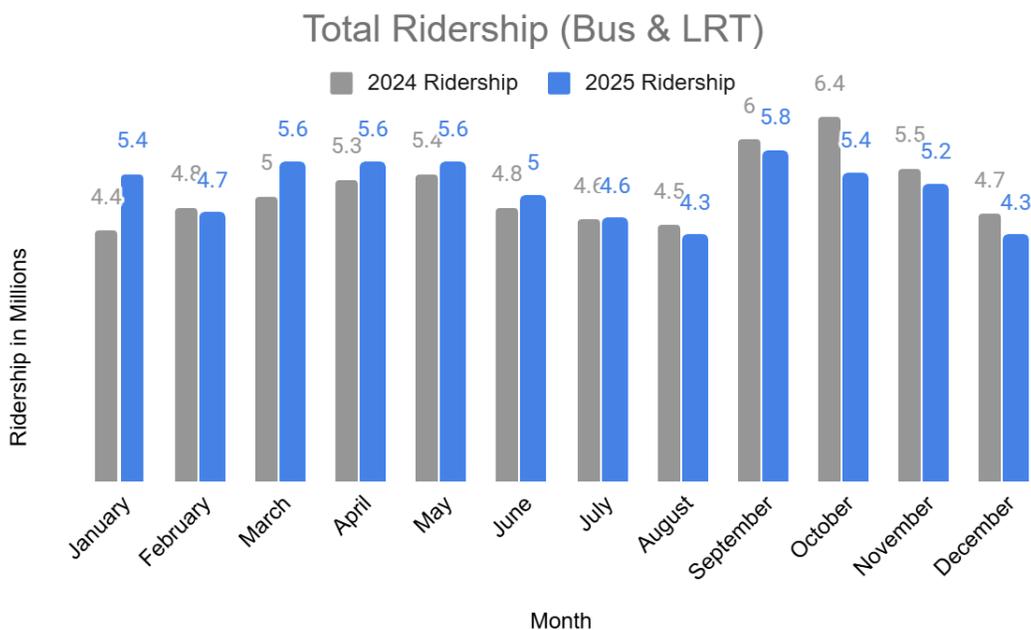


# ETS Branch Highlights Report

Date: January 26, 2026

## 1. RIDERSHIP



Overall transit ridership reached 61.8 million in 2025, remaining consistent with the 61.6 million recorded in 2024 and 12 per cent higher than pre-pandemic ridership in 2019. Efforts to make transit more convenient, reliable, safe, and accessible have contributed to this sustained demand. Notable milestones throughout the year include:

- Growth on the Valley Line Southeast LRT, which saw 3.1 million rides in 2025, a 12 per cent increase over its first full year of service in 2024.
- Growth in On Demand Transit ridership to roughly 732,000 trips, a five per cent increase over the previous year.
- Higher demand for paratransit service, with DATS delivering 997,000 trips, a seven per cent increase over 2024.

## 2. ETS UPDATES

### **Rider Engagement**

#### *Post-Secondary Winter Orientation*

ETS participated in several winter orientation events at post-secondary campuses around the city. Similar to the spring and fall orientation events, ETS staff answered questions about trip planning, Arc, how to use ETS and general safety questions.

#### *High School Open House Events*

From about mid-January until mid-March, ETS teams are fanning out to junior high and high school open house nights across the city. As many students use ETS to get to school, administrators invite ETS to participate to answer questions related to trip planning, safety and fares. These important conversations often factor into school choice for many families.

#### *Deep Freeze: A Byzantine Winter Festival*

ETS was a sponsor of the Deep Freeze Festival for the third year in a row. This annual event is hosted by Arts on the Ave, and brings together artists and the community for two days. ETS provided free transit access to volunteers and staff who bring this event to life, and provided the new Indigenous bus as a warm-up location for festival-goers. The bus was also a stage for buskers, who performed music for people inside of the bus.

#### *Holiday Train*

In late December, LRT Operations and Maintenance staged its first holiday train. ETS' historic General Electric 1946 locomotive, ballast cars and a flatdeck car were adorned with festive decorations. The train traveled from Clareview to Century Park, making several stops along the way. The staff also worked with the City of Edmonton's United Way committee to collect winter clothing for Edmonton's most vulnerable residents.

