Applying The City Plan Levers of Change

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Levers are the tools we use to make change happen and will be activated to different degrees to achieve desired results. Levers are tools, actions or approaches that the City can use to achieve outcomes and the Big City Moves.

The City Plan levers are:

- Policy
- Partnerships and Advocacy
- Incentives, Pricing and Subsidies
- Infrastructure Investment

Policy is a municipal planning instrument that can guide, direct, manage or shape how we provide strategic direction for land, infrastructure or services to influence or change the behaviour of residents and markets or market groups.

Partnerships and Advocacy require fostering relationships with private, community, institutional and not-for-profit entities to activate strategies, initiatives and actions to advance common goals, recognizing shared interests and aspirations.

Incentives, Pricing and Subsidies include applying a premium to cost or a reduction in cost to support a shared outcome or influence behaviour. This can include off-setting the costs of services and amenities for certain user groups or types of activities, or applying charges and fees for users through available funding mechanisms.

Infrastructure Investment is about providing capital or operational investment in physical infrastructure, City assets, services and planning activities to activate and encourage specific City Building Outcomes.

Policy Levers Applied to Achieve 50 Percent Mode Share

Policy Levers

The City Plan's land use concept and mass transit network were the starting point for the 50 percent technical analysis and modelling. The analysis also used relevant policies identified in The City Plan, such as:

- Trade-offs that redistribute road right-of-way away from cars to transit, such as dedicating existing car lanes to buses, to improve transit efficiency and travel time
- Shifting investment from road expansion to other modes (e.g., transit, bike lanes, etc.)
- Aligning capital and operating budgets with land use and growth management priorities
- Maximizing the efficiency of the existing transportation network through a holistic analysis of system capacity and targeted infrastructure improvements
- Managing parking and curbside space as a strategic asset, which recognizes its value as a public resource that may need to shift to meet emerging needs over time.

Pricing and Subsidy Levers

The analysis considered pricing mechanisms that doubled household auto operating and quadrupled parking costs, as compared to business as usual. Pricing mechanisms to increase auto operating costs could include road pricing such as tolls, congestion charges, fuel taxes, vehicle registration costs or mileage-based charges. Typically, road pricing strategies are coupled with infrastructure improvements, where the funds raised pay for road infrastructure or improve transit's people-moving capacity through operating and infrastructure investments. In addition, the analysis included increasing parking costs in areas where Edmontonians currently pay to park and introducing parking pricing across the nodes and corridors.

The analysis also applied a subsidy to reduce transit fares. Administration previously found applying transit fare reductions alone has a marginal impact on increasing transit ridership (October 28, 2019 Executive Committee report CR_7128 Ridership Recovery and Growth). Extending that learning to this analysis, transit connectivity and operational improvements were applied and found to be effective in contributing to increased transit ridership.

Partnerships Levers

Under current provincial legislation, the City does not have the authority to apply road pricing charges or vehicle operation taxes. However, the analysis assumed that such tools were available or that over the course of time, other orders of government would apply or allow the City to use such tools. In the future, should the City wish to use such levers, negotiation and partnership with other orders of government, industry, and stakeholders would be required. Some pricing mechanisms that increase the operating costs of vehicles already exist, such as the provincial fuel tax and the carbon levy instituted by the federal government.

Some grant funds that flow to the City as a result of these taxes have been used for transit investment.

Investment Levers

The City chooses to invest in certain areas by allocating operating and infrastructure budget. There are limits to the City's control on investment - sometimes, the City may allocate budget in response to funding opportunities and partnerships with other orders of government. In the analysis, Administration considered scenarios in which planned major roadway improvements would still continue for projects such as the Terwillegar Expressway and the free-flowing of Yellowhead Trail, while other major investments would be redirected to shift arterial lanes away from auto movement to transit service. The scenarios also applied changes to The City Plan mass transit network, including:

- Transit priority measures (e.g., transit-exclusive lanes) on key routes
- Increases in transit frequency during the peak and non-peak periods of the day
- Increases in planned and existing park and ride capacity
- More direct connections between transit centres
- First kilometer/last kilometer connections to mass transit stations

These improvements are expected to increase capital and operating budgets for transit service.