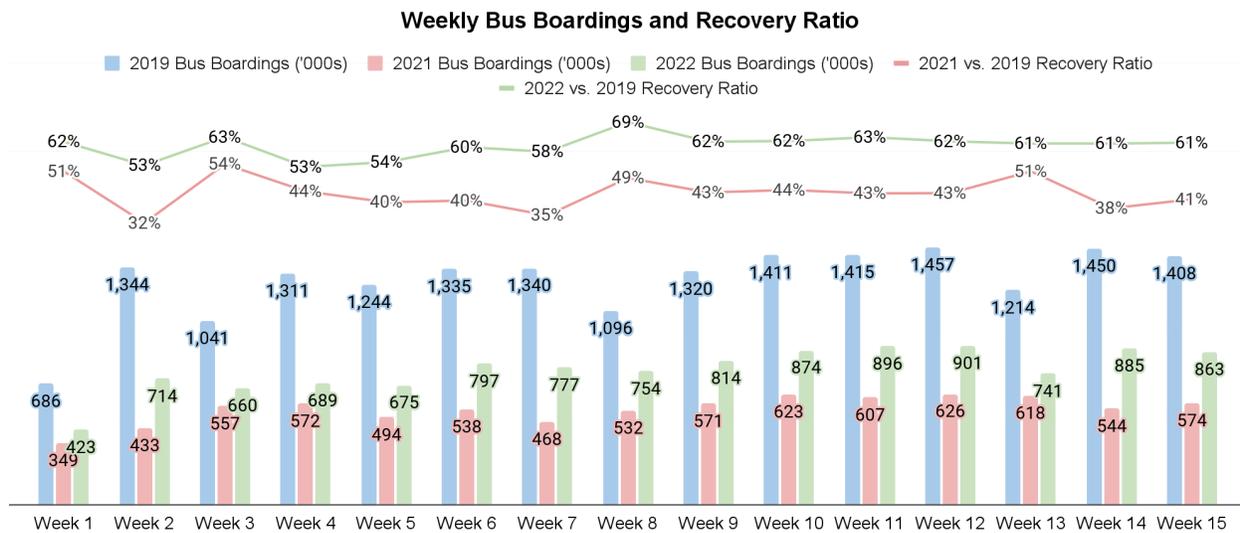


ETS Branch Highlights Report

Date: April 25, 2022

1. RIDERSHIP



Note: Weekend ridership is not included.

* Week 1: December 30, 2018 to January 5, 2019 / December 27, 2020 to January 2, 2021 / January 2, 2022 to January 8, 2022

* Week 15: April 7, 2019 to April 14, 2019 / April 4, 2021 to April 10, 2021 / April 10, 2022 to April 16, 2022

Ridership recovery has been stable in the 60% range during the first few weeks of April. With 863,333 bus boardings during the week of April 10-16, transit ridership was up by approximately 50% above the same week in 2021. At a 61% recovery from pre-pandemic levels, the rebound in ETS ridership remains to be one of the highest nationally as of late.

Hybrid work models will continue impacting ridership growth as office workers are taking less commute trips compared to pre-pandemic levels. ETS will continue monitoring the impact of hybrid models on travel patterns and rider trip characteristics as ridership rebuilds.

2. ETS UPDATES

Federal-Provincial Transit Funding

On April 13, the Government of Alberta announced it will be committing \$79.5 million to support transit systems operated by 26 municipalities across the province. The funding is part of the Alberta Relief for Shortfalls for Transit Operators (RESTOR) program designed to provide a top-up to assist municipalities impacted by low ridership over the last two years. The Government of Canada is matching that amount, for a combined total of \$159 million in top-up assistance. Of the total funding, Edmonton will receive \$66.97 million. The funding will help ETS recover ridership, and will offset the operating budget shortfall in 2022 resulting from lower ridership and transit fare revenue, including the freeze on fare increases.

Sustainable Funding Tools

In order to meet the City Plan targets to have 50 per cent transit and active transportation mode share, operating funding strategies are being explored for transit growth. ETS' current operating income sources - transit fare revenue and property tax - have been strained during the pandemic and may not be sufficient to support the levers that need to be engaged to meet the City Plan's targets. Administration identified an initial list of 20 tools that have been used in other jurisdictions and provide consistent and sustainable funding for transit. These tools were then narrowed down to 10 of the most promising tools and were categorized as real estate, transportation and other tools.

An analysis was conducted on the tools to assess which would have the strongest impact on travel choices, ease of implementation, equity, alignment with City objectives and revenue potential. Of the tools identified, six showed promise as viable revenue sources: community revitalization levy, dedicated transit funding, real estate opportunities, motor fuel tax, parking fees and vehicle registration fees. A sustainable funding formula will likely require implementing a suite of tools. Additionally, any new tool will have to balance the tradeoffs between creating more sustainable funding and the regulatory changes necessary to implement them.

In response to this report, on April 19, City Council passed a two-part motion:

- 1. That Administration conduct further analysis on the revenue potential, risks and possible implementation of a suite of options as outlined in the April 13, 2022, City Operations report CO00607, including Community Revitalization Levies, dedicated transit funding, real estate opportunities and parking fees, and model these tools to determine potential for a long term sustainable, predictable revenue source for transit that meets both the capital and operating mass transit objectives laid out in the City Plan; and*
- 2. That Administration explore interest in shared advocacy opportunities with Alberta municipalities regional partners and transit stakeholders to push for legislative changes to pursue additional transit revenue options including but not limited to*

possible vehicle registration fees, and a standing agreement to receive a portion of the provincial government's motor fuel tax.

Bus Service Changes

ETS implemented spring bus service adjustments on April 24 to reflect spring ridership patterns. Several bus routes underwent schedule changes, including routes 1-100, 101-199, 500-599, 700-799, and 900-999. Some of the adjustments will allow for better connections between certain bus routes to enhance the transfer experience for riders.

On Demand service expanded to connect riders from one of 49 neighbourhoods to 11 transit hubs. The service was also added to 11 neighbourhoods, including seven in the north: Uplands, Stillwater, Glenridding Ravine, Balwin, as well as portions of Albany, Canossa, Rapperswill, Chambery, Elsinore, Klarvatten and Kinglet Gardens. The expansion of the On Demand service in the north is an effort to provide better transit service to residents in these areas and ensure residents have better access to affordable mobility options.

Closure of Washrooms in Transit Stations

After the announcement of the Transit Safety Plan in February, public washrooms in 15 transit stations were temporarily closed as part of the plan. The measure was in response to the growing number of calls to medical aid in public washrooms over the past few years. Transit riders were directed to public washrooms in nearby parks and city facilities. Administration is developing a plan to enhance safety and allow for the reopening of public washrooms in transit stations.

TPOs and EPS Officers Extra Duty

As of April 11, Transit Peace Officers and EPS officers are on extra duties at various LRT stations and transit centres. The City deployed high visibility TPOs and EPS officers on specialized duties at transit locations from Monday to Friday during the morning and evening. The aim is to reduce crime and disorder on transit and help riders feel safe while using transit.

Budget Planning

The City of Edmonton is developing the proposed 2023-26 Operating and Capital Budgets to be presented to City Council for approval in Q4 2022. On the Operating side, the key priorities being put forward by ETS include the permanent funding for the Community Outreach Transit Team, On-Demand Transit service and continued enhanced cleaning, as well as redeploying the Valley Line Southeast Precursor bus service budget and buses to allow for growth in the conventional bus network. On the capital side, priorities include new garage capacity, the introduction of ongoing funding for transit priority measures, fleet renewal and planning for BRT routes in key city corridors.

The submissions are being included as part of a process to help identify the long-term operating and capital investment outlooks that are being presented to City Council in June; the proposed four-year budgets will be presented to Council for deliberation that begins in November of 2022.

3. ETSAB INFORMATION REQUESTS

SmartFare Update

Fall 2021 saw the kick off of the Smart Fare Program with the launch of UPass. Four institutions (University of Alberta, NAIT, Grant MacEwan, Norquest) began distributing Arc Cards (smart fare brand name) in August 2021 in preparation for the start of the 2021/2022 school year. Over the past 9 months post-secondary students have been traveling transit using the Smart Fare system.

On December 13, 2021, the Adult PAYG pilot officially launched with the core project team performing initial 'live' testing of the system in preparation for full pilot launch. The new year - January 1 - saw approximately 500 volunteers setting up accounts, adding funds, riding the system and providing feedback on their experiences. The project team has been actively engaging the volunteers through ongoing surveys and 'community' engagement platforms, identifying what is going well and areas for improvement.

Enhancements to the system, modifications to the website and content changes to the messaging have been identified and are being implemented to ensure an excellent customer experience once the system is launched regionally.

While the volunteers continue to test the system and the Project Team works with the Vendor to resolve the last few outstanding issues, ridership continues to expand. In March, Arc Cards were distributed to all City of Edmonton Transit staff and in April the University of Alberta Administrative Staff transitioned from paper 'staff passes' to Arc cards. To date, over 2.8 million rides have been taken across the region using Smart Fare and will continue to increase as the project advances.

4. ETS COUNCIL REPORT TRACKING - 2022

Report #	Report Title	Meeting Date*	Committee*
Reports being led by ETS:			
CO01229	Transit Safety and Security Update	May 24, 2022	City Council
CO00576	Transit Fare Fines - Repayment Options	Oct 26, 2022 (rescheduled to align with CO)	Exec
CO01179	Edmonton Metropolitan Transit Services Commission - Phase One Service Plan Implications	Sep 26, 2022	CPSC
TBD	Evaluation of On Demand Transit service delivery	Fall 2022	Exec
CO01192	Ride Transit and Leisure Access Programs review	October 26, 2022	Exec
Other reports of interest:			
CO00778	Snow and Ice Control - Options to Increase Service Standards	Apr 25, 2022	CPSC
CS00751	Amendments to Bylaw 14614 Public Places Bylaw - Restorative Justice Practices	April 25, 2022	CPSC
OCM01136	Amendments to Bylaw 8353 Conduct of Transit Passengers	August 22, 2022	CPSC

*Subject to change

AC = Audit Committee

CC = City Council

CPSC = Community and Public Services Committee

Exec = Executive Committee

IRCD = Inter-municipal and Regional Development Committee

UPC = Urban Planning Committee