

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE EDMONTON TRANSIT SYSTEM SAFETY PLAN

RECOMMENDATION

That the July 4, 2023, City Operations report CO01834, be received for information.

Requested Council Action	Information only		
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)	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"> N/A 		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> OCM01037, Transit Safety and Security, City Council, February 22, 2022 CO01229, Transit Safety and Security Interim Update, City Council, May 24, 2022 OCM01303, Bylaw 19983 - Amending Bylaw 8353 Conduct of Transit Passengers Bylaw, City Council, June 7, 2022 CS01566, Community Outreach Transit Team, Community and Public Services Committee, March 20, 2023 CO01725, Administration Response - ETSAB Report: Youth and Their Perception of Safety on ETS, Urban Planning Committee, March 21, 2023 OCM01797, Advancing Edmonton's Safety and Security, Community and Public Services Committee, May 1, 2023 CO01907, Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal Report, City Council, June 13/14, 2023 CO01908, Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal Report, City Council, July 4/5, 2023 		

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 21, 2023, Urban Planning Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a progress report on implementation of the Transit Safety Plan, approved by Council in February 2022, and that the report includes an overview of key performance indicators and program outcomes and outlines opportunities to further enhance transit safety and security.

Executive Summary

- Demonstrating a commitment to providing safe transit spaces for all, a number of critical investments have been made to enhance transit safety and security. As additional Enhanced Transit Safety Plan actions are completed, Council will receive information through monthly verbal updates.
- Considering the rider journey, Administration identified additional areas where further enhancements could improve safety and security for all in transit spaces. Investment opportunities include service improvements, space activation, personnel, technology enhancements and infrastructure modifications.
- Following Council direction, Administration can bring forward a more detailed plan for Council's consideration, outlining specific actions to be undertaken, proposed timing and an outline of budget impacts.

REPORT

Public transit is a critical component of transportation mode shift and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets set out in The City Plan. The City Plan envisions a vibrant and prosperous city with an integrated transportation network, providing residents with convenient and equitable options. Safe, reliable and accessible public transit enables economic prosperity by connecting people to their workplaces, educational opportunities and shopping districts. A robust transit system is foundational, including an evolved mass transit network that supports mobility and connects all areas of the city.

Transit facilities are intended to play a central role in the heart of a community, providing spaces that are active, vibrant and a welcoming forum for public life. Activation of transit spaces can be supported by greater integration of stations into the urban fabric. In alignment with The City Plan, the City has advanced designs of transit station areas to support compact, mixed-use development, provide community amenities and facilitate multimodal connections.

Challenges with transit safety and security are felt in major cities across North America. In April 2023, the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) released a report highlighting recommendations from a national Transit Safety Task Force (Attachment 1). In addition to recommendations for transit agencies, several recommendations for the federal and provincial governments were included related to addressing supportive housing, extreme weather, mental health and substance use.

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

In Alberta, larger municipalities are experiencing these same challenges and have continually collaborated and shared best practices. The City of Edmonton has implemented the majority of the CUTA Task Force recommendations, including developing a multidisciplinary and integrated transit safety plan, creating multidisciplinary outreach teams, investing in security and enforcement personnel and continuing enhanced cleaning. The future opportunities outlined below further align with CUTA's recommendations.

Enhanced Transit Safety Plan Progress

Safety and security have many dimensions, including individual and community, cultural, physical, social and psychological, and the perception and experience of safety is different for every person. Both short and long-term strategies are needed to promote safety and security in service of greater goals of inclusion and economic prosperity as the perception and experience of safety is a critical enabler to larger outcomes. Reflecting the vision of The City Plan, aligned to the Economic Action Plan, and nested under the umbrella of the Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy, three partnership-based city activations – Downtown Vibrancy, Chinatown Recovery and the City-wide Transit Safety Plan – are focusing the City's actions to achieve a safe, vibrant and welcoming community for Edmontonians, businesses and visitors.

Downtown Edmonton and the adjacent neighbourhoods are the centre of the city — they are the educational, economic, governance and cultural heartbeat of a community of more than one million people. The downtown core was one of the most significantly impacted areas as a result of the direct and indirect impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; however, the City of Edmonton, in collaboration with the Government of Alberta, Government of Canada, Edmonton Police Service, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, and other community partners are demonstrating collaboration, integration and investment to heighten safety to increase vibrancy in the downtown core.

