

## ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY

### Recommendation

That the March 4, 2025, City Operations report CO02559, be received for information.

Requested Action		Information	
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle		ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals	
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.		Urban Places	
City Plan Values	ACCESS		
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"><li>• City Policy C539A - Transit Service Standards Procedures</li><li>• Enhanced Transit Safety Plan</li><li>• Community Safety and Well-Being Strategy</li><li>• Bylaw 8353 - Conduct of Transit Passengers</li></ul>		
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• June 12/13, 2024, City Operations report CO02358, Quarterly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal report</li><li>• March 12, 2024, City Operations report CO02227, Quarterly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal report</li><li>• December 12, 2023, City Operations report CO01954, Bi-monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal report</li><li>• October 24, 2023, City Operations report CO01944, Bi-monthly Verbal Update on Transit Safety Plan &amp; Downtown Core</li><li>• October 24, 2023, City Operations report CO01974, Opportunities to Enhance Transit Safety and Security - Further Information and Plans</li><li>• October 11, 2023, City Operations report CO02029, Administrative Response To: Youth Council Report Youth Perspectives on Transit in Edmonton: An Analytical Report of Ongoing Transit Issues From the Youth Lens</li><li>• July 4, 2023, City Operations report CO01834, Implementation of the Edmonton Transit System Safety Plan</li><li>• July 4, 2023, City Operations report CO01908, Monthly Update on the</li></ul>		

## ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY

- |  |  |
|--|--|
|  | <p>Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal report</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• May 1, 2023, Office of the City Manager report OCM01797, Advancing Edmonton's Safety and Security</li><li>• March 21, 2023, City Operations report CO01725, Administration Response: ETSAB Youth Safety</li></ul> |
|--|--|

### Executive Summary

- This report responds to recommendations made in the Edmonton Transit Service Advisory Board's (ETSAB) report EXT02558 ETSAB: Perception of LRT Safety. Administration is aligned with the recommendations.
- ETS is committed to delivering convenient, reliable, safe, accessible and inclusive transit service. Safety and security is a core lever for ridership, in addition to service and faring-related levers.
- Over the last several years, ETS has seen more investment, partnerships and measures focused on safety and security than in previous years. More uniformed security personnel, joint deployments, and community outreach patrol provide support across the transit network. Enhanced cleaning, facility upgrades and community activations, in partnership with community organizations and festivals, continue to expand and build upon the ongoing work. These initiatives align with recommendations from the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) on improving safety for riders, staff and contractors.
- The average crime severity at LRT stations and transit centres decreased by six per cent in 2024. Transit safety and security saw a decrease of incidents where Transit Peace Officers (TPOs) Calls for service to LRT stations and transit centres increased by 12 per cent.
- Administration has provided regular updates to Council on the implementation and progress related to transit safety and security, and will continue to share updates on a quarterly basis through memos to Council. Recommendations from ETSAB will inform further actions as work continues to improve transit safety and security.
- Administration will be returning to City Council on March 18, 2025 with City Operations report CO02718, responding to a motion outlining additional options to further enhance LRT safety.

### REPORT

Ensuring all riders have access to a safe, reliable and inclusive transit service is critical for growing ridership and can impact the perception of a safe city. ETSAB has prepared a report, EXT02558 ETSAB: Perception of LRT Safety, which provides recommendations on improving cleanliness in transit spaces; awareness of transit safety tools and measures; activations in transit spaces; and operational and technological upgrades. Administration appreciates ETSAB's ongoing work in sharing information about the perceptions of safety on transit in Edmonton.

As part of the commitment to providing safe transit spaces for everyone, the City has made a number of critical investments to improve transit safety and security over the past several years and will consider ETSAB's feedback in future planning. Administration has provided regular

## ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY

updates to Council on the progress of safety and security improvements as well as related ridership recovery and growth. Since the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan<sup>1</sup> was approved by Council in February 2022, Administration has continuously implemented safety improvements, including but not limited to:

- Adding more personnel resources to do joint patrols among Transit Peace Officers (TPOs) and Edmonton Police Service (EPS) members
- Growing the number of Community Outreach Transit Teams (COTT), in partnership with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society
- Exploring more ways to activate transit spaces, including community partnerships, art installations and buskers
- Upgrading facilities and infrastructure to enhance the security of LRT stations, and
- Adding more surveillance cameras across the network.

