

TRANSIT SAFETY PLAN - EXPANDING THE MODEL

RECOMMENDATION

That the June 13, 2022, Community Services report CS01135, be received for information.

Report Purpose

Information only.

Administration is providing Committee with information on the current level of support and how resources are being reallocated to improve safety and support for business improvement areas.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the February 22/24, 2022, City Council meeting the following motion passed:

That Administration work with the Edmonton Police Service, Transit Officers, Peace Officers and Community Partners as to determine resource requirements of expanding the model similar to that outlined within the Transit Safety Plan throughout the Downtown core, including but not limited to the Chinatown, Jasper Avenue, and 124 Street area, to address safety and well-being and return to Community and Public Services Committee.

Executive Summary

- In response to public safety challenges, on June 9, 2022 the City launched Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan. With a focus on Downtown, including Chinatown and transit spaces, the plan outlines sixteen actions that support and strengthen public safety.
- Ongoing work includes funding, encampment response, waste collection, needle pickup, general cleaning, day services for the vulnerable, proactive enforcement work, collaboration with partners and future planning.

REPORT

During the February 22/24, 2022 City Council meeting, Administration brought forward the Transit Safety and Security report (OCM01037), resulting in a conversation about building on the success of the Community Outreach Transit Team (COTT). Administration was directed to determine resource requirements for expanding the model into the Downtown core in an effort

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to address safety concerns in the community while being compassionate and understanding with surrounding socially vulnerable neighbourhoods.

Community-wide and downtown approaches

Since the February motion was tabled, City Council has made significant decisions and allocated funding to address concerns in specific business areas and Administration has adjusted service levels temporarily in the Chinatown and Downtown areas. As the Transit Safety and Security Plan is actively implemented, stakeholders are providing feedback on what is working and what can be improved for a coordinated and compassionate response.

Within the past year, Administration has responded to changing conditions Downtown, in Chinatown, and across the public transit network. In response to public safety challenges, on June 9, 2022 the City launched Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit System Safety Plan (Attachment 1). With a focus on Downtown, including Chinatown and transit spaces, the plan outlines sixteen actions that strengthen public safety, such as:

- Identifying the need for a Healthy Streets Operations Centre
- Increasing Peace Officer presence
- Amending the Conduct of Transit Passengers Bylaw
- Increasing response to encampments and Problem Properties
- Funding business security and community recovery
- Installing temporary public washrooms
- Completing Safety Audits
- Increasing cleaning in parks, roads and alleys
- Funding opioid prevention and response
- Increasing communications and co-ordination with businesses and social agencies

In May 2022, the Edmonton Police Service started Phase I of Project Connection, with focus on increased police visibility in Alberta Avenue, Chinatown, the Downtown core and the transit system. At Phase III of Project Connection, beginning in September 2022, Administration and Edmonton Police Service (EPS), along with community partners, will have multidisciplinary community safety teams in place, targeted to high priority areas (Attachment 2).

The enhanced focus on safety in these areas is anticipated to have some spillover effect on nearby businesses and communities. Administration will monitor progress for consideration of scalability to other business improvement areas and socially vulnerable neighbourhoods. An upcoming report, CS01174 - Mutual Aid Organizations, will outline current grassroots community supports to Community and Public Services on June 27, 2022.

Future possibilities for the business areas include potential relief through intergovernmental advocacy efforts and possible RECOVER Urban Well Being Auricle or Soloss projects in the fall of 2022.

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As this work progresses, learnings will help determine an appropriate course of action for business and commercial areas beyond Chinatown and the downtown core.

Budget/Financial Implications

At the May 24/27, 2022, City Council meeting, through the Office of the City Manager report OCM00991 Community Safety and Well-being Strategy, City Council approved funding to increase the City Manager's Office budget to \$300,000 in order to help Chinatown businesses with enhanced security monitoring.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

As part of the Community Safety and Well-being work, Administration is demonstrating its commitment to be a relationship-based organization and is working with stakeholders including business owners, cultural associations, and organizations supporting vulnerable people to understand and address the complexity of the social challenges.

Administration consulted with the Edmonton Police Service and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society for feedback in regards to this specific motion. Through discussions with other orders of government, City Council and Administration will continue to use their collective voices to amplify requests for supports for economic recovery, homelessness, mental health, drug poisoning and reconciliation.

As an example of a specific advocacy opportunity, stakeholders in Chinatown indicated that several of the current pressures may be an impact of current provincial and federal discharge and release processes from the health system and criminal justice systems, without confirmed accommodations. Both Council and Administration are bringing forward these specific observations to the federal and provincial governments, suggesting reviews of health and corrections/remand operational procedures. As an additional example of intergovernmental partnership and information sharing, the provincial government's Coordinated Community Response to Homelessness Task Force is planning a pilot program to be delivered in summer 2022.

GBA+

When considering safety and security, it is important to ask "for who?". There is a larger ecosystem of habits, behaviours and attitudes that extend generation over generation in relation to what is safe, orderly and appropriate and there are different relationships with enforcement from culture to culture.

With Edmonton's diverse population and how different people use the same shared spaces, it becomes a challenge to address multiple different needs which may appear, at initial assessment, as contradictory. In business areas, the specialization of products and services may be planned to attract specific clientele in order to create a sense of community and belonging, and improve connections - examples are Chinatown and Viva Italia.

There is a disproportionate representation of Indigenous and racialized peoples in the justice system. The lack of supportive resources and services creates further marginalization as those

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released are not given the supports they need and are left unsheltered. In addition, Indigenous peoples continue to be disproportionately represented among people experiencing homelessness, due to various factors including lack of access to safe, affordable, and culturally appropriate housing, and experiences of intergenerational trauma, systemic racism and discrimination. While Administration is working on understanding the impacts, it is a journey of unlearning and undoing over a hundred years of practices and planning, which will take significant effort.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Edmonton's Downtown Core and Transit Safety Plan
2. Project Connection