As part of the commitment to providing safe transit spaces for all, a number of critical investments have been made over the past several years to enhance transit safety and security as outlined in Attachment 2. All of this work is nested under the Enhanced Transit Safety and Security Plan as approved by City Council in February 2022. Tenets of the plan include:

- integrating enforcement as well as social support efforts and resources;
- developing shared goals and measures of success; and
- ensuring a comprehensive, integrated approach to transit safety.

As presented in the June 13/14, 2023, City Council meeting, City Operations report CO01907 Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal, progress through proactive measures undertaken are demonstrated through targeted site-specific interventions that have been piloted at Southgate LRT Station and Transit Centre. An example of this is the joint deployment of EPS and Transit Peace Officers that has been trialed in select LRT stations, including at Southgate and some north end stations. The initial results of these joint deployment initiatives have been positive and Administration is pursuing more sustained, fully integrated joint deployment strategies.

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

Further updates on implementation of the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan will be provided in the July 4, 2023, City Operations report CO01908 Monthly Verbal Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core.

Program Outcomes and Key Performance Indicators

As referenced in the June 13/14, 2023, City Operations report CO01907 Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal, the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan focuses on four key pillars: Integration, Safety, Perception of Safety and Well-being.

Within each pillar, Administration has identified short, medium and long term outcomes and has started to gather available measures that are aligned to them. These are organized into placemats, which outline the short-term, medium-term and long-term outcomes related to the four streams of work, as well as the associated key performance indicators. The placemats are provided as Attachment 3.

Integration

Integration is the ongoing work to ensure that all of the areas involved in transit safety are working together to build:

- integrated governance structures,
- operational procedures,
- communication strategies,
- data and analytics platforms,
- deployment of resources and
- problem solving initiatives.

The long-term goal is that Transit safety is strengthened through collaboration between the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Service and Bent Arrow. Integration ensures that all partners approach transit spaces with the appropriate authorities, knowledge, skill and abilities, which increases the level of trust riders and transit employees have in the City of Edmonton's ability to provide them with a consistent and safe experience.

Integration is an aspect of the enhanced Transit Safety Plan that is more challenging to measure and evaluate than the other three pillars. In order to analyze how well the integration efforts are progressing, qualitative data and milestone tracking will be used to document and evaluate efforts. Further work is underway to identify and develop new measures and targets with EPS and Bent Arrow to create an integrated evaluation framework and scorecard.

Safety

The safety pillar refers to conventional aspects of safety - what has been traditionally measured by counts of criminal activity, number of operator assaults, or other measurements that capture what is physically happening in these spaces. Activities within this pillar relate to what safety improvements are being employed in and with transit spaces - both proactively and reactively - to promote a safer environment. Depending on what is required, activities within this pillar could include increased outreach or enforcement.

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

The long-term outcome for the Safety pillar is to ensure that all people are physically safe in transit spaces. To achieve this long-term outcome, sustained reductions in the measures identified in Attachment 3 are required in the short and medium term.

To achieve these reductions, Administration has convened joint initiatives such as:

- alignment of TPO schedules and facility maintenance activities to help ensure a safe environment for maintenance staff,
- facility lock-up pilots at some transit and LRT stations,
- proactive hotspot policing,
- assignment of addresses and wayfinding tools for pedways and tunnels and
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) audits.

Perception of Safety

Perception of Safety refers to how it feels to be in transit spaces. Activities within this pillar include space activation, CPTED improvements or a uniformed presence.

The long term goal or outcome of this pillar is that Edmontonians perceive transit to be safe and are not deterred for safety reasons. The perception of safety in transit spaces is impacted not only by the occurrence of safety-related incidents measured in the Safety pillar, but by how it feels to be in transit spaces. By reducing vandalism at transit facilities and implementing safety measures, Administration expects to see improved perception of safety scores within ongoing customer satisfaction surveys, as well as increased ridership.

To achieve this, the following activities will be implemented:

- increased cleaning program,
- transit facility activation and programming and
- increased security guard presence.

These activities will be highlighted and shared through ongoing communications about the work underway to improve transit safety.

