

## OPPORTUNITIES TO ENHANCE TRANSIT SAFETY AND SECURITY - FURTHER INFORMATION AND PLAN

### Recommendation

That the October 24, 2023 City Operations report CO01974, be received for information.

<b>Requested Action</b>	Information only		
<b>ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle</b>	<b>ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals</b>		
<b>CONNECTED</b> This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	<b>Urban Places</b>		
<b>City Plan Values</b>	ACCESS		
<b>City Plan Big City Move(s)</b>	A community of communities	<b>Relationship to Council's Strategic Priorities</b>	Mobility Network
<b>Corporate Business Plan</b>	Serving Edmontonians		
<b>Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Safety and Well-being Strategy</li> </ul>		
<b>Related Council Discussions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CO01834, Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan, City Council, July 4, 2023</li> <li>OCM01037, Transit Safety and Security, City Council, February 22, 2022</li> <li>CO01229, Transit Safety and Security Interim Update, City Council, May 24, 2022</li> <li>OCM01303, Bylaw 19983 - Amending Bylaw 8353 Conduct of Transit Passengers Bylaw, City Council, June 7, 2022</li> <li>CS01566, Community Outreach Transit Team, Community and Public Services Committee, March 20, 2023</li> <li>CO01725, Administration Response - ETSAB Report: Youth and Their Perception of Safety on ETS, Urban Planning Committee, March 21, 2023</li> <li>OCM01797, Advancing Edmonton's Safety and Security, Community and Public Services Committee, May 1, 2023</li> <li>CO01907, Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal Report, City Council, June 13/14, 2023</li> <li>CO01908, Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal Report, City Council, July 4/5, 2023</li> </ul>		

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### **Previous Council/Committee Action**

At the July 4, 2023, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

1. That Administration provide a report to City Council that includes detailed plans that outline specific actions, proposed timing and budget impacts prior to the Supplemental Operating and Capital Budget Adjustments related to:
  - a. Transit Space Activation (#3 in the July 4, 2023 City Operations report CO01834)
  - b. Customer Support at Stations (#4 in the July 4, 2023, City Operations report CO01834)
  - c. Permanent enhanced cleaning (#5 in the July 4, 2023, City Operations report CO01834)
2. That an unfunded capital profile related to the Tunnel Intruder Technology (#12 in the July 4, 2023, City Operations report CO01834) be included in the Fall 2023 Budget discussion.

*Note: the due date for part 2 above is Fall 2023 Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment.*

### **Executive Summary**

- Enhancing the transit rider experience in transit spaces supports increased ridership which, in turn, provides a safer environment by spurring more activity in these spaces.
- Reflecting Council direction from the July 4, 2023 City Council meeting, Administration is providing further information on three opportunities - transit space activation, customer support at stations and ongoing enhanced cleaning.
- While these investments help to address the core needs of the safety plan with regards to personnel, infrastructure and outreach support, there are additional opportunities to improve the transit rider experience in transit spaces.

### **REPORT**

There are currently 43 transit centres and LRT stations in Edmonton, with more being added through the continued growth of the Mass Transit Network. Report CO01834 Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan, presented to City Council on July 4, 2023, provided a list of 14 opportunities to further support transit safety. In response to this report, City Council directed Administration to develop further details around three opportunities: transit space activation, customer support at stations and permanent enhanced cleaning.

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. Since the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan was approved by Council in February 2022, Administration has continuously implemented improvements. While these investments help to address the core needs of the safety plan, there are additional opportunities to improve the transit rider experience in transit spaces.

If implemented, the three opportunities discussed in this report will enhance the vibrancy of Edmonton's transit spaces and contribute to these broader objectives.

### **Transit Space Activation**

In recent years, ETS advanced several space activation projects, including partnering with festival organizers to hold performances in transit stations, providing transit ambassadors in stations as

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part of the Rediscover ETS campaign, and partnering with local artists and agencies to develop new art installations (e.g., the YEG Dignity Mural in Churchill Station, see Attachment 1).

With additional funding, space activation could be broadened to create a more comprehensive Transit Space Activation Program, which would identify priority locations and establish a year-round calendar of activities. This program would have three focus areas, described in further detail below:

- Increasing rider experiential and interactive initiatives within transit spaces.
- Enhancing transit spaces with ongoing art installations.
- Exploring business and community partnership opportunities to provide value-added services for riders during their transit journey.

### Increasing Rider Experiential and Interactive Initiatives

This includes supporting festivals and events, creating standalone events in transit spaces and enhancing the busking program. Administration has supported several community festivals and events - such as the Edmonton International Fringe Theatre Festival, Sustainival and Taste of Edmonton - by providing transportation for volunteers and cross-promotion. This could be expanded to other festivals and events on a year-round basis, facilitating additional performances within transit spaces. This approach was successfully trialed with the Street Performers Festival in 2021 and the Alberta Circus Arts Festival in 2023. It would create promotional opportunities for the festivals, generate positive experiences for transit riders, and reinforce ETS as the preferred choice of travel to and from the event.

