



Bus Network Redesign 2018

# What We Did and Heard Highlights

Edmonton  
Transit Service:  
Public Engagement

| **SHARE** YOUR VOICE  
**SHAPE** OUR CITY



**ETS**

April 2019

# Overview

Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) is transforming transit in our city by rolling out a new bus network in summer 2020. This network will be built on a set of guiding principles, public input, and will work to provide a service that is faster, more frequent and efficient.

This means ETS will have fewer overlapping routes, straighter and more frequent routes, as well as moving buses from some underused routes to areas where the demand is higher. The result will be frequent service for central areas of the city with lots of transit users. In suburban neighbourhoods, there will be express routes getting more people to work and school during rush hour and routes that move Edmontonians across the city without going through downtown.

## Transit Strategy

The Bus Network Redesign is the first major action to come out of the Transit Strategy. Through extensive public engagement in 2015, Edmontonians helped develop this strategy by letting us know how they wanted their transit system to work. This work led to the creation of the **transit principles** that help guide ETS transit planners when they make decisions about the transit system.

## Public engagement

ETS currently provides nearly 86 million rides to Edmontonians every year and is working to meet the demands of a growing city. Collecting input from the public, community and other stakeholders formed an important part of the Bus Network Redesign project. An extensive community engagement program took place in spring and fall 2018 to capture feedback from the public. The engagement was focused around a key question:

*How do we carefully consider citizen's transit needs as we redesign Edmonton's bus network to be more efficient and respond to the citizen priorities identified in the Transit Strategy?*

In spring 2018, ETS held a series of drop-in community workshops where Edmontonians were asked to help adapt and adjust the first draft of the new bus network. It was an opportunity for the public to let the transit planners know how they currently use the system and how the future network will change the way they move around the city.

The planners used this valuable information to refine the first draft of the network. For example, after having many conversations about walking distances, planners worked to reduce those distances without compromising the integrity of the new network.

In fall 2018, ETS went back to the public with the second draft of the network. Through another series of community workshops, the public was asked to provide their perspectives and feedback on the final draft. Planners used this information to make final changes to the new network that will be presented to City Council in November 2019.

# What we did

## Public engagement

### Phase 1

- + **24** drop-in community workshops
- + **6** targeted workshops with community agencies
- + **10** coffee chats with seniors groups and community agencies
- + **2,300+** individuals participated in a face-to-face engagement activities
- + **4,202** completed surveys

### Phase 2

- + **13** drop-in community workshops
- + **5** targeted workshops with community agencies
- + **13** coffee chats with seniors groups and community agencies
- + **2,700+** individuals participated in face to face engagement activities
- + **3,521** completed surveys

## Edmonton Transit Service employee engagement

### Phases 1 and 2

- + **5** facilitated workshops with select transit operators
- + **17** transit operator drop-in sessions at 6 transit garages
- + **11** presentations to key internal ETS stakeholders
- + **900** ETS employees attended staff engagement events

## Public engagement activities

**Drop-in community workshops:** these were four-hour drop-in sessions held in each ward. The Bus Network Redesign team met with Edmontonians at libraries, recreation centres, community halls and shopping centres.

**Targeted workshops:** these workshops were held to get feedback from community agencies who serve individuals with specialized needs that might be acutely impacted by the changes to the bus network.

**Coffee chats:** this approach saw ETS transit planners visiting different groups in accessible spaces to have conversations and collect input about their transit needs.

**Surveys:** in both spring and fall 2018, a survey (via the City of Edmonton's Insight Community and [edmonton.ca/newbusroutes](http://edmonton.ca/newbusroutes)) was available to participants at the workshop and those who were unable to attend. Surveys were available April 12 to June 30 in phase one and October 25 to December 9 in phase two.

# Who we talked to

In addition to talking to Edmontonians who attended a drop-in workshop, we met with community agencies. We met with representatives of the agencies, as well as some of their clients, to better understand how the proposed changes affect them.

## Community agencies

- + Edmonton's Food Bank
- + Catholic Social Services
- + Bissell Centre
- + Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters of Edmonton and Area
- + Vision Loss Rehab
- + Canadian National Institute for the Blind
- + Winnifred Stewart Association

## Seniors agencies

- + Edmonton Seniors Coordinating Council
- + Alberta Council on Aging
- + Seniors Association of Greater Edmonton (SAGE)
- + Central Lions Seniors Association
- + Operation Friendship Seniors Society
- + Westend Seniors Activity Centre
- + Edmonton Indigenous Seniors Centre
- + Mill Woods Seniors Association
- + Scona Seniors Centre
- + Strathcona 55+ Centre
- + Selo Housing Society
- + Eldercare Edmonton
- + Drive Happiness
- + Idylwyld Library Seniors Group
- + Canterbury Foundation



## Community leagues

- + Wedgewood Community League
- + Cameron Heights Community League
- + Westridge Wolf Willow Country Club Community League
- + Woodcroft Community League
- + Riverdale Community League

## Advisory groups: Business Improvement Areas Council

- + Edmonton Transit System Advisory Board (COE)
- + Women's Advocacy Voice of Edmonton Committee (COE)
- + Accessibility Advisory Committee (COE)

## We talked to our Operators

Operators are our eyes and ears on the streets of Edmonton.