Well-Being

This pillar encompasses the wraparound, balanced and culturally appropriate supports that are needed for those turning to transit spaces for many different reasons. The work is aligned with the Well-Being pillar of the Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy. The long-term goal is that Edmontonians are connected to culturally appropriate supports, reducing the use of transit spaces for non-travel purposes.

To achieve this, in the short and medium term the Community Outreach Transit Teams (COTT) will need to be effectively utilized to bridge marginalized Edmontonians to appropriate services. In addition, oversight will be required to ensure that initiatives that aim to reduce crime do so through appropriate enforcement that does not penalize poverty and social support interventions.

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

The measures that have been identified to date to evaluate this relate largely to the work done by the COTT initiative, and further work is underway to identify additional measures through ethnographic research in transit spaces and collaboration with the EPS.

The Transit Rider Journey

In 2018, Administration developed a customer journey map for transit service (Attachment 4). At the broadest level, the transit rider journey includes awareness of the service, exploring service options, planning a trip, travelling and follow-up after the trip is completed. Work to improve the rider experience, including transit safety and security, impacts steps across the rider journey.

To further understand the journey, Administration has segmented the experience into the following steps:

- Travelling to first stop/station
- Waiting to board transit vehicle
- On-board transit vehicle
- During a transfer
- Exiting transit vehicle
- Travelling to final destination

These points in the transit journey have been used in ETS surveys of riders and non-riders to understand areas of high performance and identify opportunities for improvement. In 2022, overall rider satisfaction was 82 per cent, an increase from 81 per cent in 2021.

As part of the annual rider satisfaction survey, riders are asked about their overall perception of safety and their perception of safety along the transit journey. In 2022, 68 per cent of riders felt safe throughout their trip. The journey points where riders reported feeling unsafe are noted in the table below.

Where Riders Reported Feeling Unsafe	Percentage
Travelling to first stop/station	8%
Waiting to board a transit vehicle	10%
Riding on-board a transit vehicle	14%
During a transfer	7%
Exiting a transit vehicle	6%
Travelling to final destination	5%

Opportunities to further enhance transit safety and security can be considered within each step in this journey.

Opportunities to Further Enhance Transit Safety and Security

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

Considering the rider journey, Administration has identified additional areas where further enhancements could improve safety and security for all in transit spaces, in no particular order. These future opportunities include the following:

- 1. Dedicated Travel Training Centre** - There are opportunities to expand travel training to more riders to provide detailed training about how to use transit, including safety and security features in the rider’s journey. ETS is currently developing an expanded travel training model to provide trip planning and navigation support to more groups such as youth, newcomers, seniors and persons with disabilities. This work could be further enhanced by establishing a dedicated travel training centre, similar to other transit agencies in Canada, which would provide a teaching hub with supporting transit infrastructure such as a dedicated bus to support travel training activities.
- 2. Bus Service Improvements** - Increasing transit ridership is one of the greatest opportunities to improve transit safety and security, while also supporting inclusion, mode shift and climate goals. A common principle in city planning and urban design is “eyes on the street,” meaning that public spaces need to have a continuous presence of people who provide natural surveillance. Improved service coverage and frequency in all time periods, such as continuing to expand off-peak service, will support ridership growth and help increase natural surveillance at major stops and stations.

When service is frequent and reliable, riders can be confident they will experience a short wait time. This is particularly important at bus stops in the off-peak periods. While the Bus Network Redesign significantly increased the frequency and availability of service on evenings and weekends, there are still many areas citywide that do not have frequent transit service in all time periods.

Administration is preparing information that will be brought forward in third quarter 2023 that will present further opportunities to improve bus service for Edmontonians as part of the transit network.

- 3. Transit Space Activation Program** - There are 43 transit centres and LRT stations throughout the city, and more will be added with the growth of the Mass Transit Network. While transit spaces are places that people travel through in their journey, they also play a vital part of the local community. Over time, transit spaces have an opportunity to become more central to positive neighbourhood identities and places where people feel comfortable spending time. Activities to make transit spaces more welcoming, vibrant and inviting community spaces will support district plans and building a community of communities.