Safety enhancements and investments in transit service have contributed to a significant growth in ridership. In 2024, ridership reached a new record of 61.6 million completed trips, growing by 15 per cent compared to 2023 and by 12 per cent compared to 2019 levels. Increased transit ridership increases movement across the City, supporting various City initiatives, like Downtown Vibrancy, and, more broadly, economic development efforts. While there are several levers that help increase transit ridership, such as population growth and service investments, there is an important relationship between ridership and safety. Transit safety and security is a core lever for transit ridership, along with other levers like service reliability, convenience and frequency.

Implementation of the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan has resulted in several positive outcomes. As noted by ETSAB, various types of safety and security incident rates have decreased over the last year. The average percentage of non-criminal incidents<sup>2</sup> relative to ridership was 0.049 per cent in 2024, representing an increase from 0.046 per cent in 2023. Ridership increased by 15 per cent over the same period. As reported in the last several verbal updates on the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan, both the Crime Severity Index and violent criminal incidents on transit reported by Edmonton Police Service have been decreasing.

In 2024, 61 per cent of respondents in the monthly online transit rider satisfaction survey indicated they felt safe throughout their last transit trip, compared to 60 per cent in 2023. As described by ETSAB, there are many factors that influence perception of safety, and actual safety incidents are only one of these factors. Perceptions can also vary based on rider demographics and intersecting identity factors as well as seasonal variations. Improving perceptions of safety will take time given the wide range of factors that can have an impact. Additional indicators of transit safety and security can provide further insights into the rider experience, such as incident reporting trends, trip data to identify travel patterns and qualitative feedback from riders.

---

<sup>1</sup> [Enhanced Transit Safety Plan](#), February 2022

<sup>2</sup> Internal ETS safety data, 2023-2024

## ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY

### Jurisdictional Context

Challenges with transit safety and security are experienced in major cities across North America. In April 2023, the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA) released a report<sup>3</sup> highlighting recommendations from a national Transit Safety Task Force. In addition to recommendations for transit agencies, several recommendations for the federal and provincial governments related to addressing supportive housing, extreme weather, mental health and substance use are included. The City has implemented, or is in the process of implementing, the majority of the CUTA Task Force recommendations, including a multidisciplinary and integrated transit safety plan, coordinated outreach teams, investment in security and enforcement personnel, enhanced cleaning and cellular service expansion in underground transit locations.

Administration remains committed to listening, learning and adapting to the needs of transit riders. In alignment with the recommendations from ETSAB, examples of ongoing and new initiatives regarding safety and security are outlined below.

### Expanded Personnel and Partnerships

Administration has continued to implement additional enforcement personnel supported through Council budget decisions. For winter 2024/2025, more resources have been deployed across the network than ever before, including 98 frontline TPOs, more EPS members and joint patrols between TPOs and EPS, as well as seven COTTs. In 2024, the integrated Transit Community Safety teams (TRACS), which pairs a TPO with EPS members on joint patrols, have provided additional patrols. The Transit Community Action Teams (TCAT) will continue to be deployed in data-led hot spot areas on the transit system to provide a proactive enforcement presence. In addition, a TPO Train Team is currently being piloted on the LRT, focusing on high visibility and fare inspections during peak ridership periods.

In Q2 to Q3 2024, TPOs conducted educational and outreach activities that focused on proactive patrols in transit centres and provided an enhanced presence at transit locations serving as hubs for students returning to school. Through the “Here to Help” campaign, the City and EPS collaborated to create a safe and welcoming transit environment for all riders, including new and returning students, first-time riders and newcomers to Edmonton. The campaign resulted in:

- Ninety five per cent increase in proactive TPO patrol events, from 766 in 2023 to 1,491 in 2024.
- Thirty three per cent decrease in high-priority calls at the eight target locations compared to 2023.
- Twenty five per cent decrease in high-priority calls across the entire network compared to 2023.
- Ten per cent improvement in TPO response times for the duration of the campaign.
- Residual effect after the campaign, showing reduced high-priority events for at least five weekdays following the campaign.

---

<sup>3</sup> [CUTA Prioritizing Safety on Public Transit Report](#)

## **ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY**

### **Cleanliness and Maintenance**

Ongoing cleaning and maintenance of transit spaces and vehicles remains a priority for Administration. Enhanced cleaning protocols continue to be followed, as outlined in the December 5, 2023 City Operations report CO02060, Administration Response: ETSAB Ridership Improvement Strategies. During the Fall 2023 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment, Council approved additional funding to continue the enhanced level of cleaning through 2025. ETSAB shared rider perceptions of cleanliness have declined over the last five years. This may be due, in part, to increased social disorder and the inappropriate use of transit spaces, as well as riders seeing the physical conditions of the interior of the aging fleet, for example, rust in the bus interior or seats in need of repair.