ETS could work with community partners to establish standalone events in transit spaces. There are numerous open spaces and underused areas that are suitable for larger scale events or activities. These experiential opportunities can support the City's climate goals and engage/educate riders about the connection between transit and climate action, and include special events, such as Earth Day, Clean Air Day and Bike Month. Sao Paulo in Brazil, for example, hosts an annual music festival in underground stations called Sounderground. Similarly, TransLink in Vancouver hosts an Art Moves music and performance residency program to bring performances into transit spaces.

There are also opportunities to enhance the existing busking program. Currently there are very few buskers within transit spaces, potentially due to low earning potential, safety concerns, limitations on the current booking system, the application process/fee and lack of awareness of the program. Other transit agencies, such as TransLink, have actively promoted busking by creating a curated busking program, including an annual call for performers and ongoing artist promotion. Refreshing the busking program would include a review of existing busking locations within transit spaces, creating refreshed on-site signage, developing an online booking system, investing in communications and creating financial incentives.

### Enhancing Spaces with Art Activations

This focus area would establish partnership funding streams to support community-led activations, and expand on the success of past art installations, such as the Paint the Rails and

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YEG Dignity murals. The Paint the Rails program was financially supported by the Government of Canada as part of the Canada 150 celebrations. Administration does not have operating funding to support these activities. However, there are many opportunities to sustain this program through partnerships with local communities, educational institutions and external organizations that have connections with local artists. The pride crosswalk at the Mill Woods Town Centre is an example of this type of community-led project. Resources would support honoraria for artists and materials costs.

### Exploring Business and Community Agency Partnerships

This involves partnering with the local business community, non-profit organizations and social sector agencies on mutually beneficial opportunities for transit riders. Through initiatives, Administration would proactively work with businesses and organizations to offer products and services that enhance convenience for transit riders. For example, this could include leveraging kiosk locations, hosting pop-up market events or establishing a food box pickup location.

### Resource Requirements for Transit Space Activation Program

The Transit Space Activation program would cost approximately \$300,000 in annual ongoing operating funding. The funding would be used primarily on materials to support activation events and honoraria for artists and other external partners. The funding would also support one position to coordinate this work, which includes building relationships with community partners, coordinating activities within the City and managing the logistics associated with the events.

### **Customer Support at Stations**

The transit rider journey can be complex, requiring riders to navigate a variety of spaces, several modes, evolving schedules and fare programs. Over the past several years, travel patterns and rider demographics have shifted, with riders traveling more often outside of peak commuter travel. There are also a significant number of new riders, as the city's population growth has been fueled by migration<sup>1</sup>. These trends offer an opportunity for more direct, hands-on support to transit riders.

Most large Canadian transit agencies such as TransLink in Vancouver, Calgary Transit, the Toronto Transit Commission, OC Transpo in Ottawa and the Société de transport de Montréal, have positions that support the transit rider experience through in-person rider support at stations. These positions are in addition to dedicated transit security staff, such as Peace Officers, Transit Police, Security Guards and Special Constables. A similar model exists in several United States agencies, including the Bay Area Rapid Transit system in the San Francisco Bay Area, LA Metro in Los Angeles and TriMet in Portland, Oregon. Recently, the Toronto Transit Commission announced it would expand its program by adding 130 new customer service agents in stations, citing the benefits of these positions on increasing reporting and deterring crime<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> City of Edmonton, *Economic Outlook*, 2023. Available at:

[edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/Spring2023ForecastSummaryTable.pdf?cb=1695937140](https://edmonton.ca/sites/default/files/public-files/Spring2023ForecastSummaryTable.pdf?cb=1695937140)

<sup>2</sup> Jordan Omstead, "Backed by Olivia Chow, Toronto transit safety plan proposes 178 new frontline staff," *Toronto Star*, September 20, 2023. Available at:

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The duties vary, but the primary function of these roles is to provide customer service, including assistance with purchasing fares, wayfinding, trip planning and generally educating riders on how to use the transit service. These station roles exist in complement to security guards and other enforcement roles, as they typically do not have a security function. However, they have been found to increase perceptions of safety by providing a friendly, welcoming presence. They are often cited as being the “eyes and ears” of the transit service, providing support and assistance to riders, and connecting to other services and personnel as needed.

Research indicates these roles have several benefits. They:

- Are aligned with industry-wide shifts in fare enforcement approaches;
- Can promote a culture of fare compliance;
- May be deployed as part of multidisciplinary teams;
- Can be used to further promote education campaigns; and
- Can educate riders on social programs and other initiatives.

Administration has determined that customer support duties could include:

- Explaining what fare programs are available, assisting with procuring fares and how to use Arc payment machines. This could be beneficial as Arc continues to be rolled out to additional fare groups, and as the City moves towards phasing out traditional physical fare products.
- Sharing trip planning information and directly assisting riders to plan their trip. This would include having paper and digital tools to support trip planning, similar to outreach performed at transit centres during the bus network redesign launch.
- Being visibly present and approachable, including wearing a distinct uniform.
- Communicating in a variety of languages to support riders who speak other languages.
- Actively moving through stations and proactively engaging with transit riders.
- Overseeing activities within assigned stations and reporting issues to the ETS Control Centre.
- Reinforcing messaging or information related to current campaigns or initiatives.