#### *Rider Appreciation*

In conjunction with the Arc Tap to Pay launch, ETS teams set up in transit centres around the city in mid-December to hand out cookies and hot chocolate to riders during their commute. Teams answered questions and provided transit information to riders.

#### *Downtown Station Activations*

Throughout December, ETS worked with the City of Edmonton's Downtown Economy section to bring musical performances to downtown LRT stations. The performances were hosted by the Edmonton Arts Council, who graciously sourced the talent to surprise and delight riders during their commute.

### **Arc Tap To Pay Launch**

As of December 8, 2025, the Arc system successfully expanded to include "Tap to Pay" functionality across the entire Edmonton region. This launch allows riders to pay their fares

by tapping a physical or digital debit or credit card directly on any Arc validator. Supported payment methods include Visa, Mastercard, American Express, Interac Debit, and digital wallets like Apple Pay, Google Wallet, and Samsung Wallet.

A key feature of this launch is the integration of regional fare capping for open payments. Riders using their own credit or debit cards receive the same daily and monthly adult fare caps as Arc card users, provided they use the same payment method consistently. While no account is required for standard adult fares, riders eligible for concessions (seniors, youth, or low-income programs) can now link their discounted fare profile to their specific credit or debit card through the myArc.ca portal to receive their reduced rates.

### **Paper Fare Discontinuation**

With the full rollout of Tap to Pay, ETS has officially discontinued the acceptance of traditional paper tickets and Family/Day passes as of January 1, 2026. To support riders during this transition, a ticket exchange program is currently in effect at the Edmonton Service Centre. Until March 31, 2026, riders can exchange unused single paper tickets for single-use Arc tickets. Additionally, the orange paper ticket validators are being replaced with additional Arc validators throughout January and February, making it even easier to tap on and off transit.

### **Transit Safety and Security Update**

In January, 15 new Transit Peace Officers were deployed to transit spaces, and the phaseout of Commissionaire Security Guards was completed. An additional 30 new TPOs will be patrolling buses, LRTs and transit centres, bringing the total number of active TPOs to 126.

While this transition means the removal of static, in-person security at fixed station points, it allows for a more agile and responsive deployment of TPOs across the entire network. During this shift, ETS is reminding riders that safety concerns should be reported via Transit Watch or the blue emergency phones located in stations. For immediate emergencies, riders should continue to call 911.

TPOs will continue to patrol stations and vehicles throughout their shifts, moving dynamically across the system rather than remaining in a single location.

While violent calls for service in LRT stations and transit centers have remained stable compared to 2024, non-violent calls increased by nearly 36 per cent in Q1-Q3 2025. This rise is primarily due to a stronger, more proactive police presence, leading to an increase in police arrests and greater collaboration between EPS and Transit Peace Officers (TPOs).

ETS is committed to a multi-layered approach to safety that extends beyond uniformed patrols. Key additional collaborations include the Community Outreach Transit Teams (COTT), which partners officers with Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society outreach workers; and Community Safety Liaisons, focused on prevention-led efforts. These personnel are supported by core security infrastructure, including:

- 24/7 Monitoring: Over 1,000 cameras are continuously monitored by the ETS Control Centre.
- Transit Watch: Real-time text/phone access to the Control Centre at 780-442-4900.
- Emergency Infrastructure: Blue security phones on platforms and on-train silent alarms/pull handles that connect riders directly to operators and emergency dispatch.

## **2025-26 Annual Service Plan**

The ETS Annual Service Plan is a yearly document outlining operational plans and priorities. It details past achievements, planned service changes and improvements (like new routes or increased frequency), infrastructure projects (such as station upgrades or expansion), and overall goals and objectives for the upcoming year.

This plan provides valuable insight into the future of Edmonton's public transit system and how ETS intends to serve its riders. Along with the Annual Service Plan, ETS will release the annual Route Report Cards, which highlight ETS' route boarding information, on-time performance and specific route frequency. These report cards are developed after each service adjustment, which occur five times a year in February, April, June, September and December.

