

# NAIT Line Transit Security

## Recommendation:

That the March 25, 2015, Transportation Services report CR\_1988, be received for information.

## Report Summary

Since 2011, Edmonton Transit has grown rapidly in terms of service, ridership and infrastructure, and this growth combined with the effects of other societal challenges has resulted in a 17 percent increase in security related files without a proportionate increase in Transit Peace Officer staffing levels. The recent experience and success of the Transit and Police Partnership Team (TAPP) points to an increased need for additional security personnel. The activation of the Metro Line will bring additional security issues and Edmonton Transit will be further challenged to absorb the extra workload without impacting existing security operations. To maintain the reputation of Edmonton Transit as a safe, secure and welcoming system, it is anticipated that an additional six Transit Peace Officers will be required.

## Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 26, 2014, City Council Budget meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report, prior to the establishment of the mill rate, that will identify any additional needs for transit security arising from the activation of the NAIT line.

## Report

From 2011 to 2014, Edmonton Transit has realized significant growth in terms of ridership, service hours and infrastructure. This growth combined with incidents from increased social issues such as homelessness, addiction and mental illness have also significantly contributed to the overall workload of Transit Peace Officers. In the past four years the ratio of ridership to Peace Officers has increased by 11 percent (2011 ridership was 80,293,866; 2014 ridership was 89,400,794), service hours to Peace Officers by 3.3 percent, and security files to Peace Officers by 42 percent. In 2011, Transit Peace Officers responded to 70,943 security related events. In 2013, that number increased to 82,992, a 17 percent increase. There has been no corresponding increase to the complement of 58 Transit Peace Officers since 2011. This has reduced Transit Security's ability to proactively respond to and mitigate disorder-related activity, exclusive of the Metro Line.

While the Metro Line was designed using Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles, it is anticipated that the opening of the Metro Line, and the associated

growth in LRT ridership of an estimated 13,200 weekday riders, will widen the ratio between number of peace officers and number of passengers, ultimately adding to the security workload. Furthermore, the location of the Metro Line presents unique security challenges based on proximity to major venues (e.g. downtown arena and entertainment district). The Metro Line is also adjacent to a multi-use trail with limited access for emergency vehicles. Safety challenges include new road level crossings and high volumes of pedestrian traffic particularly in the Kingsway area.

As a result of opening the new line, six additional full-time Transit Peace Officers are recommended to maintain the standard of security currently in place across Edmonton Transit. The additional Peace Officers will assist with the responsibility of responding to calls, disorder prevention, and fare enforcement on the Metro Line on a 24/7 basis. They will supplement existing teams and enhance the City's ability to meet disorder based-targets (i.e. 6.5 disorder incidents per 100,000 boardings). The statistics generated by the recent Transit and Police Partnership Team pilot project further reinforce the need for the presence of additional security resources, as evidenced by the fact that the Transit and Police Partnership Team generated 140 arrests, 450 warrant executions, and 329 violation tickets among other results in a five month period.

Based on security intelligence, ETS uses a Daily Crime Forecast Tool to deploy to 'hot spot' crime and disorder locations, to collaborate with law enforcement stakeholders and social agencies, and to proactively engage ETS passengers. Without an increase in resources ETS's ability to use this tool effectively will be limited as LRT expansion continues. Furthermore, the safety of Transit Peace Officers is a top priority, and safety issues begin to emerge as the capacity for backup support diminishes.

The high visibility and presence of uniformed Transit Peace Officers provides reassurance to our customers. This fact is reinforced by ETS Customer Security surveys that have shown that out of all the security initiatives that exist within transit, the presence of uniformed Transit Peace Officers contribute the most to feelings of customer safety.

### Alternatives:

Peace officers within Edmonton Transit are well-positioned in terms of authority, equipment and training to deal with the majority of the security related issues that exist on the system, the bulk of which are disorder-related. Alternatives to this recommendation include:

- Status quo: This will increase workload and restrict the ability of Transit Security to be proactive and respond in a timely manner, and resources will be stretched thin. Such restrictions may reduce public perception of safety on the system, and could ultimately impact ETS ridership and the City's reputation.
- Private security: The City has the option of integrating private security guards alongside ETS officers. Private security is also governed by specific legislation and is not provided with the authority, training, equipment or oversight to deal with many of the issues that occur on the ETS system. Upon review of this

alternative, experience in other areas (e.g. Churchill Square) has demonstrated private security as a less suitable option to deal effectively with the calls for service, disorder and situations routinely encountered by Transit Peace Officers.

- **Police:** Police are highly trained and effective; however, they are a more costly resource and are more crime-focused. It is not cost-effective to have police officers deal with fare enforcement or many of the other disorder related security issues that frequently occur within the ETS network. In 2014 the formation of the Transit and Police Partnership Team provided an enhanced model of security on the system; however, due to competing priorities Edmonton Police Services has chosen to discontinue the project in this form at this time.

A safe and secure transit system is crucial to ensuring continued growth in ridership which will ultimately serve to support the strategic goals of the City of Edmonton. As Edmonton Transit continues to grow the need for security assets is paramount, and must grow in proportion to the expansion of the system.

### **Budget/Financial Implications**

The cost, inclusive of wages, benefits, equipment and training, for six Transit Peace Officers from June to December 2015 is \$354,000 and \$607,000 for the full year in 2016.

### **Others Reviewing this Report**

T. Burge, Acting Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer