

Transit Centre Security Measures

Recommendation

That the May 11, 2021, City Operations report CO00526, be received for information.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the March 23, 2021, Urban Planning Committee meeting, the following motion passed:

That Administration provide a report on the effectiveness of the current transit centre security measures, including:

- A. Measures used to monitor the performance of transit security guards and Transit Peace Officers,
- B. Any enhancements currently under consideration to improve the safety of transit riders at our transit centres.

Executive Summary

Edmonton Transit Service's (ETS) highest priority is safety of the community, transit riders and transit staff. This report outlines the transit security framework which has multiple layers of security to support an accessible and safe city. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, ridership, and the natural surveillance that it provides on transit property, has declined. Administration has seen an increase in social and security disorder and have developed a cross-functional team to monitor transit security performance measures (outlined in Attachment 1) to ensure effective and appropriate deployment of security guards, Transit Peace Officers (TPOs) and the Edmonton Police Service (EPS). Recent interim safety and security results are shown in Attachment 2. An overview of the security responsibilities are provided in Attachment 3.

In addition to these safety and security layers in the overall framework, Administration is introducing a Bystander Awareness Program and a Community Outreach Transit Team that pairs social agency staff with TPOs to create more positive and safer outcomes on transit that reduce victimization of people in need and creates a safer transit service. Administration has been focused on enhancements to improve safety for customers, employees and communities in Edmonton. A safe and healthy transit system is foundational to supporting an accessible, safe and healthy city. Administration recognizes that transit safety and security improvements are critical for recovering transit ridership, and achieving long-term goals for transit growth.

Report

In October 2018, Council approved \$21.4 million in safety and security investments for infrastructure and fleet improvements, security guards at select transit centres and LRT stations, continuous training for Transit Operators and additional transit personnel to support an enhanced approach to safety and security. Additional enhancements to safety measures require exploring the root causes of crime and disorder, then implementing prevention measures with many community stakeholders. ETS is working with partners on this next step, which will ultimately support a safer community and city.

In addition, Administration has developed an integrated safety and security framework, and governance model, that provides an interdisciplinary focus on transit security, customer experience and ridership. This has resulted in improvements of security outcomes and a more efficient deployment of resources and layering of solutions. The Transit Safety and Security Framework and governance model ensures Transit Security, Corporate Security, Transit Peace Officers (TPOs) and the Edmonton Police Service (EPS) regularly check in, monitor results and adjust for emerging developments in a coordinated and collaborative manner. Each layer provides a distinct function to ensure the safety of customers, staff and contractors working onsite.

COVID-19 Impacts

COVID-19 has impacted transit agencies across North America and stay-at-home measures have caused a drastic decline in ridership at the onset of the pandemic in March 2020 and into 2021. Despite lower ridership, ETS continues to connect Edmontonians to their basic needs, like groceries, healthcare and work. In recognition of transit's critical role in our community, in March 2020, the Government of Canada declared public transit an essential service.

Lower transit ridership results in fewer people in transit areas and therefore less natural surveillance. Administration has seen a recent increase in social and security disorder, including behaviours like vandalism, harassment, excessive loitering, overdoses, threats to staff and contractors in transit-related facilities and an increase in issues of cleanliness.

As a result, EPS and Administration have agreed to respond with targeted actions to address disorder and improve safety and security for all Edmontonians using transit. Additional measures include:

- Deploying additional security guards to provide better surveillance and monitoring, as well as provide more in-person support for people using transit.
- Increasing the number of proactive patrols from Transit Peace Officers to monitor transit centres and LRT stations.

- Introducing joint enforcement operations with Transit Peace Officers and the Edmonton Police Service Crime Suppression Branch to proactively monitor behavioural hot spots and identified problematic transit centres and LRT stations.
- Enhanced monitoring of safety and security data, including review of video surveillance to proactively identify issues and intelligence data sharing between enforcement agencies and stakeholders.
- Enhanced community outreach to promote public safety and resources available through Administration, EPS and social agency partners.
- Continued promotion of the Transit Watch program (phone or text 780-442-4900) to report a safety concern to the ETS Control Centre.

Security Guards

Contracted security guards are one of the layers in the safety and security model for public transit in Edmonton. Security guards are presently deployed at 19 select transit centres/LRT stations throughout the transit system. As of April 2021, security guards are provided by Commissionaires. Commissionaires are highly trained according to provincial standards and provide superior customer service. Security guards provide additional oversight, dedicated and surveillance, a visible presence and offer a wide range of assistance to Edmontonians when requested or deemed necessary. They have a direct connection to the 24/7 ETS Control Centre and play a critical role in reporting incidents and requesting enforcement, police or other emergency support for events in the transit centres and LRT stations. They may also assist police with investigations when requested.

Administration monitors performance and effectiveness of security guard deployment closely. The contract includes assignment instructions that provide a detailed outline of requirements in the delivery of security services to ETS. The objective of these Post Orders is to enhance safety and security of transit customers, employees and infrastructure, and to provide the posted security guards with clear expectations and a detailed outline of requirements in the performance of their duties on ETS property. Security guards are responsible for detecting and reporting criminal behaviour or nuisance and disorder incidents as they occur. They proactively patrol the location, assist people who are in the facilities and report emergency situations.