ETS plans to release the 2025-26 Annual Service Plan and Route Report Cards in early March. Watch for them at [edmonton.ca/TransitReports](https://edmonton.ca/TransitReports).

## **February Service Adjustments**

ETS is implementing its mid-winter service changes effective February 8, 2026. These routine adjustments are designed to align service with evolving and seasonal ridership needs and improve operational efficiency across the transit network. LRT service frequencies will remain at current levels, but key bus route and transit centre changes will be enacted, alongside planned service reductions for holidays and school calendars through to April. Key service change updates include:

- Bus bays will be reassigned at Meadows Transit Centre (Routes 506 and On Demand Transit) and Northgate (Route 128) to reduce congestion. Route 506 will also have a minor routing change into Meadows.
- Frequencies on the Capital, Metro, and Valley Line Southeast are unchanged but car lengths have been adjusted to meet ridership needs.
- The Low Level Bridge construction is complete and traffic across the bridge has resumed in both directions.
- Detours for Routes 2 and 2-Owl due to the Wellington Bridge work will continue until fall 2026.
- Specialized service reductions:
  - Family Day (Feb 16): All bus routes operate on Saturday schedules.

- Reading Week (Feb 17-20): Regular weekday schedules apply, with reduced Route 4 service (University of Alberta) and no Route 622 service (Concordia).
- Teachers' Convention (Feb 26-27): Public and Catholic school service is cancelled, except for Route 622.
- Spring Break (Mar 30-Apr 2): Public and Catholic school service is cancelled, except for Route 622.

Detailed service information will be available for riders on February 8 via [edmonton.ca/TransitServiceChanges](https://edmonton.ca/TransitServiceChanges).

### **Valley Line Southeast (VLSE) Update**

Since January 1, there are fewer two-car trains on the Valley Line Southeast LRT. There will be two-car trains every third train, instead of every second train. This change was made to better match capacity with current ridership demand to make the most efficient use of City resources.

The service change does not impact the VLSE's frequency or schedules, and ETS remains satisfied with the current ridership growth.

This measure is intended to better align capacity with current demand. Should ridership dramatically increase, the City maintains the ability to restore or further increase train lengths to meet rider needs.

### **747 Fare Adjustment**

Effective February 1, 2026, ETS regional airport service (Route 747) fares will be adjusted to help cover increasing operational costs, marking the first increase since the route's introduction in 2012. The 1.5-hour ticket fare will increase from \$5 to \$6, and the monthly fare cap will increase from \$90 to \$108.

To provide riders with more flexible options, new Airport multi-day passes will be introduced: the Airport + 3-day pass for \$36 and the Airport + 5-day pass for \$42. These passes include unlimited access to the entire ETS network. Route 747 service levels will remain the same, running to and from Century Park Transit Centre at 30 or 60-minute intervals, 20 hours a day, seven days a week.

### **Transit App "Rate My Ride" Pilot**

ETS has launched a research pilot in partnership with Transit App to capture real-time perception of safety feedback through the app's "Rate My Ride" feature. By leveraging the app's "GO Mode," this feature collects live survey data from app users actively riding transit. The tool is able to provide insights on the perception of safety at specific routes, stops and times.

The two-month pilot began in December 2025 and is scheduled to end on February 4, 2026.

Following this, ETS will work with Transit App to understand the value of the data collected and how it can supplement insights from existing projects under the ETS Rider Research Program. The project is part of a larger transit perception of safety study which includes qualitative and quantitative data to help provide a holistic understanding of perceptions versus reality of transit safety.

**3. ETS COUNCIL REPORT TRACKING 2026**

<b>Report Number</b>	<b>Report Name</b>	<b>Committee / Council</b>	<b>Council / Committee Meeting Date</b>
CO02980	Advancing Bus Rapid Transit and Transit Priority Measures	UPC	March 23, 2025
CO03345	Northwest Quadrant Transit Service Improvement Options	UPC	June 29, 2026
CO03344	On Demand Transit Service Expansion	UPC	September 22, 2026

*Note: New reports will be added once a report number has been assigned.*

- \*Subject to change
- CC = City Council
- CPSC = Community and Public Services Committee
- Exec = Executive Committee
- UPC = Urban Planning Committee
- Audit = Audit Committee