For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, the Government of Alberta, through the Alberta Transit System Cleanup Grant, provided the City \$5 million to enhance several core components of transit safety, including enhanced cleaning and graffiti removal, 40 additional security cameras, as well as infrastructure improvements to more than 500 LRT station and transit centre doors.

In 2022 and 2023, responding to feedback from riders about washroom reliability and cleanliness, Administration implemented measures to improve safety in public washrooms in LRT stations and transit centres. Measures included adding sharps containers for proper disposal, displaying signage about addiction and mental health supports, as well as ensuring an emergency call button was available for riders to connect to the ETS Control Centre from inside the washroom. Washroom attendants have been introduced at some LRT station washrooms. In 2023-24, a technology solution was trialed in several washrooms that detects motion and notifies the ETS Control Centre when there has been no movement inside the washroom after a period of time, which could help indicate if an overdose may be occurring. This trial has had positive outcomes in reducing medical emergencies<sup>4</sup>. Administration continues to review all of the tactics and measures in place for safer washrooms to determine which elements should be expanded.

### **Communications About Safety Tools**

Transit rider awareness of the various tools developed by the City and EPS to support their safety is vital. Over the past several years, the City has implemented several initiatives focused on improving awareness and access to this information, and Administration will continue to pursue opportunities to raise awareness. In 2022, in response to recommendations from students at MacEwan University, Administration installed transit safety information posters in LRT stations informing riders how to access security personnel and technology. A postcard version has been widely distributed to transit riders through various ETS outreach activities in the community, including schools, post-secondary institutions and civic events.

To reach a wide and diverse audience, Administration communicates about the City's safety and security efforts through targeted campaigns, such as the aforementioned "Here to Help" campaign and the former bystander awareness campaign aimed at reducing gender-based violence and harassment in transit and other public spaces. Other tactics include dissemination

---

<sup>4</sup> [Quarterly Verbal Update on Transit Safety Plan & Downtown Core](#), June 12, 2024

## **ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY**

of information through traditional media, social media, print and digital advertising and the City's website. Several website pages are dedicated to information on ETS safety and security, including the Transit Watch Program, Transit Peace Officers and the Community Outreach Transit Team, and additional safety measures located throughout the transit network. Communication strategies and tactics are designed to reach various audience segmentations to help raise awareness of the City's safety and security initiatives and to educate and empower transit riders to facilitate a more positive perception of safety.

As outlined in the March 21, 2023 City Operations report CO01725 Administration Response ETSAB Report: Youth and Their Perception of Safety on ETS, Administration has expanded outreach to youth in partnership with Edmonton school boards through new programs such as the ETS 101 youth travel training program. Administration also continues to leverage unique opportunities, such as the Girl Guides of Canada (Edmonton Area) Scavenger Hunt and Transit Rally hosted by ETS and Strathcona County Transit in May 2024, to encourage youth rider engagement. To further understand barriers experienced by youth riders and uncover motivations and perceptions of using transit, Administration has expanded rider research by applying new approaches - including experience surveys targeting youth riders and parents/caregivers - to gather insights regarding youth riders. Administration is also collaborating with the Edmonton Student Alliance to engage with post-secondary students to understand and address their transit challenges and needs.

Through funding support from the Alberta Transit System Cleanup Grant, the Transit Watch safety program signage was updated to provide a consistent visual approach across the service adhering to modern design principles in 2024. The intent was to educate riders to call or text non-emergency security concerns to the ETS Control Centre. In 2024, out of a total of 18,965 incidents reported to the ETS Control Centre throughout the year, Commissionaires accounted for 53.1 per cent of those calls, followed by Transit Watch, which accounted for 18.1 per cent of incident reports. A similar trend occurred in 2022 and 2023. Incident reporting to the ETS Control Centre allows the right resource to be deployed to provide the right response. This response may include dispatching a TPO, an EPS member, Edmonton Fire Rescue Service and/or Emergency Medical Service, depending on the type and nature of the incident.

