

### Youth Programs and Service Planning

#### 1. Routes and Timing

##### School Specials Service Planning

School Specials supplement regular service at junior high, senior high and post-secondary schools in Edmonton. These routes are intended to manage overcrowding on regular ETS bus routes caused by a large number of students travelling between a neighbourhood and a school. Many schools around the city are served by regular bus routes, and there are 111 extra trips on 37 routes that are timed for students. ETS operates 240 School Special trips per day to supplement regular bus routes on 47 School Special routes. School Special trips are an integrated part of regular ETS service, meaning parents, caregivers and other non-student riders can use these routes.

ETS regularly meets with school board planning and transportation teams to coordinate transportation needs. This coordination includes reviewing ridership, anticipated enrollment, anticipated travel patterns, as well as feedback from students, guardians, transit operators and school board staff. ETS implements five service adjustments throughout the year, however, special allowance for route timing modifications are enabled throughout September to account for unpredicted school transportation needs. In addition, ETS will continue conducting annual reviews of School Specials to further identify areas of improvement and opportunities to enhance service.

##### Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) and Transit Priority Measures

Bus Rapid Transit and Transit Priority Measures were identified as key success factors in the Mass Transit Plan for a city population of 1.25 million.

Route 31, a new bus route that provides weekday express service between the University of Alberta and Leger Transit Centre in Southwest Edmonton, started operation on September 5. This route is part of long-term service planning as Edmonton's transit system expands and prepares to meet future population growth and provides direct connections to post secondary institutions, and recreation opportunities.

Through the City's Mass Transit Planning for the 1.25 million population horizon, Route 31 will eventually evolve into an important future bus-rapid transit route that runs from Ambleside to University via Terwillegar Drive, with dedicated lanes and transit priority measures that help buses move faster.

During the 2023-2026 budget deliberations, Council approved capital funding for planning, design and construction of transit priority measures and the planning and design of two BRT routes. Administration is currently developing plans for the implementation of transit priority measures and the design of the two BRT routes.

### Online Trip Planning Tools and Mobile Applications

Times on trip planning tools such as mobile apps may vary by two minutes due to the update frequency of General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) information on vehicle locations. Therefore, it is recommended that riders get to bus stops prior to the times shown on real-time trip planning apps.

In 2022, Administration initiated a project to enhance service alerts and updates to the ETS online rider tools. Service alerts relay notices regarding detours, delays, and disruptions to service. A GTFS system is used to collect real-time data from the transit fleet to provide updates on locations and estimated arrival times of transit vehicles on trip planning tools. Administration is continually working to improve the system to enhance the availability of information to transit riders.

### Park and Ride

Park and Ride facilities are provided to increase accessibility of transit with a focus on those who use transit for commuting to downtown or major activity centres such as post-secondary institutions and for special events. The locations of Park and Ride facilities are determined by City Policy C554A - Park and Ride and the Park and Ride Guidelines provide additional guidance on the purpose and use, planning, design, pricing, safety and accessibility of Park and Ride facilities. There are currently nine Park and Ride facilities located in major districts throughout the city, offering a total of 4,619 parking spaces.

## **2. Payment Procedure and Affordability**

### ETS Youth Fares

ETS youth fares are comparable to other larger transit agencies in Canada serving populations over 400,000. A jurisdictional scan showed the current ETS youth monthly fare is lower than Toronto, Calgary, Ottawa, Winnipeg, Hamilton and Brampton. The table below outlines youth monthly transit fares across larger transit agencies in Canada:

## Attachment 2

Municipality	Youth Fare Age Range	Youth Monthly Pass (As of August 2023)
Toronto	13 - 19	\$128.15
Brampton	6 - 12	\$84.00
	13 - 19	\$118.00
Ottawa	13 - 19	\$96.75
Hamilton	13 - 19	\$94.60
Calgary	6 - 17	\$82.00
Winnipeg	11 - 16	\$77.00
Edmonton	6 - 24	\$73.00
Quebec City	6 - 18 and students (ages 19+)	\$63.00
Vancouver	14 - 18	\$59.95
London	13 - 17	\$61.00
Montreal	6 - 17 and students (ages 6-64)	\$58.00

### Other Youth Fare Programs

To support more affordable access to youth fares, ETS also offers other fare programs outlined below:

- The Universal Transit Pass (U-Pass) program provides eligible students at participating post-secondary institutions with unlimited travel on ETS and all regional transit providers at a discounted rate for the fall and winter school terms.
- The Edmonton Public and Edmonton Catholic school board youth pass subsidy which provides youth passes at 60 per cent of the standard adult fare.
- The Ride Transit program reduces financial barriers for eligible Edmontonians experiencing low-income by providing adult and youth monthly transit passes at 35 per cent or 50 per cent of the standard adult fare, depending on income level.
- Donate A Ride (DAR) and Providing Accessible Transit Here (PATH) are low-income fare programs which provide free single-use fares and monthly passes to social agencies to support their clients. Over 100 social agencies across Edmonton benefit from these programs, many of which serve youth.

### Youth Arc Pilot Findings

The Youth/Student Arc Pilot launched in July 2023 to understand the experience of youth riders with Arc, test the new fare payment system, identify gaps and formulate actionable improvements to improve the experience. Feedback from 49 youth riders was collected on various Arc features and functions, including the Arc website, youth/student fare application process, fund load and balance functions,

card tapping system, customer service and overall Arc experience. Youth participants recognized the benefits of transitioning to the Arc fare payment system as ease of use, convenience and elimination of paper waste. Additionally, participants provided suggestions for areas for improvement which are outlined below:

- Providing additional instructions for the youth fare application process.
- Ensuring Arc validators on transit vehicles and in LRT stations are functioning at all times.
- Offering a mobile app to allow Arc users to reload funds from smartphones.
- Educating riders about the benefits of tapping off.

