

# ETS/St. Albert Regional Transit

## Progress Report

### Recommendation:

That Administration work with the City of St. Albert to focus the “Moving Integrated Transit Forward” project on the assessment of a separate regional commuter bus service for the Edmonton Metro Region.

That Administration return to Committee in the third quarter of 2016, with a report addressing the following items in relation to a separate regional commuter service for the Edmonton Metro Region:

1. An analysis of costs and benefits for a regional commuter service.
2. Potential for expanding the regional commuter service to include other interested municipalities within the Edmonton metropolitan region.
3. The potential for provincial funding assistance for startup, operations and capital contributions for a regional commuter service.
4. Mechanisms available to establish a sustainable funding and cost-sharing model for the regional commuter service.
5. Available governance options for a regional commuter service, including costs, benefits, risks and timing issues associated with those options.
6. A recommendation on the preferred model for implementation of a regional commuter service.

### Report Summary

This progress report provides an overview of the work carried out between City of Edmonton and City of St. Albert administration to date, a recommended approach to enhanced regional collaboration for the Edmonton Metro Region, and next steps leading to the final report in September. A review of potential transit models considered by the project’s steering committee is included as an attachment.

### Previous Council/Committee Action

At the June 10, 2015, City Council meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration work with St. Albert Transit to evaluate the integration of both transit systems and provide a progress report to committee by March 2016.

### Report

Representatives from the Administrations of the Cities of Edmonton and St. Albert have been studying the implications of different approaches to increased regional collaboration of transit services. Since May 2015, the steering committee assessed possible models of collaboration identified along a spectrum ranging from maintaining

the status quo, to a fully integrated regional transit service across the Edmonton Metro Region. Models were assessed for:

1. the feasibility of implementation
2. an acceptable balance between maintaining local service autonomy and enhancing regional mobility

Considerations related to five models are outlined in Attachment 1.

Through research and evaluation, the project steering committee gave the highest ranking to a separate regional commuter system as the most appropriate next step towards greater regional integration. In a regional commuter service model, municipalities retain responsibility for the provision of public transit services within their municipal boundaries while inter-municipal transit is operated by a separate organization, such as a joint committee, commission or corporation.

A regional commuter service would be responsible for assessing inter-municipal travel needs of commuters and designing specific routes to meet passenger demand. Municipal transit authorities would continue to focus on the needs for network service within their respective communities. A governance structure for the service would be defined, and could include a board with representation from the participating municipalities with support from non-affiliated industry and technical expert members. Service could either be provided through an owned and operated fleet and employed staff, or through a contracted service from one or more municipal or private operators.

The regional commuter service model would be relatively easy to expand from serving St. Albert and Edmonton to include other partner communities in the Edmonton Metro Region. This would lead to greater ease of access for transit commuters. Customers would experience more convenient service across municipal boundaries through seamless transfers between express regional routes and local network routes. Transit planning would still be aligned with land-use and other planning functions within each municipality. Applying a longer-term lens, the new transit service could serve as a precursor to future phases of integration like LRT and paratransit in the Edmonton Metro Region.

### **Community Engagement**

With approval of this recommendation, Administration will begin to engage with other potential partnering municipalities and the Capital Region Board Transit Committee to gauge interest in participation as part of this transit commission. Public consultation may be included as part of the implementation strategy following direction from the September recommendation.

### **Corporate Outcomes**

Integration of regional transit services would improve the mobility of residents throughout the Edmonton Metro Region and create greater opportunities for labour mobility and economic/social endeavours, supporting both the “Edmontonians use

public transit and active modes of transportation” and the “Edmonton Region is a catalyst for industry and business growth” corporate outcomes.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

Funding to complete this project is coming from the 2016 general expenditure budget for Transportation Services (now City Operations), as outlined in the "Moving Integrated Transit Forward" proposed work plan on May 27, 2015 (CR\_2428 report). Should the September report recommend implementation of a regional model, additional funding will be required to move the project from approval through to implementation; the September report will outline anticipated funding requirements for future delivery of a regional service.

### **Legal Implications**

There are several governance / legal structures that would facilitate the establishment of a regional transit system. The choice of governance/legal model will flow from Council's policy direction on the preferred regional model.

### **Justification of Recommendation**

Through deliberations with City of St. Albert Administration, both parties consider this as a potentially effective approach to increased integration of transit services in the Edmonton Metro Region. The separate regional commuter service is projected to increase inter-municipal mobility and potentially offer more commuter destinations in addition to Edmonton's core, increasing opportunities for residents to use public transit for economic and social purposes. Implementation of a regional commuter service could support future system integration across the region.

### **Attachments**

1. ETS/St. Albert Regional Transit - Progress Report

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

- T. Burge, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer and General Manager, Financial & Corporate Services
- R. G. Klassen, General Manager, Sustainable Development