

Transit Safety and Security Update

Recommendation

That the November 13, 2020, City Operations report CR_7969, be received for information.

Executive Summary

Administration is committed to public safety and security and has been implementing a number of changes to increase safety and security on and around transit properties. These changes are foundational to supporting an accessible and safe city. Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) has been incorporated to consider safety and security from the perspective of women and girls. This continues work initiated from the UN Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative will also consider the intersectionality and perspectives of diverse voices to explore root causes and develop actions to address concerns .

This report outlines results achieved in 2019 and an update on enhancements to the transit safety and security framework. As a result of these efforts, there has been a reduction in mischief (vandalism, graffiti, broken windows, false fire alarms, etc.) from 2018 to 2019. In addition, there has been a 302 percent increase in reporting of transit-related security incidents attributed to improved surveillance, personnel presence, and communications efforts that outline how to report concerns. Due to this increase in reporting, the security disorder rate in 2019 has risen to 17 incidents per 100,000 boardings from 9 incidents in 2018.

Administration considers the impacts of COVID-19 on perceptions of safety and security, as well as other factors to recover ridership holistically. Safety and security measures are a critical lever for attracting riders back to transit and achieving long-term goals for transit growth.

Report

In October 2018, Council approved \$21.4 million in improvements for transit safety and security. Since then, Administration has been implementing changes related to infrastructure and fleet, continuous training and security personnel, as well as incorporating Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) to support an enhanced and holistic approach to safety and security. Further to the City's membership in the UN Women Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces Global Initiative, Administration is looking

at safety and security from the perspective of women and girls. By making transit safer for women and girls, it will make it safer for everyone in the community.

Safety and security investments are one important lever to recover and grow transit ridership, in support of ConnectEdmonton's strategic goal of Urban Places as well as the City Plan's commitment to 'a community of communities' where 50 percent of trips are made by transit and active transportation.

Administration has outlined a transit safety and security framework to guide actions, based on best practices and the need for a holistic approach, including:

- Environmental design (roads; pathways; transit stops; infrastructure)
- Policing and security
- Mass transit planning and transit network design
- Policies and procedures
- Education and outreach
- Technology and equipment

2019-2020 Key Actions

Over the last year, Administration has continued to implement changes to enhance transit safety and security through a variety of investments.

I. Physical Investments:

Enhancements to ETS Buses

All buses in the ETS fleet are now equipped with surveillance cameras and retractable Operator shields. These shields serve as enhanced personal protective equipment for Transit Operators.

Facility Improvements

Several changes have been made to LRT stations and transit centres since October 2018 in response to Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) reviews and architectural assessments. A total of 25 transit centres and LRT stations have been upgraded to LED lighting, supporting CPTED best practice. Additional surveillance cameras, convex mirrors and fencing have also been installed at five transit facilities to improve visibility and encourage intended use of space. In total, ETS has approximately 3,800 surveillance cameras on transit property throughout the city.

Other station improvements include added handrails and in-floor heat tracing on stairwells to prevent build up of snow and ice, refurbished platform warning tiles and for Stadium station, an entire station refurbishment that follows CPTED principles.

II. Workforce Investments:

ETS Personnel Coverage

Administration is in the process of increasing the ratio of Transit Operations staff to bus and LRT fleet in order to improve response times and support for Transit Operators when service disruptions and emergency situations arise. In total, 24 positions were approved to be added as part of the approved 2019-22 Operating Budget. All of the planned 20 positions for 2019 are in place.

Contracted Security Guards

Security guards were assigned in November 2018 to provide a visible presence at transit facilities and LRT stations and deployed at hot spot locations with higher levels of incidents. Currently, security guards are deployed at 19 locations. By deploying these resources and improving surveillance, there has been a significant increase in the number of reports being submitted, with 6,260 reports submitted by security guards in 2019.

Security guards provide extra surveillance while also supporting customer service (e.g. guards share transit information and assist with wayfinding) as part of a broader security plan. Guards are contracted to identify specific circumstances where further intervention from Transit Peace Officers or the Edmonton Police Service is needed. Guards are able to contact the Control Centre to request support as needed.