Feedback from the pilot is being taken into consideration prior to launch, and some items will be considered for future system enhancements. In the later phases of Arc launch, an open-payments system will be introduced to allow riders to tap on using their bank cards or mobile wallets.

### **3. Comfort and Security**

#### Fare Gates

Studies show that the installation of fare gates has a minimal impact on safety and security on transit. In Q1 2023 the City of Calgary published a report on a comprehensive feasibility study on the implementation of a closed transit system in Calgary. Findings from the study showed that cities with fully closed and partially closed transit systems have experienced similar spikes in crime and social disorder as open transit systems such as in Edmonton; the installation of fare gates does not deter crime from occurring in transit spaces.

#### Safety and Drug Use on Transit

The complex intersection of the drug poisoning epidemic and houselessness has contributed to an increase in disorder and sheltering in transit spaces. These complex issues have contributed to an overall shift in the perception of safety of transit riders, including youth riders.

Since the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan was approved by Council in February 2022, several measures have been implemented to address safety and security on transit. The July 4, 2023 City Council report CO01834 Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan outlines several new initiatives Administration has been undertaking to further enhance safety on transit, with upcoming Council updates in the October 24, 2023 City Council report CO01974 Opportunities to Enhance Transit

Safety and Security and the December 12, 2023 City Council CO01953 Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core verbal report.

### **4. Youth Outreach and Education**

#### Travel Training

The ETS travel training program is available to people who need extra support and guidance to learn to use transit and make best use of the transit system, with a particular focus on seniors and people with disabilities. For youth, this has generally been delivered in a group setting for high school and older youth, arranged with teachers/workers of specialized programs. One-on-one training is also available for high school-aged youth or older when requested or referred by a caregiver or support worker. Travel training and orientation content is adapted to the needs and abilities of the group or individual. The program includes presentations on the transit system safety and security features and user best practices, and this is highlighted and reinforced in experiential learning such as on board transit and on site orientation to transit centre/station locations.

In addition to travel training, ETS supports local school districts with courtesy passes for their life skills curriculum for students with disabilities in which transit orientation and practice is included in instructional activities. Students are able to build their skills and confidence in taking regular transit with their teachers and classmates over the course of the school year.

#### School Open Houses and Orientation Program

Every year during late spring and early winter, ETS works with Edmonton Public Schools and Edmonton Catholic Schools to participate in junior and senior high school open houses. These open houses are opportunities for students transitioning to junior or senior high school to learn more about the services and programs offered by the school. ETS supports students by answering questions about how students will travel between home and school using the bus and LRT. Interested schools often invite ETS representatives on site while others request transit information to share on their websites.

On-site City staff also provide awareness of transit safety and security measures, supporting their ridership experience. These subject matter experts can provide additional context to general transit information. Several schools near the Valley Line Southeast will include content on safety around low floor LRT.

### School Year Orientation

During the first two weeks of school, ETS staff conduct outreach at key transit centres where large volumes of students make transfers. The purpose of this outreach is to help students navigate transit centres so they can make a successful transfer and reach their destinations.

During all outreach activities, ETS distributes a safety and security postcard that outlines all of the ways transit riders can seek assistance to improve awareness on safety and security features on transit. Students are encouraged to take a copy and keep it in their bag when they're traveling to and from school, and this information is also available on the Transit Watch webpage of the City's website.

ETS is currently engaging the Edmonton Public and Catholic School Boards, as well as some post-secondary institutions, about other ways to engage students about how to use transit, safety and security, and rail safety. Several ideas for engagement have been identified. The new programs will be co-developed between ETS and the school board curriculum coordinators to ensure these outreach activities complement the existing school curriculum.

In addition to working with the school boards, ETS is engaging third party organizations who serve youth. This includes museums, attractions and city services where there is an opportunity to collaborate and incorporate transit into their youth programming.

### First Riders Program

Each August, the annual First Riders event provides travel training and passenger safety orientation for students making the transition to bus transportation for the first time. The event provides students under the age of 13 with the opportunity to explore a bus in a safe setting and ask ETS and yellow school bus representatives questions. The program is coordinated with three local School Boards and aims to equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to travel safely on a bus.

### City Hall School Program

The City Hall School program is a partnership between the City of Edmonton and Edmonton Public School which provides an interactive opportunity for students to learn about the City. ETS supports this program by donating charter service to transport Grade 1 to 9 students to and from City Hall. During this time, ETS provides students with transit training which teaches them essential transit skills such as how to safely use transit, trip planning, wayfinding, and other transit-related topics. Transit Peace Officers also participate in the program to educate students about safety and security on transit.

### Post-Secondary Orientation

In late August and early September, ETS participates in orientation week activities hosted by post-secondary schools during the beginning of the fall back-to-school season. Booths are set up at post-secondary schools to educate students new to ETS and new to Edmonton about using the bus and LRT.

### Bus and LRT Maintenance Shop Tours

ETS, Transit Fleet Maintenance and the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB) are exploring a new initiative to bring students who are registered in mechanics-based classes into the garage. They will be provided with an in-depth tour of the maintenance shops to learn about heavy-duty maintenance, as well as careers in public transit and the skills needed in the future as the transit fleet evolves towards zero emissions.