

ADVANCING BUS RAPID TRANSIT AND TRANSIT PRIORITY MEASURES

Recommendation

That the March 3, 2026, City Operations report CO02980, be received for information.

Requested Action	Information only
ConnectEdmonton's Guiding Principle	ConnectEdmonton Strategic Goals
CONNECTED This unifies our work to achieve our strategic goals.	Urban Places
City Plan Values	ACCESS
Corporate Business Plan	Transforming for the future
Council Policy, Program or Project Relationships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Charter Bylaw 20000 - Edmonton City Plan • UPE00342 - Mass Transit: Planning for 1.25 Million People • City Policy C539A - Transit Service Policy
Related Council Discussions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • October 30, 2018, City Operations report CR_5074, Transit Priority Measures Feasibility Study First Phase 1 • October 31, 2022, Financial and Corporate Services report FCS01393, Proposed 2023-2026 Capital Budget • March 19, 2024, City Operations report CO02133, Transit Priority Measures Implementation Update • August 27, 2024, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02216, Mass Transit: Implementing for 1.25 Million People • March 4, 2025, City Operations report CO02673, Increasing Efficiency of the Top Bus Routes • September 16, 2025, City Operations report CO03139, Canada Public Transit Fund Update • March 23, 2026, Urban Planning and Economy report UPE03117, Mobility Network Assessment Update • April 8, 2026, Integrated Infrastructure Services report IIS03404, Southeast Transit Garage - Project Update

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Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 4, 2025, Urban Planning Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration bring forward a report outlining:

1. Opportunities for ongoing Transit Priority Measures to improve the efficiency of the transit network and reduce related traffic congestion; and
2. Next steps to implement Bus Rapid Transit B1 and B2 routes, including opportunities for partner funding such as funding from the Canada Public Transit Fund.

Executive Summary

- Transit priority measures and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT), two complementary initiatives, represent an investment in mass transit planning to improve bus-based transit solutions as Edmonton prepares to become a city of two million people.
- While initial transit priority measures have been funded through the current capital budget, there is no ongoing program to sustain this work beyond 2026, or resources for more impactful improvements along congested corridors. A transit priority measures program could provide a more strategic and sustainable approach to continue advancing a range of measures to manage a more reliable and efficient bus network.
- The City of Edmonton is enhancing its Mass Transit network through the planned addition of BRT routes. These routes are designed to complement the existing bus and Light Rail Transit (LRT) systems, providing faster, more efficient, and sustainable travel options to support the City's growth and increasing population. In alignment with the strategic growth objectives outlined in the City Plan, three citywide BRT routes have been identified for future development.
- In the 2023-2026 Capital Budget, Council approved funding for concept planning for BRT Route B1 (from Castle Downs to Century Park, passing through Downtown) and Route B2 (from West Edmonton Mall to Bonnie Doon, via the University of Alberta). Final BRT route recommendations are anticipated to be complete in fall 2026, with concept planning to be completed in fall 2027. The concept planning study will include potential staging strategies and prioritization to inform project estimates, funding requests and planning for implementation. Should Council direct, an unfunded composite capital profile can be prepared for the next stages of design and delivery of BRT priorities for consideration as part of the 2027-2030 capital budget development process.
- Administration is working collaboratively with government and regional partners to advance applications under the Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF). In Budget 2025, the Government of Canada indicated there would be some changes to the CPTF, including streamlining the Metro-Region Agreement Stream. Administration plans to seek opportunities for partner funding for BRT design and implementation through this funding opportunity.

REPORT

Public transit is an essential service in the everyday lives of Edmontonians, and is a key factor to meeting the goals and targets set in ConnectEdmonton and The City Plan. Public transit is crucial for:

- Fostering economic prosperity by strengthening connections to industry, knowledge and innovation hubs,
- Enabling workforce mobility by providing accessible transportation options for workers and job seekers,
- Addressing housing affordability by lowering household transportation costs and supporting land use intensification goals,
- Supporting greater social inclusion, including participation in events, recreation and community,
- Reducing traffic congestion and commute times with fewer vehicles on the road, and
- Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and the overall carbon footprint per capita.

Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) service objectives focus on delivering a service that is convenient, reliable, accessible and safe, including conventional fixed-route bus, LRT, paratransit and On Demand Transit service. With the furthest reach and highest ridership, the bus network continues to be an integral component of ETS and delivers 93 per cent of the conventional transit service hours to Edmontonians. Establishing a well-connected transit network in Edmonton can vastly improve the quality of life of residents and help make the city a more attractive place to live, learn, work and play. Through rider engagement and the ETS rider research program, Administration has heard from transit riders who identify frequency and reliable transit service as a top priority.

Transit Priority Measures

The Mass Transit Study¹, developed in support of The City Plan, established the future transit network to support a population of two million. The study identified several critical success factors, including “Mass Transit Priority,” which refers to the reallocation of existing road right of way to create dedicated transit right of way. The study also introduced the concept of transit priority measures to increase capacity, improve reliability, reduce travel times and provide opportunities for service to respond to and increase ridership growth in alignment with the City Plan objectives of densification of nodes and corridors.

Transit priority measures refer to a broad set of measures that provide greater priority to public transit in the transportation network. These measures vary in complexity from simple changes, such as adding an exception for turning at select intersections, to more comprehensive solutions that may incorporate signal phasing, dedicated bus lanes or bridges designed to prevent speed reductions for transit vehicles.

¹ IBI Group. Mass Transit Study - Edmonton's Future Mass Transit Network. Technical Study (2020). Prepared for the City of Edmonton.
edmonton.ca/city_government/city_vision_and_strategic_plan/making-the-city-plan

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There are three main categories of transit priority measures, as outlined in the March 19, 2024 City Operations report, CO02133 - Transit Priority Measures Implementation Update:

- **Traffic Signal Measures:** These involve modifying the timing, sequence or operation of traffic lights to give preference to transit vehicles.
- **Physical Measures:** These are changes made to the physical infrastructure to create dedicated spaces for transit vehicles (for example, dedicated bus lanes). This reduces the interaction of buses with other traffic, aiming to improve travel times and reliability for public transit.
- **Other Measures:** These are strategies that can be implemented using a combination of signs and pavement markings to indicate priority for transit vehicles.

Edmonton is growing, and so is transit use — transit ridership reached 61.8 million in 2025. Between 2023 and 2025, transit ridership increased by 16 per cent, and was 12 per cent above 2019 pre-COVID levels. As the city continues to grow and densify, the implementation of transit priority measures is a cost-effective solution to improve operational efficiency and reliability of the City's transit services. This helps to reduce travel times, therefore enabling more Edmontonians to reach their destination faster. Rather than investing in additional buses and service hours to maintain schedules, ETS can allocate current service hours to meet other needs, such as adding new service for growing areas, increasing frequency on busy routes and implementing off-peak service in areas currently underserved.

Edmonton's Investment in Transit Priority Measures

Prior to 2023, Edmonton's investment in transit priority measures was limited and sporadic with some small segments of high occupancy vehicle lanes and transit priority signals at intersections. In 2017, Council approved funding for a transit priority measures study² that identified and prioritized corridors and intersections citywide that could benefit from increased transit priority.

In the 2023-2026 Capital Budget, Council funded \$7.1 million to plan, design and implement transit priority measures at priority locations. Planning of the measures began in 2023 and the first locations were implemented in 2025. Locations where measures were implemented in 2025 or where signal timing adjustments are being completed are outlined in Attachment 1.

In addition to the investment in transit priority measures across the city, transit enhancements have also been constructed on Terwillegar Drive as part of the Terwillegar Drive Expansion project. This included the addition of dedicated transit lanes, bus stop upgrades (longer pull-outs, weather-protected shelters, and enhanced connections to active transportation), and a bus-only lane from 53 Avenue to Terwillegar Drive, bypassing the Terwillegar Drive/Whitemud Drive interchange.

Opportunities for Ongoing Transit Priority Measures

While basic transit priority measures have been funded through the current capital budget cycle, there is no ongoing program to sustain this work beyond 2026, or resources for more impactful

² This study informed subsequent projects, such as the 2020 Mobility Network Assessment.

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improvements along congested corridors. A transit priority measures program could provide a more strategic and sustainable approach to continue advancing a range of measures. A framework for evaluating transit priority measures, including the projects implemented in the 2023-2026 budget cycle, is outlined in Attachment 2.