Overall, there has been a decline in mischief-related incidents since placing security guards at transit centres and LRT stations. Within the first eight months (November 2018 to July 2019), mischief-related incidents declined by 54 percent. Since that time, this reduced level has been maintained. Between March 1, 2018, and February 28, 2019, there were 559 offences overall; from March 1, 2019, to February 29, 2020, there were 554 incidents.

Transit Operator Continuous Training

In October 2018, Administration introduced continuous training for Operators, focused on competencies related to the job and adopting a standard curriculum from the Canadian Urban Transit Association. As a result of this investment, Operators receive ongoing, continuous training every year. Administration prioritized implementing two safety-related modules about how to handle difficult and dangerous situations; all Operators complete the training and receive refresher training every four years. At the beginning of Q4 2019 two additional components focused on safe driving and well being were offered. By the end of Q4 2019, 300 active Operators out of 1600 Operators completed these modules.

Critical Incident and Mental Health Supports

Administration implemented mental health training for supervisors in 2019, through The Working Mind program - a national program designed by the Mental Health

Commission of Canada. Training for all employees through the same program begins in November 2020.

Administration also provides critical incident support post-incident to employees, delivered through the ETS peer support program, Employee and Family Assistance Program, Transit Operator Employee Services Supervisors and the City Chaplain. External services related to workplace psychological injuries are also available through the Alberta Workers' Compensation Board, as part of a treatment and return-to-work plan.

Transit Peace Officers (TPOs)

Transit Peace Officers are a significant component of the overall safety model for transit service and their functions and deployment need to be integrated as part of the design of the safety system for public transit. In October 2018, Administration enhanced police and peace officer presence on transit. Administration and Edmonton Police Service (EPS) created a plan focused on high-incident locations and a joint enforcement team was put in place in Q4 2018; the team remained for the duration of 2019. In March 2020, EPS reallocated operational resources to create a city wide disruption response team.

The Joint Forces Operations Committee, comprised of Administration and EPS, meets on an as needed basis to integrate law enforcement, security agencies and internal partners to address safety trends in an effective and timely manner. Processes have been created to increase officer safety and quickly share time sensitive information to support safety throughout the city. Administration and EPS continue to work together to strengthen integration in support of transit safety and security.

Administration continues to improve the services provided by Transit Peace Officers including continued focus on inclusive questions during the hiring process, continued training with social agencies to understand lived experience for residents experiencing homelessness and mental health distress, ongoing internal reviews to understand gaps in training and authorities, increasing cultural awareness to address implicit bias and enhancement of mental health awareness and de-escalation training. Upcoming recommendations from the Community Safety and Well-being Task Force will further inform improvements of services, including advice from the Task Force about Peace Officer oversight.

III. Customer Investments:

Transit Watch "text to report" feature

Administration has added a text message feature to Transit Watch to provide a discreet way for riders to report safety and security concerns. The feature will roll out in November 2020 and was designed based on feedback collected from customers in

2019 and aligned with recommendations made by the Edmonton Safe City Community Collaboration Committee. When completing GBA+, women highlighted the need and importance of having a tool that provides a discreet way to report incidents on transit, such as incidents of harassment and sexual violence.

By texting Transit Watch (780-442-4900), the 24/7 ETS Control Centre will receive and respond to concerns from riders in the same way as if a phone call had been made. Administration will work with the Edmonton Safe City project team to enhance training for responding to issues involving violence against women and girls. The text feature adds an additional layer of support for the immediate reporting of personal safety concerns. Life threatening emergencies requiring response by ambulance, fire and/or police should continue to be reported directly to 9-1-1.

Customer Research Findings

Enhancing safety and security on transit is a critical component to improving the customer experience. Administration completed customer journey mapping in April 2020, as outlined in Attachment 1, to further explore the customer experience. Next steps include collaborating with community and stakeholder groups, when it is safe to do so in the context of COVID-19, to explore root causes of security incidents and concerns, and develop actions to further improve safety and security. This review will incorporate GBA+ and include a wide range of perspectives to represent the diversity of our communities.

Community Safety Deployment Model

To support long-term planning, Administration, EPS and REACH Edmonton have formed the Community Safety Deployment Model Advisory Team. The goal of the Community Safety Deployment Model is to establish a common operating approach and align available resources to ensure the right safety resource is applied, at the right place, at the right time with the right information for a safer city. Built with data and analytics ethics and privacy in mind, the model leverages data (without personally identifiable information) focused on time, location and incident type. The model uses predictive analysis from previous hotspots in order to predict where, when and what is likely to happen up to two weeks ahead.