Over the past several years, ETS has advanced several space activation projects, including partnering with festivals to bring performances into transit stations, Transit Ambassadors in stations as part of the Rediscover ETS campaign and partnering with local artists to develop new art installations. This space activation could be broadened to create a more fulsome Transit Space Activation Program, which would identify priority locations and establish a year round calendar of activities. Collaboration with community partners would be an essential component of this program. Collaboration for this program could include:

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

- Working with neighbourhood organisations near specific transit stations, such as nearby schools, businesses and community leagues to support community-led activations. This would help build a local sense of ownership and pride in the respective stations.
 - Developing positive community-based activities into spaces to influence behaviour of people from those communities.
 - Partnering with arts organizations and festivals to bring installations and performances to transit spaces.
 - Providing resources and supports for pop-up activities, such as incentives for busking, and security resources to support pop-up activities.
 - Repurposing an unused space within a transit facility to support local community needs.
- 4. Add Customer Support at Stations** - By adding an in-person customer support function at transit stations, riders can receive support about trip planning, wayfinding and transit faring. This would add more staff presence and align with the CUTA recommendation about increasing staff visibility in transit facilities. This approach is used in other transit agencies such as the Toronto Transit Commission and Translink.
- 5. Permanently Increase Enhanced Cleaning** - Providing clean transit facilities, buses and LRVs could improve safety for all and improve the rider experience. Permanent funding could increase the span of service, frequency and type of cleaning in facilities and on the fleet. This could follow the completion of the 2023 enhanced cleaning Government of Alberta grant.
- 6. Transit Security Investment** - Further investment in the Transit Security teams could result in increased Transit Peace Officers, as well as the administrative, training and analytic resources to support the team.
- 7. Explore Future Expansions to Outreach Support Services** - Explore expanding outreach support services as may be needed and appropriate, while continuing to work with other outreach and social supports to ensure a spectrum of care is available and coordinated.
- 8. Expand Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Evaluation & Implementation** - CPTED reviews are currently completed as part of capital renewal projects of transit stations when they are due for renewal, and implementation depends on project funding. This work could be enhanced through dedicated funding to support the implementation of smaller-scale solutions not related to facility renewal cycles. This expanded approach to CPTED would also include more proactive community engagement in the audit process.
- 9. Equity Analysis of Bus Stop Locations** - Bus stop locations have an impact on service accessibility and rider safety. Administration is analyzing bus stop locations in areas with a higher proportion of seniors and persons with disabilities to identify opportunities to improve

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

access to transit. This work could be expanded to include all neighbourhoods. It presents opportunities for improving access and rider safety at bus stops, aligned with ETS service standards, by adjusting stop locations and/or adding more stops within routes.

- 10. Equity Analysis of Fleet Safety Features** - Incorporating equity analysis to review safety features included in the transit fleet and related infrastructure could identify barriers and lead to greater access and awareness of safety features for all riders. As an example, it could include reviewing the accessibility of emergency buttons and pull bars.
- 11. Bus Shelter Amenities** - Bus shelters and related amenities impact rider safety. In addition to reviewing the placement of bus stops and shelters using equity analysis, redesigning bus shelters can also improve reliability of the infrastructure and reduce risks of vandalism. With community engagement, new shelter design could also improve access.
- 12. Tunnel Intruder Technology** - There has been an increase in volume of trespassers, including in areas within stations that are off-limits to riders, as well as LRT tunnels. These trespassing events present a high risk to safety for staff and the intruders. As an example, trespassing in an LRT station could result in interactions with the LRT track, Light Rail Vehicles (LRVs) and the overhead electrical system that powers the vehicles (catenary). Installing tunnel intruder technology can alert the ETS Control Centre of the trespassing event and lead to a more timely incident response.
- 13. Expand Safe Washroom Technology** - Administration is currently testing technology that alerts the Control Centre when there has been no movement from a person in a washroom, which could signal a drug poisoning incident and alert ETS to the need for an emergency response. Should the testing produce positive results, this system could be expanded to all washrooms in transit facilities.
- 14. Train Remote Communications System** - This technology would enable a quick and reliable exchange of critical information and data between train operations and the ETS Control Centre, to provide access to the surveillance camera feeds within the LRVs, improving surveillance and incident response. The system also provides real-time train position information and would enable Administration to measure train boardings.

Budget/Financial Implications

Following Council direction, Administration can bring forward a more detailed plan for Council's consideration outlining specific actions to be undertaken, proposed timing, and an outline of budget impacts to inform the Fall 2023 Supplemental Operating and Capital Budget Adjustments.

COMMUNITY INSIGHT

Throughout the inception and implementation of the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan, Administration has been listening to feedback from transit riders through ongoing customer satisfaction surveys, reports of concerns through 311 and Transit Watch, social media, and through direct correspondence with City Council.

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

On a citywide level, insights from monthly transit rider satisfaction surveys over the past year indicate that overall satisfaction with safety was 57 per cent in April 2023, representing a decrease of one percent from 58 per cent in March 2023 and a 14 per cent decrease from 71 per cent in April 2022. Consistent themes of the feedback that continue to emerge are concerns around personal safety, identification of social issues which impact perceptions of safety within transit spaces, as well as requests for additional safety measures. Administration has heard from transit riders that there is an urgent need for compassionate solutions to support transit spaces that are inclusive, welcoming and safe.

For non-riders, perception of safety is a significant factor in determining whether or not to choose transit. The 2022 annual non-rider survey found that of those non-riders who reported they stopped using transit because they had concerns, most (79 per cent) reported concerns about their personal safety. When non-riders were asked what ETS could do to increase their likelihood of taking transit in the future, the most frequently mentioned service enhancements were better safety and security measures.

Administration has also engaged directly with community members and organizations on specific transit safety projects. As an example, for work undertaken at Southgate LRT Station and Transit Centre, Administration convened stakeholders from EPS, Southgate Mall and the Malmo Plains community to work collaboratively on holistic, sustained solutions to address safety and security concerns in these connected areas. By pooling together data, plans and resources, activities to improve safety and security in these areas were integrated more efficiently and effectively than if stakeholders acted on their own. Stakeholders noted their appreciation for the integrated approach, and lessons learned from this project can be carried forward and scaled-up as further projects are undertaken.

This body of work continues to be informed by significant listening and learning from the community. In the coming months, Administration will continue to seek further community insights through in-depth research on riders perceptions of safety, including how different demographics vary in their perceptions of transit safety, and what are the implicit and explicit drivers of transit safety perceptions. As various strategies are implemented, Administration evaluates their effectiveness in partnership with community stakeholders and service delivery partners. Working in an iterative and relationship-focused way provides the foundation for an openness to trial new approaches and seize opportunities for change.

GBA+

Edmonton Transit Service ridership consists of diverse riders who hold a range of identity factors and lived experiences. Travel behaviours in recent years have shown there are more riders who identify as women using transit than other genders. Newcomers, essential workers, seniors, people with disabilities, students and families rely on transit to connect with their community, employment, education and medical needs. At the same time, public transit spaces are a crossroad where complex issues beyond the scope of any transit operator are playing out. Edmontonians who are unhoused, have mental health or addiction issues, or are otherwise marginalized often seek shelter in transit and transit-adjacent spaces due to a lack of (or

Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan

perceived lack of) better options. Because of the history of colonization and residential schools, Indigenous peoples are often overrepresented within these marginalized populations.

The City of Edmonton uses GBA+ to help make evidence-based decisions, challenge assumptions, and adjust programs, services and spaces to offer enhanced life experiences for those experiencing marginalization in Edmonton. Representing different perspectives and experiences are key to the effectiveness of transit safety initiatives. Administration will continue to engage people through the different intersectional lenses that may represent them and define their experiences in Edmonton, and as part of the engagement work discussed in the Community Insight section above. Administration will also actively engage with marginalized people in transit spaces to ensure that these views are captured.

By offering culturally appropriate support and connections to services to marginalized Edmontonians in transit spaces, Administration hopes to enable sustained improvements in people's lives, as well as within transit spaces directly. Measures to improve transit safety and security ultimately increases the well-being of all people within these spaces, including marginalized Edmontonians, ETS' ridership and staff, and makes it easier for non-riders to choose transit.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Canadian Urban Transit Association Transit Safety Task Force Recommendations
2. Recent Investments in Transit Safety and Security
3. Enhanced Transit Safety Plan Logic Model Placemats
4. Transit Service Journey Map