

## **Transportation Department Services and Programs for Seniors**

### **Transit Bus Stop Access**

City Policy C539 approved by City Council in 2009 establishes Transit Service Standards as a guideline for the design of transit service. Specific needs related to senior's nodes are covered in this policy. This policy states "Community Bus Routes will be considered when walking distance to major seniors residences (greater than 50 units), activity centres or other destinations is greater than 250 metres". Edmonton Transit currently operates 10 bus routes that offer (fully or in part) the "community bus" function. These are routes that are designed to provide access as close as possible to senior citizen residences and locations that they travel to. Based on our experience, the destinations more frequently used by seniors on these routes are shopping or medical opportunities (we have found that ridership to seniors activity centres is usually quite low). Community bus routes use small buses, which provide flexibility to operate on local residential roadways, and can come closer to the entrances of facilities.

Recent requests for new or modified community bus routes have been received for the Strathern, Pleasant View and McCauley communities. Edmonton Transit's ability to accommodate these requests is subject to funding availability for new services and operational considerations (roadway width, parking, ability to maneuver the bus, snow clearing considerations, adequate locations for new bus stops).

### **Transit Bus Shelters**

Requests for shelters are evaluated and scored based on the following criteria:

- The number of passengers boarding at a stop;
- Average passenger wait time;
- Surrounding land uses (higher priority is given near senior citizens residences and facilities);
- Degree of exposure to wind and precipitation.

Candidate locations are ranked, and a permanent list of shelter requests is maintained. As shelters become available, they are installed in priority sequence, provided the location has sufficient City property, adjacent property owners have no objections, and no sight line problems are created for drivers at adjacent accesses.

### **Transit Mobility Choices Travel Training Program and Seniors on the Go Initiative**

The Mobility Choices Training Program was designed to inform and educate Edmontonians about our range of accessibility options and how to use public transit safely and confidently, and has been offered since 1995. It was the first program of its kind in Canada, and continues to be a leader in innovation in the Canadian and American transit industry.

The program is customized to meet the specific needs of the individual or group requesting the training, and can provide a general or detailed and specific overview of Edmonton Transit System accessible services and features. It can include presentation style instruction, hands-on vehicle demonstrations at the person's residence (or we'll get the client to the train or bus), practice travel sessions, customized trip planning booklets, customer tools (mobility cards, bus hailer kits, and customer communication cards), and companioned travel to and from the requested destinations until the client is ready to travel independently. Regular and community bus, as well as LRT instruction and travel is available, as well as information and instruction in route/trip planning, and website navigation. For organizations and groups that need on-going training, Edmonton Transit System can also train agency representatives so that they can provide the information to their own clients. Whatever a customer needs, we'll develop and arrange training that meets their public transit needs.

The Seniors on the Go program strives to ensure that Edmonton's senior citizens feel comfortable, confident, and safe using Edmonton Transit System, and provides a more independent alternative to using DATS. This program operates from May through August. Groups are able to take a free doorstep to doorstep chartered bus to a destination of their choice within Edmonton (like a field trip!), whereupon they will have some 'free' time. Participants receive an overview on the various accessibility features of the bus, fare costs, how to plan trips on public transit, and information on safety and security. Some destinations include: the Art Gallery of Alberta, local festivals and events, West Edmonton Mall, City of Edmonton attractions like the Valley Zoo and Fort Edmonton, and trips to the LRT for orientation. For all groups participating in Seniors on the Go trips, a follow-up group travel training session is provided in the Fall and early Winter months to reinforce the information provided during the tour, and from those sessions individual sessions are often scheduled.

### **Sidewalk Connectivity**

In order for senior's roadway crossings to support access to transit service, sidewalk connectivity also needs to be available and continuous from senior's resident facilities to the bus stops and also from bus stops to destination locations. Continuous sidewalks also are required to support seniors requiring mobility aids such as walkers and wheel chairs. This requires properly designed curb ramps to support safe entry and exit to roadway crossings from the sidewalks

The Transportation Department has dedicated programs to identify and prioritize both missing sidewalks and missing curb ramps to provide good access for seniors. Priority is given to locations with higher (potential) pedestrian demands, in accordance with the 2009 Sidewalk Strategy. The Transportation Department has also expanded the criteria to further consider locations according to user demographics, and therefore higher priorities is assigned to locations where

seniors are identified as being a potential user group for a sidewalk that is constructed. Construction of missing sidewalk links identified in high seniors' activity nodes cannot necessarily be given full priority ahead of all other missing sidewalk construction in the City; however, any project that clearly serves a community of seniors will be given a relatively high priority.

### **Pedestrian Crossing Control Review and Design Programs**

The Transportation Department also determines the appropriate roadway crossing control to support access to the local bus stops and enhance sidewalk connectivity. The current City process for deciding the appropriate level of crossing protection is based on the traffic volume and roadway speed, pedestrian crossing volume and type, the number of lanes being crossed, the availability of pedestrian refuge, and the proximity to alternate crossing points. This information is gathered through a series of observations of actual current activity of both traffic and pedestrians.

Pedestrians are monitored by type and those who are observed taking longer than expected, or are at higher risk, such as elementary school-age children, mobility challenged or elderly people are weighted higher than a typical adult (i.e. equivalent of 2 adults).

With all intersections in the City being crossing points where pedestrians have the legal right of way to cross the road (unless the crossing is specifically banned), locations where higher-than-typical pedestrian crossing activity is expected are considered for enhanced crossing controls. Basic controls include roadway markings and signage on lower traffic volume and shorter crossing distance roadways. For higher traffic volume roadways with larger crossing distances pedestrian crossing lights (flashers and signals) are considered. Proximity of existing crossing locations is also reviewed and more consideration is given to locations where no other crossing lights for pedestrians are nearby (currently 200 metres is the distance reviewed and considered as "near").

At locations where full traffic signals are currently available near key origin and destination points for seniors, consideration is given to including accessible pedestrian signal activation for the visually and hearing impaired, as well as pedestrian countdown signal heads, which provides positive guidance to pedestrians on how much time they have to finish crossing the roadway. Guidelines for both of these types of devices are reviewed considering the general need and the activity level for this need. Inherent in prioritization of these devices again is the amount of pedestrians that are mobility challenged or visually/hearing impaired that can benefit from these devices as locations are installed each year. Often, where traffic signals are installed near areas of higher seniors crossings, the time provided for pedestrians to finish crossing the intersection are currently designed with 20% more time to cross the roadway than the general crossing time designed at traffic signals. This is current City

practice and is considered based on site review requests or at the time of construction.

### **Seniors' Developments Guideline Review**

In the previous Transportation and Public Works Committee report (2011TD9462 – Seniors' Crossings) dated February 8, 2011, a review of pedestrian crossing lights in close proximity to existing higher density seniors housing facilities across the city was completed. This review identified that for the most part, facilities near larger roadways currently have crossing lights within a reasonable walking distance from these housing facilities. A few exceptions were noted, where an area is under development and the ultimate four lane arterial roadway widening was yet to be completed. In these locations only marked and signed crosswalks were available where the first half of the ultimate arterial roadway is currently constructed. In all of these cases, crossing lights were planned in connection with arterial roadway widening. The Transportation Department also made a commitment in the February 8, 2011, report to improve the development review process and create the necessary guidelines for adding conditions to incorporate pedestrian controls on major roadways near senior's facilities at the time of construction, which up to this point has not been specifically considered.