A composite capital profile would enable continuous identification and advancement of transit priority measures as problem spots are identified. A transit priority measures program provides increased flexibility for Administration to pursue measures in combination with other opportunities (such as road renewal). As suggested in Council Report UPE03117 Mobility Network Assessment Update, a Transit Priority Measures composite bundle could be used to establish an ongoing funding program to implement transit priority measures.

In the March 25, 2025 Urban Planning Committee report, CO02673 - Increasing the Efficiency of the Top Bus Routes, Administration presented analysis of the current ETS network to identify potential locations for transit priority measures. This approach weighed the amount of delay on a bus route with the number of riders on that route, establishing a “passenger delay hours” metric in order to direct investments towards corridors and intersections where these measures will have the greatest impact.

As the last comprehensive study to identify citywide transit priority measures was completed in 2017, an updated study is required to identify and prioritize problem locations. This study would form the foundation for an ongoing program. This analysis would be refreshed periodically (anticipated every four years) to inform project prioritization, ensuring projects reflect challenges in the current operational environment. Ongoing program evaluation would measure the effectiveness of transit priority measure investments, including measures of time savings for riders and ridership changes.

Once locations are identified and prioritized, planning and design would advance for implementation of transit priority measures in these locations. An ongoing program would allow annual planning and design to feed into ongoing delivery of measures. It is anticipated two to three locations (depending on the scope and scale of transit priority measures required) may be addressed on an annual basis.

Implementing Bus Rapid Transit

The City of Edmonton is enhancing its Mass Transit network through the planned addition of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes. These routes are designed to complement the existing bus and LRT systems and other transportation modes, providing fast, efficient, and sustainable travel options to support the City's growth and increasing population. BRT lanes will create a more efficient road network for other vehicle drivers, reducing the stop and go traffic disruptions from buses, and support mode shift from private vehicles to public transit, reducing congestion.

BRT is characterized by high-speed travel along urban nodes and main corridors with strategically placed rider facilities offering travel times and reliability comparable to LRT, while being faster and more cost-effective to construct.

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In alignment with the 1.25 million population horizon plan, three citywide BRT routes have been identified (Attachment 3). In the 2023-2026 Capital Budget, Council approved funding for concept planning for BRT Route B1 and Route B2. The scope of the concept planning project includes confirmation of the proposed alignments, followed by the development of a comprehensive concept plan for each route. The recommended alignments for these routes were shared with the Urban Planning Committee on August 27, 2024 (Urban Planning and Economy report UPE02216 - Mass Transit: Implementing for 1.25 Million People).

The concept planning project is split into two core phases:

- Phase 1: Route Confirmation and Validation
- Phase 2: Concept Planning

Project elements being confirmed through the concept planning process include the specific streets and avenues the BRT will use, station locations, the integration of the BRT lane within the existing road right-of-way, connections to the existing transit and active transportation networks, and provision for business and community access. Coordination is required to ensure alignment with other City projects, including transit priority measures and the Old Strathcona Public Realm Strategy.

The concept planning study will include potential staging strategies and prioritization to inform project estimates, funding requests and planning for implementation. To help shape decisions along the way, ongoing concept planning is supported through public engagement and communication activities, such as surveys and discussions with interested parties.

Technical analysis, including route evaluations, option analysis, modelling and analysis of traffic impacts, is underway. Final route recommendations are anticipated to be complete in fall 2026, with concept planning to be completed in fall 2027. Administration will be seeking funding for the next design phases for the 2027-2030 budget cycle, including leveraging Canada Public Transit Fund opportunities.

Service growth considerations

In addition to the construction of physical infrastructure along the alignment, implementing BRT will require growth in the ETS bus fleet to operate the service. Due to space constraints in existing facilities, the next opportunity for substantive growth in ETS bus capacity is once the new Southeast Transit Garage is commissioned. The Southeast Transit Garage project is currently in design development. A report on the project, Integrated Infrastructure Services IIS03404 - Southeast Transit Garage - Project Update, is scheduled for Infrastructure Committee on April 8, 2026 to discuss next steps.