### **Reimagining Transit Spaces**

Enhancing a positive transit rider experience is important at every step of the transit journey, including time spent waiting within transit spaces. Over the past several years, Administration has worked with a number of organizations and agencies to activate transit spaces to generate a more lively and festive atmosphere, and will continue to pursue additional opportunities in 2025. This included the Rediscover ETS campaign in 2022, and partnerships with the Edmonton Elks, the Art Gallery of Alberta and the Alberta Circus Arts Festival to bring programming into transit spaces. Local artists have been commissioned to develop murals celebrating the community and/or representing Indigenous history and contributions as part of the City's truth and reconciliation commitments at the Central Station COTT booth and Southgate LRT station to create a more welcoming environment in transit spaces.



## **ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY**

In 2023 and 2024, Administration continued to build partnerships and mutually beneficial relationships with local festivals to position ETS as an active member of the community. These partnerships included providing festival volunteers with free transit access to help them get to and from the festival sites. In exchange, festival organizers promoted transit to their attendees as the preferred travel option. Some of the festivals and partnerships include Sustainival, Alberta Circus Arts Festival, the Edmonton Elks, Taste of Edmonton, KDays, Edmonton Folk Music Festival, Edmonton International Fringe Festival and the Kaleido Family Arts Festival. To further support live entertainment in the community, Administration waived fees for busking in transit spaces in 2023 and will continue to review opportunities to enhance the program to encourage greater participation. At present, there are several active retailers in transit stations and Administration remains open to welcoming additional retailers both through permanent kiosk locations as well as pop-up vending events.

In June 2024, a new partnership between the City and the Winspear Centre introduced symphony music recorded by the Edmonton Symphony Orchestra (ESO) to play during operational hours in LRT stations throughout downtown. This initiative is a part of the City's commitment to increase downtown vibrancy and establish more welcoming and accessible downtown LRT stations by providing riders music to listen to while they wait for the LRT.

As noted by ETSAB and through previous reports from Administration, the design of transit spaces plays a significant role in the perception of safety. The recent renewal of Stadium Station has highlighted significant positive outcomes related to updating station design to improve sightlines, lighting and visibility. Since the opening of the renewed station in spring 2023, there has been a decrease in some incident types at Stadium Station such as trespassing, smoking violations and liquor consumption. Insights collected through the pilot Transit Safety QR Code survey in Stadium, Belvedere, Churchill and Century Park Stations from July to November 2023 demonstrated that Stadium Station had the highest perception of safety among the stations measured. Key reasons indicated by survey respondents included the station having open areas and good lighting. In addition to improving transit safety, the new station design has improved accessibility, enhanced the rider experience for events at Commonwealth Stadium, and supported land use and housing outcomes through better integration with the Muttart Lands redevelopment. Administration will bring forward these types of design considerations in future opportunities to renew transit spaces.

### **Operational and Technological Improvements**

Operational and technological improvements play an important role in supporting riders having a reliable, convenient and safe transit journey. While the train to wayside technology solution was not funded to proceed during the budget deliberation process, Administration has implemented actions to provide riders with timely information and tools to communicate with transit personnel. Through the ETS renewal program, Administration has also been working to upgrade a number of key safety and security technologies, including replacing the blue emergency phones and security cameras.

Expanding cellular access in LRT tunnels has emerged as a key priority over the last several years. In the fall 2023 Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment, Council approved a new capital profile

## ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY

to support this project. At the January 22, 2025 Executive Committee meeting, Council approved a single source agreement between the City of Edmonton and Telus Communications Inc. to advance cellular connectivity in the LRT, with a plan to implement full 5G and 5G+ cellular network coverage that will be open for use by all telecommunication service providers in LRT tunnels and underground stations by March 31, 2026.

### Community Insight

Administration regularly gathers feedback from transit riders through 311, community engagement, and customer service interactions, as well as a dedicated Rider Research Program which includes rider satisfaction surveys.

The monthly transit rider satisfaction survey assesses satisfaction with various aspects of service provided, including perceptions of safety. In 2023, approximately 3,000 responses were collected from transit riders<sup>5</sup>. During this period, 60 per cent of respondents indicated they felt safe throughout their transit trip. Rider suggestions to improve safety from the open-ended comments included installing fare gates in LRT stations and increasing security personnel and law enforcement in transit spaces. In 2024, 61 per cent of survey respondents felt safe throughout their last transit trip, consistent with 2023 levels.

