

EDMONTON METROPOLITAN TRANSIT SERVICES COMMISSION - PHASE ONE SERVICE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

RECOMMENDATION

That Executive Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That the City of Edmonton proceed to contribute to the Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Service Commission Phase One Service Plan.
2. That Administration prepare an unfunded service package for the Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission Phase One Service Plan, as outlined in the September 7, 2022, City Operations report CO01179, for consideration during the 2023-2026 budget deliberations.

Requested Council Action	Decision required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED	Urban Places		
City Plan Values	ACCESS		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	A community of communities	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Mobility Network
Corporate Business Plan	Serving Edmontonians		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Transit Service Policy C539A ● Edmonton Transit Service Fare Policy C451H 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● February 19, 2020: Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development report, CR_7974 Regional Transit Services Commission Submission - Decision ● February 15, 2022: Urban Planning and Economy report, UPE00342 Mass Transit: Planning for 1.25 Million People ● March 14, 2022: Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission report, EXT01055 Regional Transit Service Commission Update 		

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Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 14/16/22, 2022, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report with a summary of the Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission phase one service plan and operational analysis of the plan's impacts on:

1. ETS transit network, neighbourhoods served and transit riders, including a Gender Based Analysis;
2. ETS transit ridership and fare revenue;
3. City of Edmonton transit fleet, equipment and other related assets;
4. the City's workforce; and
5. the ETS branch operating budget, to inform Council decision-making and the City of Edmonton's 2023-2026 operating budget.

Executive Summary

- The City Plan envisions a vibrant and prosperous city with an integrated transportation network, providing residents with convenient and equitable options while attracting investment and providing access to businesses throughout the region and the larger Alberta economy.
- The Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission (the Commission) developed a transit service plan for phase one of regional transit operations, targeted to begin in April 2023. The plan proposes new regional routes in Edmonton, as an overlay onto existing local service provided by ETS, which would require direct funding for the new service hours.
- It is estimated that the City contribution is \$7.2M plus indirect costs, including a base fee and debt repayment; these expenditures would have a partial offset from fare revenue and partial offset through cost recovery for service delivery provided by Edmonton.
- Council could consider supporting this plan through a budget that adds new service rather than redeploying existing services from Edmonton. Such a service plan would require a contribution from Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) which is estimated to cost \$7.2 million in direct service hour costs, or the equivalent of 1,253 weekly service hours. The total cost of the City of Edmonton's contribution, considering direct service hour costs, base fee, debt repayment fee, overhead charges and fare revenue is unknown at this time and will be confirmed after the Commission's October 2022 board meeting.
- In the original business case, efficiencies from the service plan were to offset the overhead costs and pay for debt accumulated during the Commission's operations. In the revised service plan, these efficiencies are no longer achieved, given the redesign reallocated some of the service efficiencies.
- A motion was passed at the February 19, 2020, City Council meeting providing the City of Edmonton's support for the establishment of a regional transit Commission. However, the

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financial commitment from the City of Edmonton and details of how the Commission would be supported operationally requires Council direction.

REPORT

Public transit is an essential service and critical component of transportation mode shift and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set out in The City Plan. As discussed in Urban Planning and Economy report UPE00342, Mass Transit Planning for 1.25 Million People, on February 15, 2022, The City Plan envisions a vibrant and prosperous city with an integrated transportation network, providing residents with convenient and equitable options. A robust transit system is foundational to a transportation network, including an evolved mass transit network that supports mobility and connects all areas of the city.

Public transit is important for the future success of the Edmonton Metropolitan Region. In 2016, the “Be Ready or Be Left Behind” report, Attachment 1, commissioned by the Metro Mayors Alliance made up of Mayors representing 95 per cent of the region’s population, identified effective inter-regional mass transit as one of three fundamental elements of a globally competitive Edmonton Metropolitan Region. Accordingly, the report recommended the creation of a regional transit entity (which became the Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission) to deliver core regional public transit across the region. The transit entity would work in parallel with a new regional economic development agency (which became Edmonton Global) and a structure to carry out regional land use planning and regional infrastructure development (which became the Edmonton Metropolitan Region Board). Furthermore, the report emphasized the need to focus on commuter corridors that enable the smooth flow of people between municipalities and enhance mobility throughout the Metro Region. In addition to work undertaken to support the Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission, there are long-standing partnerships between municipalities in the region to support regional transit objectives and enable mobility.

