

Update: Public Transit Initiative

Initiative Title: Public Transit
City Council Lead(s): Councillor A. Knack and Councillor D. Loken
Department Lead(s): City Operations, E. Robar
Sustainable Development, P. Ohm

Recommendation - Conclude Initiative

Objective:

Every day, Edmontonians choose how to get where they need to go. Public transit is one option, and Edmonton Transit System (ETS) **is striving to become a preferred travel choice for citizens by offering choices to citizens' transportation options.** Like most North American cities, Edmonton is a vehicle-centric community for personal transportation needs. About two-thirds of citizens choose their motor vehicle for weekday travel, and even more opt to use their personal vehicle on weekends.

In spite of this strong attraction to the motor vehicle, Edmontonians see the benefits of a well-integrated public transportation system such as ETS. The vast majority of citizens see ETS as valuable to the city as a whole and many, particularly younger commuters, acknowledge the need to shift away from car travel to more sustainable modes such as walking, cycling and using public transit.

We have seen considerable growth in our ridership numbers; many are trying us for the first time, and those who use our services are using it more. Our ability to provide customer-focused, safe, reliable and affordable public transit service helps us keep those riders.

Key outcomes, projects or activities and their status as of April 2017:

Transit Strategy - The complete Transit Strategy was presented to Urban Planning Committee on July 5, 2017. Development of the strategy was informed by one of the most extensive public engagement exercises undertaken by the City of Edmonton. The strategy proposes a new strategic direction for transit

service over the next decade, including guiding principles and actions for transit network design, funding and fare policy, customer experience and organizational capacity.

The next steps to move forward with strategy implementation include developing an implementation plan, moving forward with a major redesign of the bus network, including further public engagement and an update to the Transit Service Standards Policy C539.

Smart Fare - Following extensive collaboration with municipal partners to develop system requirements and a significant contract tender and review process, Administration is now in contract negotiations with the preferred vendor to implement and operate the Regional Smart Fare System. Once implemented, the electronic fare payment system will provide customers with more convenient options for paying their transit fare. Moreover, customers will be able to manage their accounts, register for fare programs, and reload value to their accounts through a variety of sales channels.

Valley Line LRT - The Valley Line is the single largest municipal infrastructure project delivered to date in the province of Alberta. It is Edmonton's first low-floor, urban-style LRT line, with an emphasis on community integration, accessibility, and passenger experience. The Southeast leg of the Valley Line, from Downtown to Mill Woods Town Centre, is currently being delivered using a Public Private Partnership (P3) delivery method, and is scheduled for service commencement by the end of 2020. The West leg of the Valley Line, from Downtown to Lewis Farms, is currently in the procurement readiness phase.

Service Reallocation - Administration has reallocated approximately 50,000 transit service hours from low performing routes to areas where a higher demand exists. The reallocation allowed growth in demand and peak service needs to be met without additional resources. The 2017 ETS Service Reallocation plan implementation is starting July 2, 2017. This phase includes routine seasonal reductions in addition to removing service hours on underused routes. The reallocation plan will continue in the Fall when seasonal service is restored, along with the addition of service hours to high demand routes.

Future Steps:

Transit Strategy, Network Design - The draft Transit Strategy has provided the scope for a redesign of Edmonton's bus network. In 2017, Administration will initiate community engagement on the bus network design and create a phased-implementation plan for the transition. Development of a new Transit Service Policy and procedure (C539) will be required as an outcome of the network redesign process.

Transit Fare Policy Update - As an outcome of the Transit Strategy, a comprehensive update of the Transit Fare Policy C451G will be needed in order to align City policy with the Strategy's guiding principles.

LRT Planning and Engineering - In order to move forward with implementation of future phases of the Long Term LRT Network Plan, Administration has initiated an update of the preliminary engineering for the West leg of the Valley Line, preliminary engineering for the extension of the Metro Line, and the planning study for the Downtown Circulator. Completion of these projects is targeted for 2017 Q4 in order to align with the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund.

Customer Charter - The ETS Customer Charter will be a public document that commits to the level of service delivery, safety and overall customer experience. Administration will report back on the Customer Charter through annual performance reporting, and look to leverage existing and emerging reporting tools such as Edmonton's Citizen Dashboard where possible.

Ride Transit Program (Low Income Transit Pass Pilot) - For September of 2017, under the Ride Transit Program, residents of Edmonton who have applied and been approved for the program will be able to purchase adult and youth monthly transit passes at a subsidized rate. The pilot is jointly funded by the City of Edmonton and Province of Alberta until at least December 2018. Administration will also develop and present recommendations for a sliding-scale subsidized rate for the program for consideration in 2017.

Purchase of Electric Buses - With funding through the Public Transit Infrastructure Fund (PTIF), Administration is currently in the tendering process to purchase up to 40 electric buses. Concurrently, the City is carrying out an

assessment of current transit garages to support the development of a long-term implementation plan for adding more electric buses to the ETS fleet. The delivery timeline for the electric buses aligns with the opening of the Northeast Transit Garage (NETG), which is currently under construction.

Safety and Training Review - Administration has reviewed, identified, and addressed safety issues and workplace hazards across the branch. The project will provide Administration with key gaps that need to be addressed to enhance safety for employees and the public, and will lead to the development of a more robust training program for all ETS staff.

Evaluation

Administration recommends the Council Initiative on Public Transit either be concluded or modified to focus on a more specific components related to public transit.

The scope of the Public Transit Council Initiative broadly encompasses all transit operations, and therefore reporting is similar to the information available in strategic planning, business planning, annual service plans, and budget documents. High profile initiatives listed in this summary are brought to Council for detailed updates through individual Council reports.