Administration recommends starting this program in six stations - including select transit centres and LRT stations - with a focus on the busiest stations and on ensuring broad, geographic coverage. The attendants would operate in pairs and support riders during all service hours, including off-peak and weekend service. This would require 24 attendants at a total cost of \$2.5 million annually, however the program could be started on a smaller scale with less attendants. Outcomes would be monitored, including direct input from riders and staff, and Administration could report back to Council to consider next steps or adjustments.

### **Permanent Enhanced Cleaning**

Transit riders have expressed that clean spaces are a priority that influence their decision to take transit. Cleaning of transit spaces includes cleaning vehicles, LRT stations, transit centres and bus shelters. Clean spaces create a welcoming transit environment with fewer safety hazards. The ETS budget has historically included approximately \$11.1 million of funding for a base level of

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cleaning activity of vehicles and facilities, however, over the last several years, cleaning needs have increased. There are ongoing needs to remove litter and debris, clean up graffiti and address other cleaning needs.

In 2023 the Government of Alberta provided a one-time grant of \$5 million to the City of Edmonton through the Alberta Transit System Cleaning Grant. This grant enabled Administration to advance several initiatives including infrastructure improvements, establishing joint deployment hubs, and more frequent cleaning. One million dollars of the grant was allocated to increased hours of custodial service, increased cleaning of Light Rail Vehicles and graffiti removal.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

The three opportunities outlined in this report require the following annual operating budget:

- \$300,000 annual ongoing funding including one FTE to support a Transit Space Activation Program.
- \$2.5 million annual ongoing funding for 24 FTEs (attendants) to support a Station Attendant Program.
- \$2.34 million annual ongoing funding to permanently maintain a higher service level of cleaning in transit. For 2024, \$1.84 million is required due to it being partially offset by an Alberta Transit System Grant that expires in April 2024.

### **Community Insight**

Administration's response to transit safety challenges includes listening to feedback from transit riders through ongoing customer satisfaction surveys, concerns reported through 311 and Transit Watch, social media, and through direct correspondence with City Council. Feedback shared by Council Committees, such as the City of Edmonton Youth Council and Edmonton Transit System Advisory Board, has also informed the approach. Administration evaluates the effectiveness of new approaches, 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.

Overall satisfaction with safety among transit riders was 62 per cent between January to August 2023, representing a decrease of 13 per cent for the same period in 2022. Feedback on this question includes concerns around personal safety, the identification of social issues which impact perceptions of safety, as well as requests for additional safety measures. Administration has heard from transit riders that there is an urgent need for compassionate solutions that support inclusive, welcoming and safe transit spaces.

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 15 per cent non-riders who reported they stopped using transit because they had 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 response was better safety and security measures.

Administration continues to seek further community insight through various research projects, including a location-based QR code survey, and a qualitative research project which aims to

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uncover stories and narratives that matter to the people using transit spaces. This research will help provide a more in-depth understanding of riders' perceptions of safety, as well as the drivers of transit safety perceptions.

### GBA+

Representing different perspectives and experiences are key to the effectiveness of transit safety initiatives. Edmonton Transit Service ridership consists of diverse riders who hold a range of identity factors and lived experiences. From January to August 2023, feedback from 2,000 transit riders ages 15 and over residing within the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) was collected through the monthly transit rider satisfaction survey. Transit riders are more likely to identify as youth, women, Indigenous peoples, LGBTQ2SA+ and come from a low income household. Newcomers, essential workers, seniors, persons with disabilities, students and families are more likely to rely on transit. 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 perceived lack of) better options. Because of the history of colonization and residential schools, Indigenous peoples are often overrepresented within these marginalized populations.

The monthly transit rider satisfaction survey indicated those who identified as women, racialized/visible minorities, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+ and youth ages 15-24 were less satisfied with the cleanliness of transit centres/LRT stations compared to overall respondents. These demographic groups also tend to have lower overall satisfaction levels. Enhanced cleaning improves the experience for riders, including those from marginalized communities, supporting greater usage of transit among those who need it the most.

Providing customer support in transit spaces through station attendants reduces barriers faced by both new and existing riders by creating a more welcoming and inclusive environment, bringing direct customer service to the spaces transit riders regularly use. Studies<sup>3</sup> have indicated new transit riders experience increased anxiety and difficulty with wayfinding. This creates a challenging transit experience for occasional and new transit riders, including newcomers, youth adapting to independent travel on transit, people with lower literacy levels and those who have experienced a change in their circumstances and are beginning to rely on transit.

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.

### Attachment

1. Examples of ETS Space Activations

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<sup>3</sup> Schmitt, Lorelei. Delbosc, Alexa et. al. [Learning to use transit services: adapting to unfamiliar transit travel](#). 2018