

Phased Implementation of Late Night Transit Service

Recommendation:

That the April 24, 2012, Transportation Services report 2012TS7813, be received for information.

Report Summary

This report provides information regarding alternatives for a phased implementation of late night transit service.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November 15, 2011, Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, the following motion was passed.

1. That Administration provide a further report to Transportation and Infrastructure Committee with recommendations for a phased implementation of a late night transit service, including options for pilot projects with evaluation checkpoints, and options to start with less than comprehensive service.
2. That Administration provide a companion report on opportunities to holistically integrate Late Night transit with the Vehicle for Hire system.

Report

The late night network proposed for consideration is the Transit Centre Base Network (Option 2, described in the

Transportation Services Report 2011TS1410 from November 15, 2011- see *Attachment 1*). This network consists of eleven routes which generally follow existing mainline routes. These routes would operate in major corridors throughout the city, serving a number of major destinations and transit centres. These routes would operate at a 30-minute frequency. At outlying transit centres, there would be opportunities for passengers to be picked up by private vehicles, or for continuation of the trip by taxis into the surrounding neighbourhoods.

In order to phase in the night service, the bus routes could be implemented and evaluated in three phases, with several routes being added with each stage.

Phase 1

Phase 1 service would be confined to major corridors from downtown and Old Strathcona. Five routes would operate to Century Park, Mill Woods, Capilano, Clareview, Eaux Claires and West Edmonton Mall, and would include one route that replicates current LRT service between downtown and Clareview. A number of key destinations would be served, including downtown, hospitals and major post-secondary institutions. As these routes generally follow existing core bus routes, there would be an easy transition for passengers familiar with the system. Phase 1 map see *Attachment 2*

A staged implementation of these routes could be considered, with the routes operating until different times during the night:

- Operate routes until 3 a.m., to serve shift workers with late finish times

and the hospitality industry. The cost to operate these 5 routes at the current operating rates would be \$1,350,000 annually.

- Extend operation of these routes throughout the remainder of the late night period (between the hours of 3 a.m. and 5:30 a.m.). This would serve passengers with earlier shifts who travel prior to regular morning service. The target market would be shift workers in the industrial areas and health care sector. The additional incremental cost to operate during this time period would be \$1,650,000 annually.

The total cost to full operate the Phase 1 bus routes would be \$3,000,000 annually.

Phase 2

The second phase of implementation would focus service on the immediate periphery outside of the central business district. Three routes would be added, providing connections from Downtown to West Edmonton Mall (WEM) via Stony Plain Road and 104 Avenue, service to the Westmount and Calder areas to Northgate and an opportunity for patrons to travel between Whyte Avenue and Jasper Avenue. Key destinations that would be served include Oliver Square, the 124 Street business district, residences near MacEwan University, as well as residential areas in North Central Edmonton. The operating cost for this stage of implementation would be \$1,200,000 annually. Phase 2 map see *Attachment 3*.

Phase 3

The final phase of implementation would concentrate on the industrial areas and

the suburban neighbourhoods. These routes would provide later and earlier service to the industrial areas where some shifts start earlier than the peak period. These routes would also provide new crosstown connections, including service from the Northwest Industrial area to Abbottsfield in north Edmonton, WEM to Meadows Transit Centre in west and south Edmonton, and the 99 Street corridor in South Edmonton to Mill Woods. The operating cost for this stage of implementation would be \$2,250,000 annually. Phase 3 map see *Attachment 4*.

The total operating cost to implement the three phases would be \$6,450,000 annually. Fare box revenues have not been determined.

Further Late Night Service Considerations

One of the limitations of this late night service network is the lack of service penetration into outlying residential communities. Following implementation of this network, consideration could be given to extending routes beyond outlying transit centres or providing a limited local bus route network into the neighbourhoods.

Evaluation of Transit Service

Transit would evaluate the success of each phase before implementing the next, and can scale back or expand the level of implementation where necessary. Evaluating such service in stages would allow for a true indication of the ridership on the all night service network.

The key indicator used to evaluate bus route performance is boardings per hour (as outlined in the Transit Policy

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Standards Policy C539). For late night service, the current standard would be a combined average of 15 boarding per hour.

It should also be noted that the Night Ride Pilot service, which operates on Friday and Saturday nights between Whyte Avenue and Southgate via the University area, will provide an indication of transit demand for late night service from entertainment areas on the busier evenings. A full evaluation of this service will be undertaken after the pilot ends on April 15, 2012.

Information regarding opportunities to holistically integrate Late Night transit with the Vehicle for Hire system is provided in the April 24, 2012, Transportation Services report 2012TS7918 Late Night Transit Service and Vehicle for Hire System Integration Options.

Policy

Transit Service Standards – Policy C539 indicates that 30-minute frequency of service should be provided in transit corridors. In addition, the guidelines for implementation for walking distance and span of service indicate a maximum of 800 metres in all time periods in residential areas.

For transit service monitoring purposes, the Transit Service Standards (Policy C539) indicates that for new service implementation during off-peak time periods, ridership levels should achieve 50% of the recommended minimum performance level after one year, and fully achieve the minimum ridership level after two years of operation.

In addition, the low ridership threshold for the time periods that includes late night services until 2 a.m. is 15 boarding per hour.

These policies would need to be re-evaluated and expanded to cover the late night time period.

Corporate Outcomes

This strategy supports Council's goals;

- Shift Edmonton's Transportation Mode – Transit and active transportation are preferred by citizens. Citizens choose public transit and transit ridership grows as the city population grows. Transit is affordable and accessible to citizens.
- Improve Edmonton's Liveability – Complete communities that are strong, inclusive and have accessible services. City services and programs are affordable and available to meet the needs of diverse individuals and groups.

Budget/Financial Implications

The annual incremental operating costs (2012 dollars) for each phase of the Late Night Service Network would be;

Phase 1 - \$3,000,000

Phase 2 - \$1,200,000

Phase 3 - \$2,250,000

Total \$6,450,000

Note – some additional farebox revenues would be generated, which have not been determined.

Attachments

1. Late Night Service Network.
2. Staging of Late Night Service Network – *Phase 1*.

3. Staging of Late Night Service Network – *Phase 2*.

4. Staging of Late Night Service Network – *Phase 3*.

Others Reviewing this Report

- L. Rosen, Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer