



Bus Network Redesign

What We Heard Report Summary

Wedgewood
Heights

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SHAPE OUR CITY

ETS

April 2019

Transit in Wedgewood Heights

Within the proposed Bus Network Redesign, several difficult decisions needed to be made about providing service to areas where ridership numbers are low or have steadily declined, have a low number of residents, and/or have considerable geographic restraints that impact ETS's ability to provide traditional transit service.

Within the City of Edmonton, there are several communities facing these challenges, including Wedgewood Heights. At the request of Ward 5 Councillor, Sarah Hamilton, ETS hosted three workshops with specific Ward 5 communities who will be impacted by changes to services.

The intention of the workshop was to get feedback and perspectives from the residents

of Wedgewood Heights to build a greater understanding of the impacts of removing regular scheduled ETS service from their community. This feedback would be used to develop alternative transit solutions including on-demand service that is more flexible in meeting the needs of communities with low ridership.

What we did

To build a deeper understanding of the community's concerns, ETS held a community workshop with 56 residents on November 28, 2018 from 6 to 8 p.m. It was held at Touchmark at Wedgewood.

The workshop format included four different table conversations to understand the community's transit needs and to collect feedback about how the proposed changes to the transit network would affect them.

Leger 360, a third party professional research and engagement consultant facilitated at each table and collected participants' responses before they moved to the next conversation. Leger 360 compiled all of the input received and after the workshop, asked a volunteer from the community to review and validate the consultants' notes to ensure that what was collected was accurate and represented the fulsomeness of what was expressed.

Here is what we heard...

What does transit mean to you?

Many participants told us they use the bus to go to work, school, shopping, medical appointments and recreation. They also described transit as a basic municipal service that provides a link to the rest of the city and has a positive effect on property values.

What are the impacts of the bus network redesign to your community?

Three major concerns were identified – **walking distance, safety and lifestyle**. In the proposed bus network, the closest bus stop is near Lessard Road and 184 Street. The walking distance would increase significantly for many Wedgewood residents and they felt this would have a negative impact on **seniors** who are less mobile, and be unsafe for people walking at night along poorly lit roads. They also felt removing regular scheduled service would negatively affect **students** who use transit to get to school, work and recreation. Transit is especially important for residents because they are noticing **younger families** moving in to the community, whose kids will need transit when they become teenagers. Some residents also said removing transit service would negatively affect their **property values** and priority clearing of snow on their main road.

What are the most important things that ETS needs to know about providing bus service in your community?

Participants wanted ETS to know that transit is a way for local seniors to connect with the rest of the city, and for students to get to work and visit their grandparents.

Domestic workers also use transit to get to their place of employment in the community. Residents preferred direct bus routes because they felt transfers add too much time to their trip. Those who require extra assistance, told us that DATS is unreliable. Participants said they

wanted to maintain regular bus service using ETS staff and felt the two minute round-trip in and out of the neighbourhood entrance could be easily accommodated.

What do you want City Council to know about the process so far, and what needs to change?

Residents wanted City Council to know that bus service is important for the whole city. They had questions about Council's commitment to fighting climate change when service is proposed to be removed from their neighbourhood. They also had questions about the process ETS used in developing the network and they generally viewed it as flawed. They were unsure if ETS talked to people who use the bus, if the survey was biased to benefit the City's position, if it discriminated against citizens with a lower level of literacy and if the proposed minimum walking distance was accurate.

Participants also said they should have been consulted well before the draft network was made public and that ETS should have provided concrete details about alternative transit options. They also questioned if there were other projects in the City general budget that could be cut instead. Participants reinforced that demographics are changing and that some of their neighbours with special needs rely on public transit.

What data or facts do you need in order to give informed perspectives or views to ETS?

Participants wanted to know who is riding the bus and wanted a better count on the number of riders. They said ETS should do a better job promoting transit to increase the number of riders, as well as increase service in the area. If the community loses regular scheduled service, they wanted to know how to get it back in the future. They also had questions about school service and how it would be replaced. Participants also questioned how City Council is making its decision and what the relationship between ETS and Council looks like.

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.

All in our community are proud citizens of Edmonton and want to be seen and heard when it comes to making Edmonton and our community a better place to live and raise families. Especially when it is our specific community affected.