Incident Reporting

To address root causes of security incidents and build a safer city, incidents need to be reported. Security incidents fall into several categories such as harassment, loitering, nuisance and graffiti. Transit Peace Officers address disorder, and whenever possible, focus on education first. An enforcement response is only used when necessary, recognizing complex contributing factors and root causes such as experiencing mental health challenges or homelessness. Criminal matters or any incident involving a weapon are referred to EPS. When not responding to security

incidents, Transit Peace Officers and police conduct visible, proactive uniformed patrols to deter and detect incidents.

There was an increase in the number of overall calls for service and incident reports in 2019. Calls increased by 302 percent, from 959 to 3,861. As a result of the increased detection and reporting of security incidents, the number of incidents per 100,000 boardings increased from 9.42 in 2018 to 16.5 in 2019. This is attributed to several factors, including increased physical presence of personnel on transit property. Additionally, with increased communication of safety related measures available to riders and a greater awareness of how to report concerns has contributed to the increase in call volume. It is anticipated this trend will continue to increase, with the introduction of the text to report feature for transit riders.

When a report is received, Administration assesses the situation, responds and deploys personnel and emergency resources as appropriate to intervene. There are a variety of security tools available to the ETS Control Centre as they manage transit service and monitor transit locations.

From 2018 to 2019, there were 828 criminal occurrences on transit property reported to EPS; the number of calls about criminal occurrences to EPS in 2019 decreased by 32.4 percent. Occurrences are defined as Crimes Against the Person, Crimes Against Property, Violation of Controlled Drugs and Substances Act and other Criminal Code violations.

In addition, the number of Operator assaults declined from 84 incidents in 2018 to 82 incidents in 2019. An Operator assault includes behaviours such as intentionally applying force by punching, kicking or spitting, as well as assaults involving weapons or causing bodily harm. Through the support of the Operator Assault Task Force, a partnership between ATU Local 569 and Edmonton Transit Service, detailed analysis of each incident is conducted to inform future actions.

COVID-19 Impacts

As part of the City's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, transit is an essential service connecting Edmontonians to important needs, like grocery shopping, healthcare appointments and work. In recognition of this role, in March 2020, the Government of Canada declared public transit an essential service. To protect the health and safety of employees and riders, several important health and safety measures were implemented to respond to transit-related COVID-19 risks. These measures included:

- Only deploying buses that had Operator shields and distributing personal protective equipment to employees such as masks, hand sanitizer and gloves;

- Implementing hazard assessment tools for the workplace to assess COVID-19 risks and mitigating activities to protect employees;
- Implementing a mandatory face coverings policy for transit;
- Monitoring boardings on a daily basis to respond to reports of crowding;
- Enhancing practices for cleaning and disinfecting transit buses, trains, facilities and LRT stations; and,
- Implementing actions, including communications campaigns for riders, to align with provincial public transit guidelines as outlined in Attachment 2.

During the pandemic, what it means to be “safe and secure” on transit has shifted for riders as concerns associated with the pandemic have been elevated. Administration shifted its transit customer research during the pandemic to focus on changing behaviours and the readiness to return to transit.

When combined with COVID-19 safety-related measures, the ongoing planned actions to improve safety and security on transit will improve the customer experience and help to recover and grow transit ridership.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmonton is a safe city			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Improved safety and security for users of City Operations services	Security disorder rate per 100,000 boardings	2019:17	2021:15
Reduced operator assaults	Annual number of operator assaults	2019: 82	2021: 71
Corporate Outcome(s): Edmontonians use public transit and active modes of transportation			
Outcome(s)	Measure(s)	Result(s)	Target(s)
Services promote mode shift to public transit and active transportation modes	Customer Satisfaction of Safety on ETS	2019: 78%	80%

Attachments

1. Transit Service Journey Map
2. COVID-19 Government of Alberta Guidance for Public Transit

Others Reviewing this Report

- M. Persson, Deputy City Manager and Chief Financial Officer, Financial and Corporate Services
- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- S. McCabe, Deputy City Manager, Urban Form and Corporate Strategic Development
- B. Andriachuk, City Solicitor