

# Edmonton's Transit Strategy

## Recommendation:

That Urban Planning Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That *Edmonton's Transit Strategy*, as set out in Attachment 1 of the July 5, 2017, Sustainable Development report CR\_4513, be approved.
2. That Administration prepare a service package for the Fall Operating Budget adjustment to support implementation of the Transit Strategy with a bus network redesign project.

## Report Summary

**This report provides an overview of *Edmonton's Transit Strategy*. The strategy sets the direction for transit service delivery over the next decade.**

## Report

### Background

The Comprehensive Transit Review, completed in 2014, indicated a compelling financial and customer service case for an updated *Transit Strategy* for Edmonton. Based on projections of the current growth of the city and past funding available for transit, a gap has grown between meeting current service standards and meeting affordability. *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* outlined in this report provides a framework to guide transit development and investment as the city continues to grow in population and transform in urban form over the next decade.

The Transportation Master Plan, *The Way We Move*, provides direction to develop an integrated, efficient, effective and accessible transit network. A foundational element of this network is the long term LRT network plan, approved by Council in 2009. Urban-style LRT extensions are planned for each quadrant of the city, connecting to a circulator LRT in the central area. *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* complements and supports the LRT network plan, providing a comprehensive public transit service strategy for the future.

### Strategy Development

From August 2015 to June 2016, *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* project team heard from

over 20,000 Edmontonians through an extensive, three-phase, public engagement program. It was essential that this process engage citizens in effective and innovative ways, including engaging with citizens in locations convenient to them, and connecting with groups who traditionally face barriers to engagement. Through this process, Administration heard from a broad cross-section of Edmontonians in a variety of settings. The results of the three phases of public engagement (*Gather Ideas, Prioritize Ideas, and Explore Trade-offs*) were summarized in the December 7, 2016, report to Urban Planning Committee and have since been shared with the public.

Informed by the priorities expressed by Edmontonians in the engagement process, a set of foundational Pillars and Guiding Principles for transit was developed and outlined in a Strategic Direction Report. This work was presented to City Council's Urban Planning Committee on December 7, 2016. The Strategic Direction defined the fundamental components of the strategy: Strategic Alignment, Core Values, and a set of Guiding Principles for each of five foundational Pillars.

*Edmonton's Transit Strategy* (Attachment 1) was developed within the context of the following:

- Approved City policies as documented in *The Ways* plans and supporting technical reports.
- Previous studies and reviews of public transit in Edmonton.
- Citizen preferences as revealed through an extensive, three-stage, public engagement process conducted between August 2015 and June 2016 (*Gather Ideas, Prioritizing Ideas, Explore Trade-offs*).
- Insights provided by a cross-departmental, internal working group representing diverse perspectives (*Edmonton's Transit Strategy Guiding Perspectives Committee*) throughout the strategy development process.
- Feedback received from the Urban Planning Committee during its consideration of the *Strategic Direction Report* in December 2016.

### **Strategic Direction**

*Edmonton's Transit Strategy* provides a comprehensive and integrated perspective regarding the transit system, including Light Rail Transit (LRT), bus and paratransit (DATS - Disabled Adult Transit Service). It focuses the transit system around the following four key values:

- Mobility
- Connectivity
- Integration
- Sustainability

Fulfilling these values is essential to meeting citizens expectations for the transit system. Additionally, Edmontonians expressed the need for a transit system that is convenient, reliable, fast and safe.

The core of *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* is framed around five foundational *Pillars*. Under each Pillar are Guiding Principles and Actions to be implemented over the next decade. While the Guiding Principles and Actions for each of the Pillars have specific roles, they must be applied collectively to ensure the effective delivery of *Edmonton's Transit Strategy*.

Pillar	Strategic Direction
1. Integrate Transit with Community Planning and Design	Coordinates transit system development with the City's urban planning goals and with community planning and design.
2. Establish a Balanced Approach to Operating Funding and Fare Policy	Establishes the financial context within which the transit system is to operate.
3. Develop a Market-Responsive Approach to Transit Network Design	Defines the nature of the transit network and the types of services to be provided.
4. Improve the Customer Experience	Defines how customers will experience the services delivered through the transit network.
5. Develop Transit Organizational Capacity	Develops organizational competencies required for effective and efficient transit service delivery (e.g. human resources, technology, sustainability, funding).