The survey also gauges satisfaction with cleanliness in transit vehicles, transit centres and LRT stations. In 2024, satisfaction with the cleanliness of vehicles and satisfaction with transit centres and LRT stations were both 64 per cent.

Administration has also been conducting additional engagement in transit spaces in collaboration with partners to better understand rider experiences on transit. In winter 2023/2024, Administration partnered with the University of Alberta to launch the first phase of an equity analysis of transit centres and bus shelter amenities, engaging riders on bus routes and in transit centres to gauge their perspectives on safety, amenities and comfort in winter. The second phase of the analysis was launched in August 2024 to assess impacts on rider perspectives during the summer months. The research will consider equity and climate impact considerations to inform future decisions around the design and allocation of bus stop amenities.

In summer 2023, Administration partnered with a social design consultant to launch the Auricle project to explore the stories and narratives of people using transit spaces at four transit centres and LRT stations. Building on the success of this engagement, the second phase of planning the Auricle project is underway, with pop up events in transit spaces taking place throughout the winter and spring. This phase will allow Administration to gain deeper insights into the diverse experiences and stories related to transit, explore ways to share these stories more effectively with the public, and use them to reimagine and enhance services.

### GBA+

Transit is accessed by a diverse range of demographics and intersecting identities, including youth, women, Indigenous peoples, newcomers to Canada, people with disabilities, parents with

---

<sup>5</sup> [Quarterly Verbal Update on Transit Safety Plan & Downtown Core](#), June 12, 2024



## ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY

young children, 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals, and riders with lower incomes. Survey data from the transit rider satisfaction survey shows riders from marginalized communities, including women, youth, Indigenous peoples and those with lower income levels, are more likely to use transit as their primary mode of transportation. These riders also tend to have lower perceptions of safety on transit and this is compounded when identity factors intersect. A 2022 study<sup>6</sup> by Mobilizing Justice and the University of Manitoba highlighted some of the factors contributing to lower perceptions of safety on transit among marginalized communities include exposure to institutional racism, harassment and neighbourhood safety concerns.

Administration has recently focused on increasing access to transit service by improving service planning, increasing service levels, enhancing safety and security, providing more outreach and education, and improving access to low-income fare programs. Examples of some of the initiatives Administration has implemented to help address perceptions of safety include:

- Deploying Transit Inspectors at transit centres and transit stops near schools to support riders, students and operators as they navigate back-to-school.
- Enhancing proactive presence and education from Transit Peace Officers at LRT stations and transit centres that have a high volume of students.
- Providing back-to-school outreach to welcome students and support riders, including collaboration with the Community Safety Liaison and the Neighbourhood Empowerment Teams (NET). NET is an EPS partnership with City of Edmonton Community Services, Edmonton Police Service, The Family Centre, and United Way of the Alberta Capital Region. The teams promote and support community safety activities and have supported presentations to post-secondary institutions on transit safety. Youth Community Safety Liaisons are also coordinating with educational and community connections to promote transit safety.
- Improving collaboration between Edmonton Police Service and Transit Peace Officers to respond to safety issues and provide visible presence on transit.
- Expanding the number of fare products distributed through ETS low-income fare programs, Providing Accessible Transit Here (PATH) and Transit Access Grant, to align with the proportion of the population experiencing low income, in accordance with the design of the programs.

By improving transit safety, reliability and convenience, the well-being of all Edmontonians is enhanced, encouraging more people to choose transit. Demographics of survey respondents from the 2024 transit rider satisfaction surveys are outlined below:

- Twenty one per cent of respondents indicated their annual household income was below \$30,000
- Sixteen per cent of survey respondents were between the ages 15 and 24
- Eight per cent of survey respondents were aged 65 and older

---

<sup>6</sup> Mobilizing Justice, [Who Feels Safe on Transit?](#) August 2022.

## **ADMINISTRATION RESPONSE: EDMONTON TRANSIT SERVICE ADVISORY BOARD PERCEPTION OF LRT SAFETY**

- Fifty two per cent of survey respondents identified as a woman
- Fourteen per cent of survey respondents identified as persons with disabilities
- Eleven per cent of survey respondents identified as newcomers to Canada (less than 5 years)
- Eight per cent of respondents identified as Indigenous

### **Environment and Climate Review**

Improving perceptions of safety drives ridership growth on transit and reduces reliance on private vehicle use. Ridership growth for public transit reduces greenhouse gas emissions and enables more efficient and sustainable land-use practices.