Another key consideration is the timeline for bus orders, with manufacturers currently requiring significant lead time between placing an order and a bus arriving.

Canada Public Transit Fund

As discussed in the September 16, 2025 City Operations report CO03139 - Canada Public Transit Fund Update, the Canada Public Transit Fund (CPTF) is a federal funding program that will deliver sustainable and predictable capital funding for public transit to communities of all sizes across

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Canada. The program will allocate funding nationally over 10 years, with funding available starting in April 2026. The CPTF aims to strengthen collaboration between all orders of government to modernize and enhance transit services, support economic growth, increase housing supply and affordability and contribute to climate mitigation.

The CPTF was initially rolled out with three funding streams: Baseline Funding Stream, Metro Region Agreement Stream and Targeted Funding Stream.

- The Baseline Funding stream focuses on routine capital renewal and growth, including upgrading, replacing and expanding core transit infrastructure. Following the submission of the City of Edmonton's Expression of Interest in fall 2024, Administration received confirmation of the City's notional Baseline Funding stream allocation of \$164.2 million over 10 years or \$16.42 million per year. A Capital Plan application was submitted in early 2025, and Administration received Approval-in-Principle in January 2026.
- In Budget 2025, the Government of Canada indicated there would be some changes to the Canada Public Transit Fund, including streamlining the Metro-Region Agreement Stream and rolling the targeted funding stream into the Build Communities Strong Fund. Administration has been working with the Canadian Urban Transit Association and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities to gain insights on what changes to expect in the CPTF program. In particular, Administration is interested in updates on the Metro-Region Agreement Stream, as this stream would be the appropriate funding source to advance larger city-building transit projects, such as the design and construction of Bus Rapid Transit.
- The Build Communities Strong Fund (BCSF) is another opportunity that Administration is considering for public transit funding, however this fund covers a broader range of sectors and may be more competitive. Administration is currently awaiting further details on the funding criteria and guidelines.

Next Steps

While transit priority measures and BRT projects are integrated and complementary, they approach transit priority from different angles. Mass Transit is grounded in future ridership and modal shift, while transit priority measures focus on reducing delays and improving efficiency for the current bus network. Continuing to advance work in both programs will support maintaining reliable service for current riders, while also building the infrastructure improvements for longer term mode shift and land use objectives. BRT concept planning is underway and is projected to be completed in fall 2027. Administration will continue to seek opportunities for partner funding through the CPTF to support both BRT and transit priority measure design and implementation.

Budget/Financial Implications

Two Financial and Corporate Services reports, June 10, 2025 FCS02596 Prioritization of Renewal in the 2027-2030 Capital Budget and January 27, 2026 FCS03223 2027-2036 Capital Investment Outlook outlined that in response to the City's growing renewal funding gap, the only growth projects that will be advanced for Council's consideration in the next budget cycle will be those that are mandated by legislation, required for safety, eligible for external funding, or show a significant benefit to the prosperity of the city. Following this approach, the projects outlined in

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this report will be considered for prioritization within the next budget cycle alongside other projects that meet the criteria outlined.

Should Council direct via motion, Administration will prepare an unfunded composite capital profile as part of the 2027-30 Capital Budget process for the potential advancement of the next stages of design and construction for BRT priorities.

Community Insight

Engaging transit riders and Edmontonians more broadly contributes valuable perspectives for building an effective transit network that meets community needs. ETS collects ongoing feedback from both riders and non-riders through various channels, including but not limited to, the ETS Rider Research Program, public engagement for major projects like BRT and LRT, as well as rider outreach.

Over the past several years, community feedback related to public transit has generated insights on common themes such as reliability, safety, connectivity and comfort. In 2025, the monthly Transit Rider Satisfaction Survey collected over 3,000 responses and showed overall satisfaction with transit was 71 per cent, which was consistent with the previous year. Top suggestions for improvement were enhancing safety/security measures, improving cleanliness, increasing service frequency and better route schedules/timings and connections. These themes have been relatively stable over the last four years.

In addition to the quantitative surveys, ETS conducts qualitative studies to better understand perspectives on specific topics or from specific rider segments. In 2025, ETS collaborated with the Edmonton Student Alliance on post-secondary student focus groups and a fall survey. The results demonstrated that service reliability, frequency, and personal safety are primary drivers of satisfaction and are critical factors for retaining students as lifelong transit users.