ETS delivers over 44,000 hours of transit service each week, across conventional bus and Light Rail Transit (LRT). In addition, ETS delivers on demand transit as well as paratransit service. Transit service has many societal benefits: reducing social isolation, generating significant economic outcomes and connecting people to employment, education, recreation and essential services.

The Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission (the Commission) developed a regional transit service plan for phase one of operations, targeted to begin in April 2023. The plan proposes new regional routes in Edmonton, as an overlay onto existing local service provided by ETS and would require direct funding for the new service hours. If Council does not choose to provide a direct financial contribution towards this plan, reducing service hours from the ETS network to reallocate to the Commission’s plan could be considered. Should Council choose to support the service plan by reallocating transit service hours from ETS to the Commission’s plan, Administration’s analysis assumes a reduction of service hours from the ETS network, including regional airport and local transit service hours. In this scenario, tradeoffs may need to be

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considered in order to demonstrate expanded support for regional objectives and ongoing membership.

Commission Background

In 2018, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was signed by elected officials from the City of St. Albert and the City of Edmonton to look into creating a regional commission model for public transit service. That MOU also led to securing a provincial grant that assisted the development of a business case. In 2019, a total of 13 municipalities from the region agreed to be part of developing the business case (Attachment 2).

In total, eight municipalities including the City of Fort Saskatchewan, City of Spruce Grove, City of Leduc, City of Beaumont, Town of Stony Plain, Town of Devon, City of St. Albert and the City of Edmonton agreed to move forward to create a regional transit commission. In June 2020, the business case was updated (Attachment 3) to include the total service hour contribution from each participant, cost allocation and associated financial analysis. The history of the formation of the Commission and operational analysis of the business case is included in Attachment 4.

The financial commitment from the City of Edmonton and details of how the Commission would be supported operationally requires Council direction to determine next steps and inform the Commission's planning process, the City of Edmonton's 2023-2026 budget process and the 2023 ETS Annual Service Plan.

Phase One Regional Transit Service Plan

The Commission has approved a service plan for phase one of operations for conventional bus service, (Attachment 5). The plan includes a contribution from the City of Edmonton equivalent to 1,253 weekly service hours which is estimated to cost \$7.2 million annually in direct service hour costs. The calculation supporting the \$7.2 million City of Edmonton contribution is shown in Attachment 5. This is the equivalent of three per cent of the ETS annual funded service hours for conventional bus service.

1. Edmonton's Transit Network Impacts

Current State

Before analyzing the impacts of the proposed service plan, the City of Edmonton currently shares investments in regional transit to contribute to shared regional outcomes in several areas, including:

Regional Airport Service: The Airport Accord facilitated the development of cost sharing for the airport transit service, reflecting the principles of shared investment for shared benefit among the City of Leduc, Leduc County, Edmonton International Airport and the City of Edmonton. Route 747 is operated by ETS and provides a direct link between the airport and one of the Edmonton metropolitan region's busiest transit centres at Century Park.

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ETS as Service Delivery Provider: ETS currently provides service to support regional service objectives. For example, ETS operates regional service for Fort Saskatchewan and Spruce Grove. In the past, ETS was also the service provider for Beaumont and for a transit service pilot in Devon.

Trip Planning: Information is shared to support seamless trip planning across the region for transit riders. In support of Arc, the regional partners made a shared investment to install Smart Bus technology that has GPS tracking for buses, enabling further integrated trip planning for transit riders. This means riders can travel across the region accessing trip planning information using a common trip planning application, such as Google Maps or Transit app.

Access Agreements: To enable a smooth transit rider experience across all regional transit services, operating agreements are in place to provide access to bus stops and stations to regional municipalities as well as with third-party transportation providers to provide connections outside of the region.

Analysis

Opening Day Service Plan Elements

Eleven regional routes are outlined as part of the Commission's phase one service plan; more details including an outline of ridership impact are in Attachment 6. If supported as an additional layer of service rather than a redeployment of Edmonton service, some of these routes would increase service on these corridors.

- Regional Express 1 - Stony Plain/Spruce Grove to NAIT, Government Centre, Kingsway
- Rapid 1 - St. Albert Exchange, Nakî Transit Centre, Kingsway, Government Centre
- Regional Express 2 - Nakî Transit Centre, NAIT, Government Centre
- Regional Express 4 - St. Albert Exchange, Nakî Transit Centre, Westmount, University of Alberta
- Crosstown Express 1 - Clareview, Northgate, Nakî Transit Centre, West Edmonton Mall (referred to as an overlay route by the Commission)
- Regional Express 3 - Eaux Claire, Northgate, Government Centre (referred to as an overlay route by the Commission)
- Rapid 2 - Lewis Farms, West Edmonton Mall, University of Alberta, Government Centre (referred to as an overlay route by the Commission)
- Fort Saskatchewan Express - Fort Saskatchewan, Clareview
- Beaumont Express - Edmonton International Airport, Beaumont, Mill Woods
- Leduc / Airport Express - Leduc, Edmonton International Airport, Century Park
- Devon Express - Devon, Lewis Farms

In addition to these regional routes, the service plan includes the existing local routes within other member municipalities.

Mass Transit Plan Alignment

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Mass transit elements in The City Plan are anchored by nodes and travel along corridors where land use has the potential to densify. Mobility hubs are key nodes that support the critical functions in a regional transportation system as the origin, destination or transfer point for a significant number of trips. The alignment of the Commission's service plan to Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes outlined in the mass transit plan was reviewed. Overall, the Commission's routes will serve as express routes, similar to ETS routes 920X and 120X. BRT, as outlined in the mass transit plan, includes adding BRT stations, lane conversions, transit priority measures and different service levels to meet bus rapid transit standards related to having dedicated roadway lanes for bus use. While route Rapid 2 corresponds to the west portion of Mass Transit Route B2, it does not serve Whyte Avenue, which is a critical segment of future route B2. Similarly, route Regional Express 3 corresponds to the north portion of Mass Transit Route B1; it does not travel along the Calgary Trail / Gateway Boulevard portion of route B1. As the City develops BRT service standards, there may be an opportunity to revisit the Commission's service plan to achieve greater alignment.

Network Analysis

Transit service decisions are typically guided by service policies and service standards to outline how the network and service is designed and delivered. For ETS, service standards are outlined in City Policy and Administrative Procedure C539A - Transit Service Policy, and include things like route types, frequencies and walking distances, as well as metrics to review service delivery, such as boardings per hour. To date, the phase one service plan does not reference service standards.

The Commission's network includes desired nodes of Park and Ride locations, post secondary institutions such as the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology (NAIT), MacEwan and the University of Alberta and regional transit centres with very few transfers. With minimal transfers, there may be tradeoffs related to lower ridership, as an example. The increased distances between stops will make for relatively faster journeys with the additional tradeoff of increasing walking distance to bus stops. This impact would be mitigated by maintaining underlying ETS service on common corridors.

The proposed Leduc / Airport Express is intended to replace the ETS route 747 (EIA - Century Park Shuttle) and Leduc Transit Route 1 (Leduc - Century Park) by combining the service. The proposed routing means that travel from the airport to Century Park in the morning peak requires travelling through Leduc first. In the afternoon peak, there is direct service from Century Park to the airport hourly. Access to the airport for people travelling opposite of peak travel times, such as late night shift workers, will travel through Leduc before heading to Edmonton.

The proposed Rapid 2 is intended to follow the routing of the ETS 920X (Lewis Farms - University) with an extension from University to Government Centre. The Commission has indicated that Rapid 2 is intended to operate at service levels similar to the ETS route 920X.

The proposed Regional Express 3 route provides express service between Eaux Claire and Government Centre via Jasper Avenue. The Commission has indicated that Regional Express 3 is

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intended to operate at service levels similar to the ETS route 120X (Eaux Claire - Government Centre).