They know every turn and bump in the road. Through workshops, drop-in sessions with our planners, surveys and feedback stations at the ETS garages, we gathered our Operators' input about the proposed bus network. Operators shared valuable perspectives about the proposed network, which were used by the transit planners to make important adjustments. During our engagement activities, they

consistently shared their neighbourhood level knowledge by telling us about:

- + Customer care considerations, especially for seniors, children and those with mobility needs
- + Routing options, especially for the most popular routes and new neighborhoods
- + Route connections and timing adjustments
- + Service impacts of winter
- + Potential customer requests and needs

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*The comprehensive approach recognizes the importance of transit contributing to the quality of life of Edmontonians*

*– Londonderry Mall participant*

## What we asked

When we presented the proposed bus network to citizens, we wanted to know how it would affect them so our transit planners could make meaningful changes.

- + What are overall opinions of the bus network?
- + What are the perceived benefits?
- + What are the main concerns?
- + How can the concerns be minimized?
- + How does opinion vary for different groups of citizens?

We also wanted to know how the proposed network met the Transit Strategy principles:

- + Does it offer a variety of services?
- + Is it easy to understand?
- + Does it connect major destinations?
- + Does it provide frequent service?
- + Is it easy to move between the suburbs and major destinations?
- + Is it easy to get to neighbourhood destinations?

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*Handicap with walkers or canes too difficult to do transfers*

*– West Edmonton Mall participant*

# What we heard

Thousands of Edmontonians provided feedback through online surveys, and overall, we learned they recognize the benefits of the proposed network. Citizens also shared some of their concerns, as well as the importance of staying informed as the project moves forward.

Some of the benefits identified by citizens include:

- + More frequent buses
- + A more efficient transit system that makes better use of resources and is more cost effective
- + More direct routes
- + Access to major destinations
- + Easy to understand

However, citizens felt there were challenges about other aspects of the network, which included:

- + Local neighbourhood service
- + Service to and from suburban communities
- + The network offers services for all citizens
- + Coverage (where the bus goes)
- + Travel times (in particular, transfers)
- + Ensuring enough frequency during off peak hours in some areas
- + Walking distance

The public workshops, targeted workshops and coffee chats allowed us to collect useful in-person feedback. These opportunities to talk to citizens reinforced the benefits and concerns they told us about in the surveys. In addition to the benefits already listed in this report, they told us the new network made sense and they liked the extended service hours on some routes.

They also shared concerns about fairness in the network (inner neighbourhoods are perceived to gain service while outer neighbourhoods are perceived to lose service), transfers being unfamiliar to customers who are used to travelling on a single bus, and winter conditions making it a challenge for some people to access bus stops.

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*If planned properly, could cut commuting time and be more efficient with more frequent service*

*- Idylwyld Library participant*

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*Easy access and easy transfers. Short wait times between buses*

*- Edmonton Tower participant*

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*Reduce walking distance in winter; sidewalks need repair*

*- Southgate Mall participant*

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*Increase in travel time will decrease ridership*

*- Mill Woods Town Centre participant*

## Positive and negative views about frequency

Citizens' perspectives about frequency largely depended on where they live. Edmontonians in inner areas of the city that will have frequent routes had a positive outlook because of how often the buses would serve their neighbourhoods in the proposed network. Meanwhile, residents who live in some suburban areas, or use the bus during evenings and weekends, said some buses won't come often enough in the proposed network.

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*Thank you for making Manning Town Center part of the northeast McConachie and area*

*– Clareview Recreation Centre participant*

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*Like how much thought and planning has gone into the new design*

*– Lois Hole Library participant*

## What we did

Did you know that over 22 per cent of the bus network was changed using feedback collected during public engagement in 2018?

During summer and winter 2018, a team of six transit planners went through the tens of thousands of comments that were collected through emails, 311 calls, workshops and surveys. They used a database to help categorize the comments, and then through many team sessions, they were able to make adjustments to the network.

*“We want to make the best system for those who use it, so it was critical that we get good feedback from a wide range of users. Our first draft was meant as a starting point so that we could have a good conversation with the public. This was very obvious in the Castle Downs area where I wasn't sure what connections the residents actually wanted. I had a lot of good conversations about what parts of my initial design they liked, why they didn't like the rest and what might work better. The end result is a very different network that will work a lot better.”*

*– Bryan Whited, ETS Transit Planner*



## Next steps

In November of 2019, ETS will be presenting the proposed bus network report and the comprehensive public engagement report to City Council. Council members will use this feedback to help them in making decisions about Edmonton's future transit network. While these reports were initially expected to be presented in spring 2019, it was decided to bundle them with other related transit reports that are being presented to City Council in November.

If approved, the new bus network will be implemented in summer 2020. The City of Edmonton will make route maps, route schedules and other materials available in spring 2020 so citizens can begin pre-planning their trips. ETS will also have extensive public outreach in summer 2020 to help transit users plan their trips and learn the new network.

## Alternative transit options

ETS transit planners identified communities that would benefit from a different kind of transit service where walking distances are greater than 600 metres. This new approach would balance the needs of residents with the ability for ETS to provide wide-ranging, high quality transit service. ETS is working on alternative transit options for:

- + communities with walking distances of greater than 600 metres
- + communities with a low ridership demand
- + communities with considerable geographic constraints
- + newer communities that are substantially built up with a population base that can support the introduction of a flexible service.

Working in collaboration is an important part of alternative transit options for Edmonton. Community engagement planning is underway and ETS anticipates hosting further workshops in communities where alternative transit options are being proposed. More information about these sessions and about alternative transit options will be made available later in 2019. Alternative transit options, along with engagement findings, will be presented to City Council for consideration in November 2019.



### Thank you for your participation

In total, we estimate that more than 19,000 hours have been invested by citizens who contributed to helping shape the proposed bus network. ETS and the City of Edmonton would like to offer our sincere thanks to those who took the time to share their voice and shape our city.

For any questions regarding this report, please contact 311.