effort required to report incidents in addition to effectively delivering daily tasks. This has led to employees reporting only significant incidents, and under-reporting daily or frequent occurrences. Administration has taken immediate action to improve reporting and has communicated that employees have the right to refuse work when conditions are unsafe.

The implementation of the TCAT program and Transit Peace Officer resources dedicated to foot patrol will address the need to reduce and prevent crime and disorder in these spaces where staff work. Administration will continue to evaluate that these measures effectively mitigate the hazards and monitor the trend in incidents reported.

Budget/Financial Implications

As part of reviewing the Transit Peace Officer deployment models, Administration is able to submit an unfunded service package for 2023-2026 budget deliberations if directed by City Council to do so.

As part of preparing for the 2023-2026 budget deliberations, Administration is preparing an unfunded capital profile related to installing fare payment gates as access control for LRT platform areas in some stations for Council consideration.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Edmontonians have continued to share their feedback through numerous channels through formal surveys, input to 311, social media and direct correspondence with City Council. Themes

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

include concerns for personal safety and security, identification of social issues impacting feelings of safety as well as requests for additional safety measures.

In the next three months, Administration will update research with Edmontonians who are not using transit to assess levers that would help them consider transit use in the future.

In May to June 2021, Administration conducted a survey of 400 Edmontonians who had not used transit in the past 24 months or had used the service infrequently. 91 per cent of respondents indicated they had used transit at some point in the past, and of these former riders, only 1 per cent indicated they had stopped using transit as a result of safety or security concerns. When considering factors that would increase their likelihood of using transit, 22 per cent of respondents indicated safety and security enhancements would positively contribute to their transit use. However, this was the sixth top suggested enhancement.

GBA+

To further advance the City's understanding of diverse community perspectives on transit safety, Administration completed GBA+ engagement in the fall and winter of 2021. This report provides a summary of the methodology, what was heard from participants and recommendations that align with the Transit Safety Plan.

GBA+ Engagement on Transit Safety and Security

Transit safety and security approaches must be advanced in a manner that is meaningful and impactful for Edmontonians. To ensure this occurs, it is essential that Administration hears the diverse and intersectional perspectives from the community. Between September 2021 and March 2022, Administration completed GBA+ engagement on transit safety, as previously identified as a next step in advancing the transit safety framework. This work leveraged the diverse and intersectional perspectives of participants to identify root causes of safety and security challenges, as well as to consider the effectiveness of safety and security improvements made over the past several years.

The GBA+ engagement involved hearing from a diverse range of voices, including internal stakeholders, civic boards and community members. City employees working in transit spaces, EPS and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society representatives were also included. Civic boards included the Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton, Accessibility Advisory Committee and the Edmonton Transit System Advisory Board. Community participants included a group of Muslim women coordinated with the Islamic Family and Social Services Association, high school students, the Seniors Coordinating Council and social agencies participating in the Providing Accessible Transportation Here (PATH) program.

A mixed methods approach was used for this qualitative study, and included focus groups and individual interviews with riders and non-riders, and conducting a survey of social agencies and civic boards. Participants were asked to reflect on safety and security issues surrounding transit, causes of the issues, and ways to address them, considering changes made over the past several years. The research findings are summarized in Attachment 4 and were shared with participants in a reporting back session in February 2022. The purpose of this session was to validate findings

TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY INTERIM UPDATE

with the participants, engage in additional discussion and inform recommendations. Leaders from Administration and EPS attended the session to directly hear the community feedback.

Several themes emerged from what was shared; and were categorized as operations, societal and coordinated:

- **Operational themes** relate to how the City designs service operations to ensure a safe environment for all. This includes providing accessible and well maintained infrastructure; providing appropriate enforcement approaches; reflecting on the role of transit Operators; enhancing technology for monitoring and reporting; and the impact of transit routes and schedules to the riders' journey and perceptions of safety.
- **Societal themes** relate to broader social issues which may be the root causes of transit safety challenges. These include the increasing presence of marginalized populations in transit spaces who should have greater support; racism, prejudice and discrimination in the community impacting diverse groups of riders; crime and disorder in the community; and the pandemic's impacts on perceptions of safety.
- **Coordinated themes** represent an intersection of operational and social issues, where stakeholders must work together to address root causes and enhance operations to respond. This includes greater collaboration and coordination between stakeholders, and enhanced communication and engagement with the community.

Emerging from this engagement is a set of recommendations grounded in community perspectives, as summarized in Attachment 5. These recommendations largely align with the Transit Safety Plan and implementation activities are underway to support each item. The recommendations provide a framework that Administration can continually revisit to confirm what has been completed and develop new activities to continue advancing this work.

ATTACHMENTS

- Attachment 1: Transit Peace Officer Deployment Theory of Change
- Attachment 2: Jurisdictional Scan of Transit Peace Officer Authorities and Staffing Levels
- Attachment 3: Hierarchy of Controls, Risk Rating and OHS Recommendations
- Attachment 4: Transit Safety & Security GBA+ Engagement Findings
- Attachment 5: Transit Safety & Security GBA+ Engagement Recommendations