

COMMUNITY OUTREACH TRANSIT TEAM

RECOMMENDATION

That an amendment to the service agreement between The City of Edmonton and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society to provide outreach support as part of the Community Outreach Transit Team, as outlined in Attachment 1 of the March 20, 2023, Community Services report CS01556, be approved, and that the agreement reflecting those amendments be in the form and content acceptable to the City Manager.

Requested Council Action	Decision required		
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals		
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Healthy City		
City Plan Values	LIVE		
City Plan Big City Move(s)	Inclusive and compassionate	Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities	Community Safety and Well-Being
Corporate Business Plan	Managing the corporation		
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bylaw 16620 - City Administration Bylaw • Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy • Indigenous Framework 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OCM01037, Transit Safety and Security Plan, City Council, February 22, 2022 		

Executive Summary

- The Community Outreach Transit Team is a partnership between the City of Edmonton and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH TRANSIT TEAM

- Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society was originally selected as the partner on the Community Outreach Transit Team initiative through a single source procurement in July 2021 and a subsequent amending agreement was signed in June 2022.
- As per the City Administration Bylaw 16620, procurement agreements over \$1 million that do not arise from a competitive procurement process must be approved by the appropriate Council Committee. Administration is seeking approval from Community and Public Service Committee to enter into a three year amending agreement with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society for their continued provision of outreach services on the Community Outreach Transit Team.

REPORT

Administration explored alternate approaches to expand the continuum of existing transit safety and support the needs of all those who access transit spaces, recognizing that some of the disorder observed is rooted in core social issues such as lack of housing, mental health, and substance use. The result was the creation of the Community Outreach Transit Team as a two year pilot from September 2020 to September 2022. Further investment for the Community Outreach Transit Team was made in the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan for three years from 2022 to 2025.

Community Outreach Transit Team

The Community Outreach Transit Team is a partnership between the City of Edmonton and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society (Bent Arrow). Within this program, a City transit peace officer is paired with a Bent Arrow outreach worker and together they proactively patrol the transit system with the purpose of assisting individuals requiring specialized support to connect to the community resources they need. The Community Outreach Transit Team utilizes a human-centered and trauma-informed lens to guide their work and interactions with the community. The system navigation support provided by the team can include assistance with housing, mental health, substance use and/or addiction.

In the Community Outreach Transit Team's first year (September 27, 2021- September 30, 2022), with two teams operational, the program had more than:

- 2700 general interactions where Community Outreach Transit Team team members shared information about the program and how they can help.
- 510 engagements where specific referrals were made based on needs and/or transport or soft hand-off was facilitated.
- 30 different agencies or services that clients were physically connected to, including mental health resources, shelters, pharmacies and doctors.
- 250 unique individuals were provided with ongoing follow-up support (data reporting began in January 2022).
- 150 individuals supported in achieving 277 short-term goals that ranged from acquiring identification to support with accessing medical, addiction and/or housing (temporary, transitional or permanent) resources.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH TRANSIT TEAM

- 115 instances where the Community Outreach Transit Team was requested but unable to respond due to capacity issues (data collection began in November 2021).

Collaboration with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society

Edmonton's Community Outreach Transit Team was co-created by Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and the City of Edmonton. Bent Arrow was selected as the initiative partner in July 2021 through a single source procurement with an initial contract value of \$200,000 funded by the COVID-19 Financial Stabilization Reserve.

- A subsequent amending agreement was signed in June 2022.
- The current agreement is scheduled to expire in August 2023.

Bent Arrow has served Indigenous children, youth and families and the community since 1994 and is experienced in various community and government partnerships. Currently, their programs and services range from early childhood intervention to employment and housing to culture to advocacy; highlighting their knowledge and experience in supporting individuals across the spectrum of social challenges and needs. The Community Outreach Transit Team's collaboration with Bent Arrow represents one way in which the City honours its commitment towards reconciliation and the Indigenous Framework. Bent Arrow is an Indigenous serving organization with a mission to build "upon the strengths of Aboriginal Children, youth and families to enable them to grow spiritually, emotionally, physically and mentally so that they can walk proudly in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities."

Bent Arrow's contributions to the Community Outreach Transit Team are critical to the success of the program. Members of the organization sit on all levels of the Community Outreach Transit Team's governance structure and are involved in guiding all aspects of the program's development and delivery. It is through this collaboration that the Community Outreach Transit Team is able to leverage the unique knowledge, resources, and skillsets of its partner to deliver a coordinated, compassionate and trauma-informed response that better supports marginalized individuals within the transit system.

Budget/Financial Implications

Ongoing operational funding for the Community Outreach Transit Team was approved by City Council during the 2023-2026 budget deliberations to maintain funding at \$700,000 per year. Community and Public Service Committee approval is being sought to enter into a three year amending agreement of the current contract with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society in an amount not to exceed \$2,100,000 to enable the Community Outreach Transit Team.

Legal Implications

As per the City Administration Bylaw 16620, procurement agreements over \$1 million that do not arise from a competitive procurement process must be approved by the appropriate Council Committee. The City is subject to trade agreements that require an open competitive process for procurements of this value unless a trade agreement exemption applies. For this procurement, there is an exemption in each applicable trade agreement.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH TRANSIT TEAM

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Numbers do not always effectively convey the impact and complexity of the Community Outreach Transit Team’s work; their work is also captured through qualitative means like a story. Anecdotes that demonstrate the work to build relationships and trust include moments such as “brother, I don’t see the uniform when I see you anymore” or clients referring and advocating to their peers about the program can offer insight into the value and experience with the program. Administration is demonstrating its commitment to be a relationship-based organization to support vulnerable people while working to to understand and address the complexity of many social challenges faced by those people.

GBA+

Many of the social challenges observed within Edmonton’s transit spaces are rooted in social inequities and systemic barriers. While these barriers impact all demographics, Indigenous People are over represented in this space as they continue to face higher levels of poverty and homelessness.

Data from Homeward Trust’s January 2023 by name list indicates that 47 per cent of individuals experiencing homelessness identified as Indigenous. This is in contrast to how Indigenous peoples only account for approximately 6 per cent of Edmonton’s population. Similarly, in 2022, 47 per cent of the Community Outreach Transit Team’s clients identified as Indigenous.

The City’s journey towards reconciliation must acknowledge, honour, and commit to the central role that connections to culture, land and relationship play in healing. Through the Community Outreach Transit Team’s collaboration with Bent Arrow and their knowledge of Indigenous culture and trauma-informed practice, the program has been able to incorporate an Indigenous worldview into its development and delivery to better serve the diverse needs of the community. The Community Outreach Transit Team initiative launched in a pipe ceremony to ground the work and Indigenous teachings have been incorporated into the entire team’s learning development. It should be noted that although Bent Arrow is an Indigenous-serving organization, the Indigenous worldview recognizes the relatedness and kinship amongst all people and things. It is a worldview that intrinsically embraces the diversity of the community and its people in all their intersectionalities.

ATTACHMENT

1. Attachment 1: Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society Amending Agreement - Key Terms