Input gathered through engagement activities is a key factor in the planning process for infrastructure projects, such as BRT. Engagement gathered during the Mass Transit Strategy phase and input being gathered through ongoing concept planning helps to shape decisions. Some notable components of the outreach during the concept planning phase include:

- A citywide survey to share information on BRT Routes B1 and B2 was launched in fall 2025. The survey generated 4,200 responses.
- Targeted engagement (including an area-specific survey) was initiated in fall 2025 for the area of BRT Route B1 between 111 Avenue and 118 Avenue. The survey for this area yielded nearly 100 responses.
- Meetings with interested parties are ongoing to collect additional feedback on proposed route options for the segment between 111 Avenue and 118 Avenue.

Ongoing concept planning will continue to be supported by engagement and communications activities. Discussions with interested parties and further targeted public engagement is planned for spring 2026 for BRT Route B2, focusing on the following segments:

- 87 Avenue/University of Alberta Transit Centre to 109 Street

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- Whyte Avenue/82 Avenue between 109 Street and 83 Street

GBA+

A robust and affordable mass transit network is a vehicle for social mobility, enabling greater access to a wide range of opportunities for marginalized populations. Access to transit directly impacts their ability to live, work and play, as equity-deserving groups are more likely to rely on public transit as their primary transportation mode. Research³ shows long travel times, unreliable service and unavailable transit service are the primary transit barriers faced by these groups.

Data from the 2025 ETS rider satisfaction surveys indicated more than half of equity-deserving groups—such as youth, students, newcomers (under five years) and individuals earning incomes below \$30,000—were all-purpose riders. These riders use transit more frequently for multiple trip purposes beyond commuting to work and school, compared to approximately 40 per cent of overall respondents. Investing in bus-based mass transit options like transit priority measures and BRT helps address travel barriers by providing increased access to safe, reliable and convenient transit service with faster journey times; it is a direct investment in social stability.

The City is embedding equity into the foundational design and implementation of bus-based mass transit, with the objective of ensuring investments do not result in the marginalization of equity-deserving groups, but rather enable full participation in society. Several mass transit engagements and equity assessments have been conducted over the last three years using various tactics to gain insights, including surveys, workshops, online commentary opportunities and ride-alongs, to understand the transit-related experiences and needs of Edmontonians. Administration heard from youth, seniors, those earning an annual income under \$30,000, racialized people, newcomers, Indigenous peoples, women and persons with disabilities among various other intersecting identities. Common themes emerged from these engagements, including:

- Strong support for bus-based mass transit,
- Connecting diverse locations including outside of core Edmonton areas where equity-deserving groups live, and integration with other modes,
- Ensuring transit safety and security while considering lived experiences of different groups,
- Accessibility and comfort of stops and stations,
- Importance of balancing benefits against costs, and
- Location-specific feedback.

The feedback from these engagements is supporting more informed decision making when designing transit priority measures and BRT. By integrating these insights, the City is ensuring the bus-based mass transit network is not just faster, but is fundamentally more inclusive, allowing all Edmontonians to participate fully in the social and economic life of the city.

³ O. Linovski, H. Dorries, S. Simpson, [Public Transit and Equity-Deserving Groups: Understanding Lived Experiences](#). December 2021.

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Environment and Climate Review

Research by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change⁴ shows investing in transit growth is one of the most efficient and cost-effective solutions to addressing climate change. To limit global warming, transit capacity must significantly increase in the next few years, requiring substantial investments in transit infrastructure and operational requirements to support a greater mode-shift to transit.

The transportation sector is responsible for one quarter of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions. By investing in public transit, the City can reduce the total vehicle kilometres traveled and reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. In addition to direct GHG reductions from transportation, public transit supports building more compact and lively neighbourhoods, which reduces Edmonton's environmental footprint.

Attachments

1. Implementation Update on 2023-2026 Transit Priority Measures
2. Transit Priority Measures Evaluation Framework
3. Mass Transit Network with BRT Routes

⁴ Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, [Climate Change 2022: Mitigation of Climate Change](#)