Since the deployment of security guards in late 2018, they have intervened to prevent potentially tragic situations when individuals have shown distressed behaviour near the tracks at LRT stations. Additionally, security guards have also helped mitigate a wide variety of other challenging situations by quickly reporting incidents such as deliberately set fires, helping vulnerable Edmontonians who are not adequately clothed for cold winter weather, administering critical first aid and life-saving naloxone, and even helping to safely reunite a missing child with their family.

The impact of having guards deployed has been very positive and has resulted in a significant increase in reporting to the ETS Control Centre, which enables ETS to deploy resources to respond to incidents in a more effective and timely manner. Security guards provide surveillance and decrease mischief and increase reporting, allowing for more data to drive responses and action. When comparing calls for service before and after security guards were deployed in late 2018, data indicates that calls for service have increased by 487.7 percent:

- 391 calls for service in Q3 2018 (before security guards were deployed)
- 1,258 calls for service in Q4 2018 (after security guards were deployed)
- 1,686 calls for service in Q4 2019 (approximately one year after guards were deployed)
- 2,298 calls for service in Q4 2020 (approximately two years after guards were deployed)

Further interim results are detailed in Attachment 2. Security guards report to the ETS Control Centre at the start and end of each shift, sharing relevant information about recent incidents or public safety matters. The documentation and data can be used to conduct audits, assist with investigations and provide information such as who conducted the patrol, when and where. Administration is able to review the data and has the discretion to conduct notice audits of security services. At the end of each shift, the Guard Supervisor creates a detailed Shift Supervisor Report. Administration ensures that the security service provider meets and/or exceeds ETS service level requirements; commendations and complaints regarding security guard services are reviewed weekly or as often as required.

Transit Peace Officers

Transit Peace Officers (TPOs) are another layer in the safety and security framework, and are deployed to select locations based on an intelligence led and data-driven approach to reduce disorder and bylaw infractions. TPOs provide visible proactive patrols on transit property to educate or enforce bylaws, intervene in non-violent criminal incidents with EPS support, collaborate with onsite security guards, and provide assistance when requested and when safe to do so. TPOs have been instrumental in responding to social and security disorder concerns and supporting people who are in distress and need support. Enforcement activities are in relation to behaviours such as loitering, littering, substance use, and criminal related events. From December 2020 to March 2021, TPOs have conducted 14,689 patrols, issued 21,396 warnings and 1,343 tickets and recorded 30,606 offences on transit property.

TPOs and EPS have deployed joint teams focused on transit locations that are experiencing an increase in nuisance, disorder and crime. These joint teams are from current TPO and EPS regularly deployed resources assigned to transit. Additional joint teams, in addition to regular operations, are planned to be deployed in May 2021. The teams are proactive in their approach with the goals of providing public education,

uniformed presence, deterrence and, when appropriate, enforcement of applicable municipal bylaws, provincial acts and criminal code provisions. The teams partner with social agency staff to support a harm reduction approach when interacting with people in need. Social agency staff have the expertise to respond more effectively to people who are marginalized and may require a connection to supportive housing, mental health supports or other resources as alternatives to enforcement.

Edmonton Police Service (EPS)

The EPS Crime Suppression Branch proactively patrols transit property and works closely with TPOs and security guards. EPS has the responsibility to educate the public about expected behaviour according to bylaw and law, respond to all violent and criminal incidents and investigate crime. EPS responds to criminal incidents on transit property.

In 2021, EPS officially launched the Human-centred Engagement and Liaison Partnership (HELP) unit that works in partnership alongside Boyle Street Community Services to collaboratively support people and provide referrals and case management plans. The HELP team works with external community service providers and aims to prevent community members from interacting with the judicial system. The HELP team participates in the engagement work on transit property once per week at the request of EPS Crime Suppression Teams.

Next Steps- Further Planned Enhancements

Community Outreach Transit Team

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused uncertainty and stress for all Edmontonians, and has especially highlighted marginalized or vulnerable Edmontonians who may lack safe housing or may be experiencing mental health or addictions issues.

Administration has developed a Community Outreach Transit Team that partners TPOs with dedicated Outreach Workers to provide a pathway to securing appropriate housing as needed, social support services, mental health supports and connections to basic needs like food and clothing. All Edmontonians deserve to feel safe when in public spaces and on transit property. The Community Outreach Transit Team aims to provide better access to support for those who are marginalized.

Bystander Awareness Program

In 2021, Administration will develop and implement a Bystander Awareness campaign and staff training program to help empower bystanders to identify and effectively respond to forms of harassment and sexual violence. This program addresses the Edmonton Safe City Community Collaboration Committee recommendations made through the United Nations Women Global Initiative for Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces and supports a Gender Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) lens on transit safety and security.

Corporate Outcomes and Performance Management

Measures tracked to monitor performance of transit security guards and Transit Peace Officers (TPOs) are included in a logic model in Attachment 1 as part of measuring results in the transit safety and security framework.

Corporate Outcome(s): Edmontonians use public transit and active modes of transportation, 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

Attachments

1. Transit Safety and Security Logic Model
2. Transit Safety and Security Interim Results
3. Safety and Security Roles

Others Reviewing this Report

- C. Owen, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement
- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- K. Fallis-Howell, Acting City Solicitor