### **A New Approach**

During the preparation of the Strategy, it became evident that there is a need for a new approach to the transit network, grounded in citizen priorities, the current urban context and city-building objectives. Since the last major redesign of the bus network in 1997, travel patterns and transportation needs have evolved significantly as the city has grown in population and geography.

The Guiding Principles for Pillar 3, Transit Network Design, were used to prepare a draft Conceptual Network Plan (see Appendix A, Attachment 1). This Conceptual Network Plan identifies Edmonton's Primary Transit Network, consisting of Light Rail Transit (LRT) and precursor Bus Rapid Transit, Frequent Bus Routes, Rapid Bus Routes and Crosstown Routes. This Primary Transit Network is proposed to be supported by local neighbourhood services, which are illustrated through examples in Appendix B of Attachment 1.

The intent of the conceptual planning was to test whether the Guiding Principles for network design could be successfully applied within Edmonton Transit's existing complement of annual bus hours and available bus fleet, to develop an initial framework to guide a subsequent detailed redesign of the network, and to provide decision-makers with a vision of the overall structure of the future system. The resulting concept plan and associated costing indicates that the principles for the transit network can be applied with minimal impact to the annual operating budget. The Conceptual Network Plan was also used to develop a high-level understanding of the potential impacts to transit riders by applying the new approach. Further assessment of impacts to riders will be conducted during the development of the detailed network design.

### **Next Steps**

To move *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* forward, the next step is the preparation of a detailed implementation plan. Implementation of the full suite of Actions will take place over the 10 year span of the strategy and will require decisions at various future steps. The decision points arising within the next year are outlined in Attachment 2. Building on the momentum of the strategy development, a major redesign of the bus network, based on the Guiding Principles outlined in the Strategy, becomes an immediate priority. This important project can take place concurrently with the preparation of the implementation plan. The public conversation initiated through *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* should continue during the bus network redesign process through local consultations with people directly affected by proposed changes. The steps for the bus network design project are outlined in Attachment 3. The outcome will be a transit

system that optimizes resources to better meet the needs of citizens in our growing city.

### Policy

This report is supported by the following policies (For related policies, see Attachment 4):

- City Policy C451G - Edmonton Transit System Fare Policy
- City Policy C539 - Transit Service Standards

### Corporate Outcomes

This Strategic Alignment outlined in *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* (Attachment 1) discusses how *this Strategy* will support the following corporate outcomes:

- “Edmontonians use public transit and active modes of transportation” by providing strategic direction to guide the delivery of transit service over the next decade.
- “Edmonton is attractive and compact.” by recommending guiding principles and actions to improve the integration of transit with community planning and design.
- “The City of Edmonton has a resilient financial position” by recommending a cost recovery target for transit operations and proposing specific changes to transit service to align service delivery with customer expectations in a context of limited resources.
- “The City of Edmonton has sustainable and accessible infrastructure” by recommending guiding principles and actions to guide the design and renewal of transit infrastructure to support equitable access.
- “Edmonton is an environmentally sustainable and resilient city” by recommending guiding principles and actions to improve transit’s environmental performance, to support our energy transition and develop a climate adaptation strategy.

### Risk Assessment

Risk Element	Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Risk Score	Current Mitigations	Potential Future Mitigations
Financial - Resources available for implementation	Proposed strategic alignment must be delivered within available	3	4	12	Developing conceptual network design and costing	Develop implementation plan and resourcing requirements

	funding					subsequent to strategy approval
Corporate Governance - strategic direction	Inability to set strategic direction due to lack of shared agreement challenges and solutions	3	4	12	Conduct extensive stakeholder engagement to inform Council of public priorities	Further technical work or public engagement
Project Management - Scope	Council and public expectations for project exceed defined scope	4	3	12	Communicate project scope in communications materials	

### Public Engagement

The Public Engagement and Communications Plan for this work was informed by Phase 1 of the Council Initiative on Public Engagement, specifically to:

- Use tactics that directly engage individuals that traditionally face barriers to engagement, as well as transit riders and non-riders.
- Provide greater balance of resources between technical work and engagement activities.
- Employ a more diverse and innovative array of communications and engagement tools, both in person and digitally.
- Report back to the public throughout the process on what was heard from the public engagement.