The Crosstown Express 1 provides local service between West Edmonton Mall and Naki along the same roads as the St. Albert Route 205. Connecting Naki, Northgate, and Clareview via express service on Mark Messier Trail and 137 Avenue. Crosstown Express 1 is expected to have hourly service.

Cost Allocation

The Commission has estimated ridership for these routes at a high level, however the scope of analysis did not include detailed ridership forecasting. When comparing ridership between ETS and regional routes, the Commission has shared that ridership expectations are lower on regional services, and therefore the cost recovery is also lower. The Commission's ridership estimates for these four routes are as follows:

- Regional Express 3 = 5,000 rides per week
- Rapid 2 = 3,000 rides per week
- Crosstown Express 1 = 5,000 rides per week
- Leduc / Airport Express = 7,000 rides per week

The regional transit service plan includes a proposed cost allocation to Edmonton on a route-by-route basis, as a portion of the total weekly service hours provided:

- 10 per cent of costs for the Regional Express 1, Rapid 1, Regional Express 2, Regional Express 4 and Beaumont Express;
- 25 per cent for the Leduc/Edmonton International Airport Express;
- 45 per cent of the costs for the Crosstown Express 1; and
- 100 per cent for the Regional Express 3 and Rapid 2.

Through this cost allocation, the City of Edmonton will contribute to service across the region, while also increasing service within Edmonton's boundaries. Attachment 6 provides details on the cost allocation and the City's \$7.2 million annual contribution. Some routes are proposed to receive service enhancements through increased frequencies and new connections, such as a connection from Beaumont to the Edmonton International Airport.

Neighbourhood Impacts

Neighbourhood impacts related to the service plan are outlined on a route-by-route basis in Attachment 6.

2. Fare and Revenue Impacts

Current State

There are several areas of shared regional investment for transit faring, including:

Fare Payment Technology: Arc is the regional transit fare payment system, with a shared investment from Strathcona County, City of St. Albert, City of Leduc, City of Beaumont, City of

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Spruce Grove, City of Fort Saskatchewan and City of Edmonton. The implementation of this smart fare payment technology will provide a more seamless, easy to use system that is integrated and consistent across the region. Arc was rolled out to U-Pass riders in September 2021, and will continue to be rolled out to additional rider groups in a phased and regionally coordinated approach through the Arc regional governance model.

Regional Fare Capping: With the Arc system, the Edmonton region will be the first in Canada to offer regional fare capping. This shared regional investment means the same fare capping rules will apply for the entire regional network, which will greatly enhance the transit rider experience in the region. From a rider journey perspective, when a rider meets the monthly cap for their home municipality, they will not pay additional fare when travelling in other regional municipalities.

Fare Reciprocity: Arc is the interface used by riders to pay transit fares, and behind the system are the fare policies and structures. Fare reciprocity refers to the extent to which transit agencies recognize each others' fares to allow riders to travel multiple systems (St. Albert Transit, ETS and Strathcona County Transit) with little or no additional cost. There is fare reciprocity today in the region with ETS through bilateral regional agreements, and this reciprocity will continue under the Arc system. Regional fare capping is one additional aspect of regional fare reciprocity.

Regional U-Pass Agreement: U-Pass is another example of regional collaboration and shared investment. This allows post-secondary students attending the University of Alberta, MacEwan University, NAIT and Norquest College to access unlimited travel in the region for the participating municipalities: the City of St. Albert, City of Fort Saskatchewan, City of Spruce Grove, City and County of Leduc, City of Beaumont and Strathcona County. A regional working committee between the participating municipalities and post-secondary institutions collectively maintains the program, and a contract agreement is signed by all participants.

Analysis

The Commission is in the early stages of developing a faring plan for opening day service. The preliminary approach proposed is to operate each municipality's current fare structures on the routes the municipalities have been allocated through the cost allocation model. This means:

- ETS fare structure would apply on Rapid 2 and Regional Express 3;
- St. Albert Transit fare structure would apply on Rapid 1, Regional Express 2 and Regional Express 4
- Spruce Grove Transit fare structure would apply on Regional Express 1;
- Fort Saskatchewan Transit fare structure would apply on the Fort Saskatchewan Express;
- Beaumont Transit fare structure would apply on the Beaumont Express;
- The current Route 747 fare structure would apply on the Leduc / EIA Express;
- A new fare structure would be developed by Devon for the Devon Express.

