

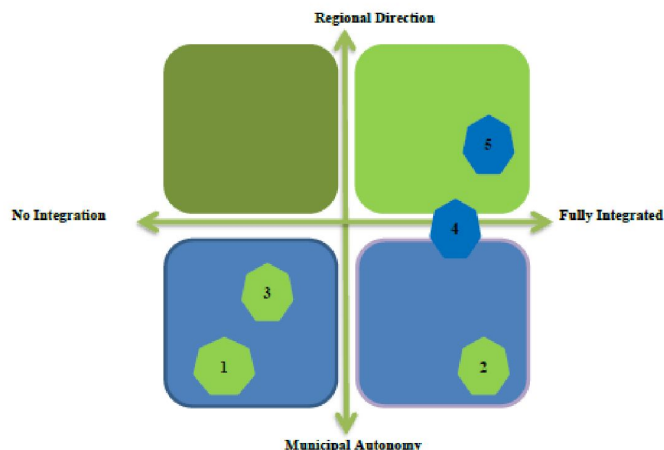
Attachment 1 - CR_2616

“ETS/St. Albert Regional Transit - Progress Report”

Attachment 1 provides a high level examination of the five potential models that were considered by the project steering committee. Models were assessed for the feasibility of implementation and an acceptable balance between maintaining local service autonomy and enhancing regional mobility.

FIGURE 1: THE FIVE MODELS ON A CONTINUUM OF SERVICE

1. Current State;
2. Single Contractor/Operator;
3. Common Capital Program;
4. Regional Commuter Service; and
5. Independent Transit Authority.



1. Current State

While the goal of the project is to examine the possibility of greater levels of integration for regional transit services, it is important to note that the Edmonton Metro Region already has a high level of collaboration between the different service providers. Further enhancements are in development that will facilitate regional mobility. Examples of this include contracts in place to allow suburban municipalities to enter the region's core and use ETS facilities, a number of subcontracted services between providers, and approval and funding for the implementation of a regional Smart Fare System.

Benefits

Local autonomy remains intact, and the transit service providers across the region will continue to explore possible opportunities to enhance regional collaboration as they become available.

The status quo avoids concerns related to autonomy over service levels, revenues (as commuter routes are primary revenue sources), and governance structures.

Risks

The associated risk of maintaining the status quo is a continuation on the path towards eight or more separate transit services in the region. While the region would still have the ability to collaborate through various initiatives, this approach could trail behind the other models in terms of overall regional mobility options, regional coordination and planning of services, and capital investments supporting regional priorities.

Funding Considerations

Funding for the Current State would remain status quo with costs described in current municipal operational business plans.

2. Single Contractor/Operator Model

This model proposes a regional provider of transit services that contracts service with each municipality.

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Benefits

The Single Contractor/Operator Model maintains local autonomy over service levels and route selection, as the level of service or funding directed towards transit services remains the purview of each separate municipality. The Edmonton Metro Region would take advantage of the scope and expertise of a centralized administration. This would produce consistency across the region related to the reliability of service and the assets delivering the service. The single brand for the region would increase awareness of inter-municipal commuter transit service, with the potential to create a better customer experience through streamlined communication and information systems.

Risks

Administrative efficiency in this model would be limited as each municipality would have to maintain a planning relationship with the operating contractor. The share of administrative costs would increase for smaller providers because of the broader scope of activities and functions. Overall system cost are expected to increase primarily due to projected wage rate increases.

It is unlikely that there would be significant change in regional investment or prioritization. The Single Contractor/Operator Model does not address the coordination of planning or regional prioritization of capital investments. There could be a perception of loss in local autonomy over service and some loss of cost control.

Funding Considerations

The Single Contractor/Operator would negotiate directly with each municipality, creating minimal fiscal change from current expenditures. Municipalities would have autonomy to select service and funding levels, with some loss of control over costs. The projected increase from ‘leveling’ of labour rates would increase overall system/service costs.

3. Regional Capital Priorities Model

The Regional Capital Priorities Model would coordinate and prioritize capital investment in Transit Services across the Metro Edmonton Region. A regional board, committee or commission would be accountable for prioritizing program/grant investments in infrastructure such as LRT, rolling stock and park and ride facilities. Operational service delivery would remain unchanged.

Municipalities would forego a level of autonomy as investment decisions would be made with a focus on regional mobility. Local operations would be indirectly impacted through this model, as services would be adjusted to respond to the infrastructure investments being made.