Public engagement for *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* used a variety of unique communications and engagement tools, including visiting neighbourhoods and special events by the What Moves You Engagement Bus and Street Team, online surveys, and public and targeted workshops. A particular effort was made to reach individuals that traditionally face barriers to engagement through co-hosting targeted workshops with community organizations. In total, approximately 20,000 individuals were engaged in developing *Edmonton's Transit Strategy*.

What was heard from the public through this process has directly informed every component of *Edmonton's Transit Strategy*. Edmontonians expressed great support for our transit system and appreciate its contributions to many diverse city-building goals. They also indicated opportunities for improvement in regards to the transit network and customer service. These ideas and priorities for improvement have been reflected in

the values, attributes, guiding principles, and actions of *Edmonton's Transit Strategy*. In this way, what was heard from citizens has played a central role in shaping *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* and building our transit system for the next decade.

### Budget/Financial Implications

Implementation of the full complement of Guiding Principles and Actions will require resource investment over the life of the Strategy. The development of an implementation plan is a critical next step to move *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* forward. This plan should include prioritization and phasing of actions, resource requirements, and identification of organizational responsibility. This plan will be developed collaboratively across City departments and will be an important tool to inform business plans and budgets.

The draft Conceptual Bus Network Plan was used to estimate resources required to implement a revised transit network. Based on this analysis, as shown in Tables 6 and 7 of Attachment 1, it is anticipated that delivery of the revised bus network can be accommodated within the current budget resources of Edmonton Transit. Detailed planning and implementation of a revised bus network will require additional resources.

### Metrics, Targets and Outcomes

A performance-monitoring framework has been integrated into *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* to support strategy implementation and evaluation. While it will be important to track implementation of each action, the ultimate success of any strategy rests on the cumulative effect of these actions towards the intended outcomes. Progress towards outcomes will be reported annually to inform Council and the public on the state of transit in Edmonton. The following table highlights a sample of the performance measures included within the Strategy.

Metrics	Targets	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ridership per capita - 96.9 rides per capita for 2016</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>105 rides per capita by 2018</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit network is well integrated.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit Cost Revenue Ratio 41 percent for 2016</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase to 45-50 percent Transit Cost Revenue Ratio</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revenue generation sustainably supports City operations.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2016 customer satisfaction with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bus frequency: 62 percent</li> <li>LRT frequency: 80 percent</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2017 customer satisfaction with:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bus frequency: 65 percent</li> <li>LRT frequency: 90 percent</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit network is well integrated.</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit Customer Satisfaction - 76 percent for 2016</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Target to be determined</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transit network is well integrated.</li> </ul>
<p>Public engagement in Strategy development</p> <p>Phase 1: Gather Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4,500 participants</li> <li>10,000 comments received</li> <li>11 workshops, 21 community events</li> </ul> <p>Phase 2: Prioritize Ideas</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3,000 participants</li> <li>4 workshops, 7 community events</li> </ul> <p>Phase 3: Explore Trade-offs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>12,800 participants</li> <li>13 workshops, 17 community events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not applicable</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edmontonians had an opportunity to provide input into the process.</li> <li>Obtained a variety of perspectives.</li> </ul>

## Justification of Recommendation:

1. Development and implementation of *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* is identified as one of Council's priorities for 2016-2018 in The Way Ahead Implementation Plan. Approval of *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* will provide direction to Administration to proceed with implementation of the specific initiatives outlined in the strategy. This includes development of a new bus network plan, revising the Transit Service Standards Policy and revising the Transit Fare Policy. Approval of *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* will improve alignment of transit service delivery with the expectations of Edmontonians within a context of limited financial resources in a growing city.
2. *Edmonton's Transit Strategy* provides specific direction to redesign the bus network as an immediate outcome of strategy approval. Implementation of this direction will require additional resources for planning, public engagement and communication.

## Attachments

1. *Edmonton's Transit Strategy*
2. Decision Points for Strategy Development and Implementation
3. Steps for Bus Network Design Project
4. Related Policies



### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Deputy City Manager, Financial and Corporate Services
- A. Laughlin, Deputy City Manager, Integrated Infrastructure Services
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- C. Campbell, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- D. Jones, Deputy City Manager, City Operations