The Commission has proposed that fare revenue from each route be allocated back to each municipality in accordance with the cost allocation model. It is unclear what fare structure would

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apply on routes that are shared equally by multiple municipalities, such as Crosstown Express 1 which would be funded by Edmonton, St. Albert and Fort Saskatchewan. Fare revenue estimates for each route have not yet been confirmed; however, this information will be included in the October 2022 Commission Board of Directors meeting.

3. Fleet, Equipment and Asset Impacts

Current State

The ETS fleet currently includes 942 buses, which incorporates 838 forty foot buses, including 60 battery electric buses, 55 articulated sixty foot buses and 49 thirty foot buses. In addition to the bus itself, each vehicle includes significant capital investment in supporting equipment such as Arc payment validators, Smart Bus equipment, Mobile Data Terminals, surveillance cameras, radios and retractable Operator shields.

Analysis

Transit service hour funding includes calculations for fleet usage, transit operators and related service needs such as fuel costs. The annual service hour contribution requested from the City of Edmonton requires approximately 26 buses. Should the Commission want to own the fleet and related assets directly, it is unlikely to be achieved in the proposed timeline for service commencement. The fleet and equipment-related impacts may be partially mitigated by entering into a service delivery agreement with the Commission that outlines the fleet and equipment remain property of the City of Edmonton.

4. Workforce Impacts

Current State

The ETS workforce currently includes approximately 2,100 employees, including more than 1,700 Operators who deliver bus and LRT service. ETS relies on direct support from other branches for daily service delivery as well as shared services across the corporation. Direct service delivery supports include:

- Maintenance of the conventional bus and paratransit fleet by Fleet and Facility Services. These personnel include 365 Heavy Equipment Technicians, Body technicians, service people, cleaners, forepersons and supervisors;
- Deployment of Transit Peace Officers by Community Standards and Neighbourhoods.
- Provision of security guards by Corporate Security;
- Application intake for the Ride Transit program by Community Recreation and Culture;
- Coordination of Community Outreach Transit Teams (COTT) and program administration of Providing Accessible Transit Here (PATH) and Donate-a-Ride by Social Development.

Shared services support is provided by Employee Services, Financial and Corporate Services, Communications and Engagement and Integrated Infrastructure Services departments, as well as the Legal Services branch.

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Analysis

To deliver the weekly 1,253 service hours, the workforce plan would include:

- 44 Transit Operators
- 8 Transit Fleet Maintenance staff

Should Council choose to contribute to the plan by transferring service hours from the ETS network, engagement with union partners and staff as well as change management would be required. In this scenario, should the Commission choose to employ these positions directly, it is unlikely to be completed in the proposed timeline. Workforce impacts may be partially mitigated by entering into a service delivery agreement with the Commission. This would mean that existing City of Edmonton employees in these roles could remain employees of the City and deliver regional service through a service contract between ETS and the Commission.

Other Considerations

COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted public transit globally, including the Edmonton region. In March 2020, transit ridership in Edmonton dropped to under 30 per cent of normal levels. Transit services were adjusted, responding to changes in ridership demand as well as challenges associated with health and safety impacts on staff and riders. ETS has been delivering full service levels and transit ridership is gradually recovering to pre-pandemic levels. By ensuring a safe, convenient and reliable transit rider experience, ridership is expected to fully recover in 2024.

ETS's focus for recovery and growth has been on service-related ridership levers, such as providing a more direct and frequent network, ensuring service reliability and incorporating ways to better integrate with other active modes of transportation, like allowing bikes on LRT. These rider-focused efforts are supported by continuing work to improve transit safety and security, implement smart fare payment technology solutions and improve the condition of the transit fleet through enhanced cleaning and fleet renewal initiatives.

The Commission has adjusted the phase one service plan compared to the business case in recognition, in part, of the impacts of the pandemic. This has resulted in a lower level of contribution from Edmonton aligned to a new layer of service.

Bus Network Redesign

With the implementation of the bus network redesign and On Demand Transit service in 2021, transit service in Edmonton has undergone significant change. The original Regional Transit Services Commission business case was created before the bus network redesign was implemented and, since that time, the redesign harvested some of the efficiencies identified in the original business case. The revised service plan from the Commission contemplates the current ETS network.

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As a transfer-based, high frequency network with more direct and crosstown routes, the new bus network uses existing resources more efficiently, redeploying all available service hours, operators and fleet. There was no growth in service hours and no fleet added as part of the network redesign. Edmonton is now one of five municipalities in Canada with a high frequency corridor for transit service. ETS is also delivering the largest on demand public transit service in Canada, serving hard-to-reach areas with lower ridership, seniors residences, and newer neighbourhoods which previously did not have access to transit service.

Since its implementation, hundreds of adjustments have been made based on ongoing feedback and community insights. ETS makes changes five times per year to align service levels to demand and seasonal fluctuations. Each year, an Annual Service Plan is also released to share key performance metrics, identify planned service changes and highlight service-related improvements that will take place throughout the year. ETS has service typologies with specific service standards (e.g. hours of service, ridership, minimum service frequencies) as approved by Council in policy C539 guiding the deployment of service hours.

The City Plan and Mass Transit

Administration is advancing several pieces of work to activate The City Plan as it relates to transit, including elements outlined in the Mass Transit Plan. The critical success factors identified in the report included focus areas related to mass transit priority such as the reallocation of existing road right-of-way in order to create dedicated transit right-of-way and the introduction of transit priority measures. The Mass Transit Plan also flagged that filling network gaps and parallel corridors are a priority. Lastly, the Mass Transit plan also highlights the need for Bus Rapid Transit as well as bus-based connection to the airport, and identifies the need to transition the ETS fleet to low carbon options in support of climate goals.

Through creating additional service along several mass transit corridors, the Commission's plan aligns with ETS to set the stage for work to create Bus Rapid Transit service along these corridors.

These factors - the pandemic, the new bus network, and the approval and activation of The City Plan - have shifted the landscape for ETS service.

5. Budget/Financial Implications

Based on the City's current understanding, the Commission will submit annual invoices to each participating municipality for contributions. There are two components of the annual contribution: a base fee and a regional service allocation. The base fee was contemplated in the business case to be \$2 million annually for the City of Edmonton, and served as an annual fee for being part of the Commission. The regional service allocation will include the following:

- Direct costs for service hours (such as fuel for the fleet and compensation for staff delivering the service);
- Plus indirect costs for supporting the Commission's overhead expenditures (such as staffing and office space);
- Plus costs to repay the debt from the line of credit financing for startup costs;

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- Less fare revenue allocated to the municipality, and offset further by any service delivery contract agreement in excess of ETS' current regional service delivery contracts.

The regional transit service plan includes Edmonton contributing 65,130 service hours annually (equivalent to 1,253 service hours per week), which represents 48 per cent of the regional network and equates to \$7.2 million. This service hour cost is one component of the fee structure for the Commission. The Commission has not yet finalized the additional costs related to operational overhead (such as staff and office space), debt repayment for the Commission's line of credit financing, base fee or revenue assumptions. These are expected to be shared with Administration in October 2022.

As a result, the total financial contribution requested from the City of Edmonton is unknown at this time. Indirect costs and debt repayment servicing costs are new items that were not contemplated in the business case, and would require consideration for tax levy support during the 2023-2026 operating budget deliberations. In the business case, efficiencies from the service plan were to offset the overhead costs and pay for debt accumulated during the Commission's operations. In the revised service plan, these efficiencies are no longer achieved.

As noted in the "Be Ready or Be Left Behind" report, Edmonton, St. Albert and Strathcona County provide more than 95% of transit in the region; the most efficient and cost effective regional transit system is achieved when all three are included.