Benefits

Similar to how projects are advanced through the River Valley Alliance, this approach would prioritize infrastructure investment based on transit and mobility needs for the Edmonton Metro Region. Regional mobility would be enhanced through system design that better-supports inter-municipal travel patterns and facilitates partnering by multiple municipalities on select projects.

Risks

Municipal autonomy could be reduced as control over capital expenditures is transferred. The governance structure would be replacing a one-on-one relationship with other orders of government with an indirect relationship through a 3rd party mechanism.

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Funding Considerations

Infrastructure decisions made through this model would impact local operations, both related to how service is delivered (i.e., adjusting service for a new park and ride facility) and maintenance costs due to the age/state of rolling stock.

4. Regional Commuter Service Model

In a Regional Commuter Service Model, municipalities retain responsibility for the provision of public transit services within their municipal boundaries while inter-municipal transit would be operated by a separate organization. The regional service provider will be responsible for assessing inter-municipal travel needs of commuters and designing specific routes to serve commuter demand. Municipal transit authorities would continue to focus on the needs for network service within their communities.

Benefits

A regional commuter service would be able to provide service to more communities, and more origins and destinations could be connected with express service. Customers will experience more convenient service across municipal boundaries through seamless transfers between express regional routes and local network routes. This approach to regional integration has proven successful in other jurisdictions, is fairly straightforward to implement and can easily expand to partnering communities in the Edmonton Metro Region.

In the longer term, the regional commuter transit authority could be tasked to manage capital investments in transit such as BRT or LRT right of way acquisition and roadway/railway construction. This would improve regional transportation planning and facilitate investment in transit by the Federal and Provincial governments. This approach could serve as a precursor to future phases of integration for transit in the Edmonton Metro Region.

Risks

There are challenges of integrating services of a new commission with existing services, such as planning and communication. The reduction in local autonomy over commuter services creates some risk to current services, such that passengers could be inconvenienced by having to transfer more frequently.

Commuter services are significant fare-revenue leaders for the smaller municipalities throughout the region. Effectively managing the transition to this model is critical as to not jeopardize inter-municipal transit service throughout the entire region.

Funding Considerations

The creation of a new regional service will require seed funding from partner municipalities, and may require ongoing partner funding supported by long term commitments or other predictable revenue sources. Fare allocation, revenue sharing, and debt allocation will all need to be considered and negotiated within the funding arrangement between the participating municipalities.

Regional commuter services are key transit activities that accounts for or generates the greatest operating revenue for suburban municipalities. A move to a separate operator for commuter services could significantly impact recoveries from fares for local services.

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5. Regional Transit Authority

A regional transit authority could be established to consolidate and operate all transit services by defining service levels and an operating plan, making capital decisions, and relieving all participating municipalities of their responsibilities for transit. The authority would require establishment of a corporate model; operations could be managed internally by participating municipalities or through a contracted service.

Benefits

This model would address service planning and coordination across the Edmonton Metro Region, which could enable improved regional coordination and delivery of transit. The transit authority would provide a consistent approach to route planning and assets used with the goal of maximizing mobility throughout the Edmonton Metro Region.

Administrative functions could be improved and streamlined, including efficiencies in procurement of rolling stock. Such a model facilitates the implementation of broader regional transit initiatives. Residents would be able to conveniently access service across municipal boundaries, and have a better customer experience through combined municipal strengths and technologies.

Risks

This model is the most complex of those considered in this report. It would result in a significant loss of local autonomy related to transit services for all municipalities in the region. Each municipality would have representation on the board of the transit authority, but would have limited authority.

Transit planning would be separated from municipal and regional planning occurring in different forums. This creates a risk that authorities from each municipality would not have any formal mechanism to manage or resolve differing perspectives. Preliminary assessments suggest that amalgamation of transit services could increase costs of service overall and the funding and governance requirements would be complex.

As local governments change, the local representation appointed to the board by various municipalities may have different priorities which could negatively impact long-term planning and stability.

Funding Considerations

Ongoing funding of this model would need to be designed to support a separate corporate infrastructure with board and administrative costs, in addition to the base level of service for the region, with mechanisms to support system growth and capital needs. A steady, predictable funding model would need to be in place to ensure that an acceptable level of service could be provided on an ongoing basis. This model could allow for individual municipal partners to opt-up (pay additional amounts) for a higher level of service.