

Increase to Fund Transit Peace Officers

Recommendation:

That Transportation and Public Works Committee recommend to City Council:

That the March 22, 2011, Transportation Department report 2011TD2304 be received for information.

Report Summary

This report provides information on the proposed deployment themes, priorities, duties and annual costs associated with Transit Peace Officers.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the November/December, City Council Budget meeting, the following motion was passed:

That the Transportation Department 2011 Operating Budget – Public Transit be increased by \$1,000,000 to fund Transit Security Officers, on an ongoing basis, with funding from the tax levy; subject to a report to City Council via Transportation and Public Works Committee.

Report

Background:

In terms of ridership, infrastructure and service hours, the Edmonton Transit System (Transit) has grown substantially in the past ten years. A negative consequence of the growth is further opportunity for social disorder and victimization throughout the system. This has led to an increased demand for

security personnel necessary to meet the safety needs of Transit customers and staff.

As an efficient means to increase security, Transit utilizes a holistic approach, leveraging design principles, technology, procedures and resourcing in a combined effort to increase the perception of safety throughout the system. Furthermore, as a means of increasing effectiveness, the status of Transit security has evolved from security guard to peace officer.

Transit peace officers carry out their legal responsibilities through Peace Officer Appointment certificates (pursuant to section 7 of the *Peace Officer Act*) issued by the Province of Alberta. Transit peace officers are trained and positioned within the provincial law enforcement spectrum to deal with the vast majority of security related issues that occur within Transit. Peace officers may arrest individuals they find committing criminal offences on or in relation to Transit property. However, they are not granted authorization to investigate criminal acts, as this is the mandate and responsibility of the Edmonton Police Service.

Transit and the Edmonton Police Service (Police) have a Memorandum of Understanding in place detailing the roles and responsibilities of both agencies. In relation to the criminal activities occurring on the system, Transit security works collaboratively and shares intelligence with the Police to assist with joint operations, prevention focused activities and emerging issues.

Transit peace officers are deployed within seven teams, 24/7, 365 days a year. Transit Security currently employs 51 full time equivalent peace officers trained to enforce fare policies, bylaws and relevant provincial legislation, provide customer service and operator assistance, and patrol the entire system to protect patrons, staff and municipal assets. Resources are deployed based on an award-winning intelligence-led proactive deployment model that identifies security 'hot spots'. They are dispatched based on the following priority ranking:

- calls for service
- hot-spot proactive patrols
- emerging priorities

The vast majority (93 percent) of the incidents responded to by peace officers falls under the category of nuisance behaviors and disorder such as: 'public intoxication' or 'passenger conduct' issues. Additionally, peace officers also perform routine security functions such as washroom checks and the lock up and security sweeps of Transit facilities.

Transit Security has experienced an increase in workload commensurate with the overall growth of the system. During 2009, transit peace officers issued 7,117 violation tickets for various bylaw and provincial violations, issued 5,008 Fare Evasion tickets and responded to 14,290 security events. During 2010, transit peace officers issued 9,654 violation tickets for various bylaw and provincial violations, issued 9,139 Fare Evasion tickets and responded to 26,673 security events; substantial increases in all categories.

Current Challenges:

- Security resourcing has not kept pace with the rapid growth in Transit infrastructure and ridership.
- Hot-spot demands currently outnumber available resources. Some locations go unattended in favour of more urgent needs.
- Customer and staff perception of safety. Transit routinely receives letters from customers complaining of a lack of security presence on the system.
- Future growth – Security is planning and resourcing to meet the needs of LRT expansion, and the potential of extended service hours.

Opportunities for Improvement:

Additional resources will provide the opportunity to more effectively manage hot spot locations. As an example, more security resources are urgently required at the Transit Centers and LRT stations between Churchill and Clareview stations during the late afternoon and evening hours.

Furthermore, with additional peace officers Transit Security will be able to provide the following:

- an increased security presence to mitigate the safety fears of customers and staff
- additional proactive patrols of buses, transit centers and on the LRT
- the ability to deploy to 20 percent more hot spot locations on a proactive basis
- an additional 2,400 Bus Operator Security contacts, and 100 additional rides on identified

- routes requiring a security presence and action
- additional fare enforcement
- increased joint operation opportunities with the Police and other community stakeholders

Costs:

One million dollars in funding will provide training, personal equipment issue, overhead, and salary for ten Transit Peace Officers.

Policy

Peace Officer Act

Corporate Outcomes

- The Way We Move – Shift Edmonton's Transportation Modes;
- The Way We Live – Improve Edmonton's Liveability.