Following Council's direction for the City of Edmonton's contribution for funding direct and indirect costs, as well as the base fee, Administration can prepare an unfunded service package for the 2023-2026 operating budget deliberations, which will include total funding need for the Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission service plan for phase one of the regional transit operations, and will incorporate the direction into the 2023 ETS Annual Service Plan.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

- The Commission recently completed public engagement as part of developing the phase one service plan. This included a survey that was completed by 782 people in the region. Of these participants, 42.5 per cent live in Edmonton. Feedback from participants was consistent with previous ETS-led research; Edmontonians want more direct, express, frequent service as well as more off-peak service. Among Edmontonians who responded, 35.5 per cent were woman-identified; 53.5 per cent were male-identified; 25.5 per cent were a visible minority; 5 per cent were Indigenous; 3 per cent were seniors; 22 per cent were students and 17.7 per cent were youth.
- More than 40,000 Edmontonians provided input into the Transit Strategy and Bus Network Redesign (BNR). Edmontonians clearly voiced what they need for a network with frequent, safe, convenient and reliable transit service. Extensive discussions were held about the tradeoffs required to achieve the bus network Edmontonians want, like a network with transfers to support more frequent service, as an example.

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- The BNR engagement process incorporated extensive change management and education on route changes. It will be critical to ensure ongoing support and intentional plans to engage Edmontonians and meet their diverse needs and hear their collective voices.
- Since the launch of the new bus network in April 2021, ETS has been improving the transit rider experience by creating more direct, connected and frequent service. ETS has received more than 2,000 individual pieces of feedback post-launch and engaged in ongoing dialogue about rider needs and requests. Transit riders have expressed a need for additional service and service-related changes.
- In public engagement to redesign the ETS Fare Policy in 2018, there was broad support from participants for principled-based fare decisions using four principles: affordability, equity, rewarding and balancing. Participants also shared the importance of an easy to understand and simple fare structure, as well as strong support for income-based fare supports.

GBA+

When making transit planning decisions, considering intersectional perspectives is critical to ensure that transit is convenient, reliable and safe for all and encourages ridership. ETS ridership consists of diverse riders who hold a range of identity factors and lived experiences:

- Travel behaviours during and post-pandemic have shown there are more riders who identify as women using transit than other genders. 53 per cent of ETS riders identified as women in 2021, compared to 50 per cent of all Edmontonians identifying as women in the 2019 census.
- Rider research has shown trip chaining is common among women riders who make multiple stops in a transit journey. This highlights the need for frequent service throughout the day and the importance of fare capping to support affordability, one of the principles of the Fare Policy.
- Newcomers use transit to access services in the City to access education and language services, healthcare, social services, child care and recreation opportunities.
- Residents experiencing lower income use transit for essential services and employment, including shift work and late night shifts.
- Essential workers rely on transit to get to places of work including in healthcare and caretaking roles.
- Families use transit to access recreational opportunities and childcare services.
- Students use transit routes and school special service routes to access junior and senior high schools, as well as college and university classes.
- Seniors, often with mobility issues, use transit to get groceries and access healthcare appointments.
- Some riders are registered as paratransit users and use conventional transit service.

Inequities and exclusion for marginalized people can result from mass transit networks when equity and inclusion lenses are not applied intentionally or consistently. Administration is conducting a transit planning equity analysis to review and improve the way transit service is allocated and planned. Results and findings will be shared in the fall 2022.

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Edmontonians have experienced significant change in the last two years related to public transit and the implementation of the bus network redesign and launch of on demand transit service. From a GBA+ perspective, there are opportunities for further improvement to meet rider needs such as adding off-peak service hours to meet travel needs throughout the day, improving crosstown connections, as well as addressing equity gaps in the network. Travel patterns have also changed as a result of the pandemic, with less riders during morning and afternoon peak periods, and more riders using transit during off-peak times. It is not yet known if this change is going to be short term or longer term.

ATTACHMENTS

1. 2016 Metro Mayors Alliance Advisory Panel Report: Be Ready, or Be Left Behind
2. 2020 Regional Transit Business Case
3. 2020 Regional Transit Business Case Addendum
4. Commission History and Business Case Overview
5. Regional Transit Service Plan for Phase One Operations
6. Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission 2023 Opening Day Network Plan