

City of Edmonton and Edmonton Police Service Transit Safety Standard Operating Procedures Overview

Edmonton Police Services and Administration have recently formed the Transit Safety Oversight Committee. The committee is tasked with providing greater focus on and accountability for transit security, resulting in improvements in security and more efficient deployment of resources. The committee ensures consistency with applicable policies, directives, procedures, guidelines, standards and data collection and analysis.

Edmonton's transit system has been experiencing increases in the severity of crime and disorder, including acts of violence over the last several months of the pandemic. Those using and monitoring the system are also noticing increasing incidents of overdoses and mental health concerns.

Recognizing the escalating concerns, Administration and Edmonton Police Service developed a standard operating procedure to respond in an integrated manner to the disorder. The objectives are to:

- define a consistent approach with multiple agencies, including the City of Edmonton, Edmonton Police Service, corporate security and social agency partners
- improve relationships between stakeholders and agencies
- prepare and respond to anticipated and unanticipated events of increasing crime, nuisance, disorder, overdoses and mental health issues on the transit system
- provide authority and direction to City peace officers in collaboration with the Edmonton Police Service
- ensure the safety and security of transit users, City employees, contractors and vulnerable individuals
- ensure the protection and security of transit infrastructure
- escalate enforcement practices and support services to install a behavioural change with problematic individuals on transit property

Safety Continuum Approach: Awareness, Education and Actioning of Authorities

Administration is initiating an integrated and phased strategic approach to increase education and awareness regarding available support services and the appropriate use of space within City of Edmonton locations, and, as a last resort, enforcement. With every phase, there is zero-tolerance for acts or threats of violence or repeated nuisance or predatory behaviour or criminal activity; the appropriate enforcement action and response will be initiated in these circumstances.

When an extreme weather response is activated, the standard operating procedure is used by City and police staff. Patrols are increased during the extreme weather response to conduct wellness checks on individuals, assist with referrals to shelters and the winter emergency bus, and act when enforcement is necessary. Individuals are asked to leave the premises at scheduled closure times and, as the last step, if they are creating a disturbance or disorder. When individuals are removed, the transfer of individuals to shelters is coordinated with transportation options (eg. REACH 24/7 Crisis Diversion). Individuals may then choose to use the transportation options to access available shelters. It is not uncommon for some individuals to refuse transportation to shelter and in those cases referral and transfer efforts are made to the furthest extent possible.

Long Term Goal

Administration is seeking opportunities and partnerships with social agencies to create a long-term social support model. The long-term goal is to establish a sustainable social support system or model that enhances agency capacity to underpin programs and approaches aimed to provide access to services for vulnerable persons. This holistic approach includes helping persons engage in the intended use of transit services, access to supportive living conditions, acquiring mental health and addictions counselling, ensuring food security, and minimizing the impact of displacement in the river valley and surrounding communities.