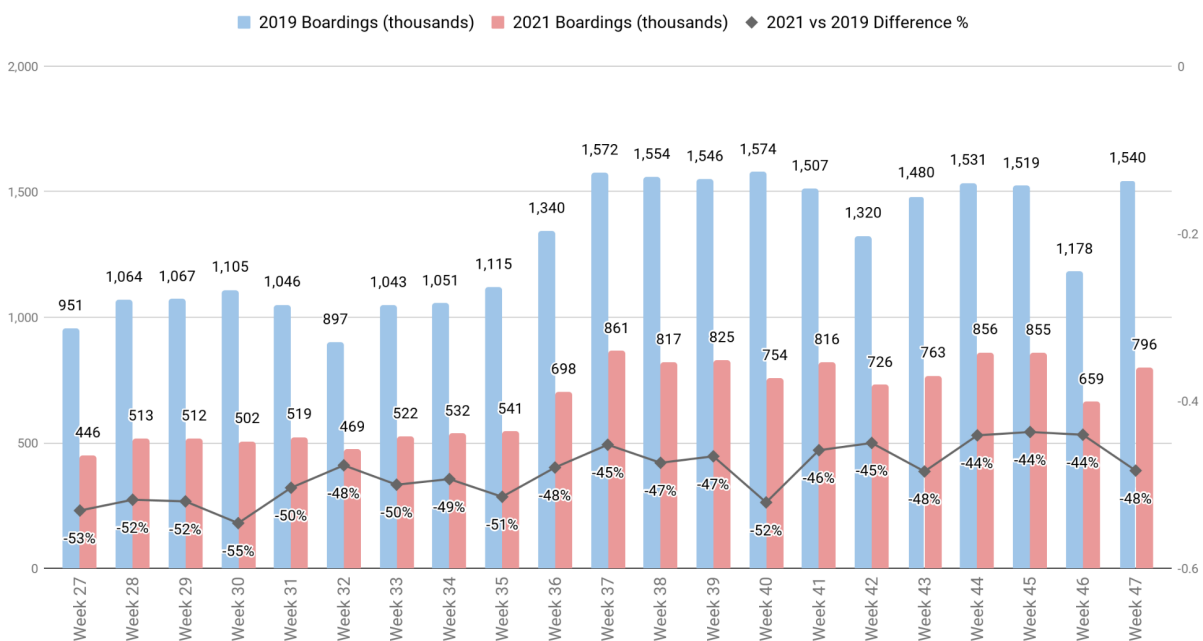


ETS Branch Highlights Report

Date: November 29, 2021

1. RIDERSHIP

Adjusted Weekly Bus Boardings (2019 vs. 2021) and YOY% Change



* Week 27: June 27, 2021 to July 3, 2021 and June 30, 2019 to June 27, 2019

* Week 47: November 14, 2021 to November 20, 2021 and November 17, 2019 to November 23, 2019

Ridership levels have been steadily increasing despite fluctuations throughout the weeks, with October and November average weekly bus boardings recovering to 54% of pre-COVID boardings. The opening of schools and post-secondary institutions have aided in the increase in ridership.

We will continue to monitor ridership closely to project January ridership when the provincial work-from-home order ends.

2. ETS UPDATES

On Demand Transit Telephones

Following public response requesting more options to book On Demand Transit trips, Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) has installed telephones at select transit hubs as an initiative to make transit more inclusive for all residents. Transit users who do not have a cell phone can use these phones to connect directly with the On Demand Call Centre to book a trip. ETS has installed telephones at six transit centres with three more telephone installations underway this month (Corona, Capilano, and WEM).

Residents who need to book a trip from an On Demand Transit hub that does not have a telephone can approach an On Demand Transit Operator, call ahead from their departure point, or use a nearby payphone.



Figure 1: On Demand Transit Telephone

FIFA World Cup Qualifiers

Over 300 bus/LRT operators & 55 inspectors/staff helped bring fans to World Cup Qualifier games at the Commonwealth Stadium on November 12 and November 16, 2021. In addition to frequent LRT service, park & ride buses operated to and from the stadium throughout the night. Crews prioritized clearing snow from bus routes as well as parking areas, entrances and gates. This was a big team effort across the City, as over 6,000 people took Park & Ride buses to the game & over 40,000 people took LRT to/from Stadium Station.

Figure 2: ETS buses at Commonwealth Stadium on November 16, 2021



Heated Bus Shelters

The City of Edmonton installed five heated bus shelters during November at the new interim West Edmonton Mall Transit Centre. Each shelter was equipped with space heaters and benches. Transit riders are already benefiting from their warmth given the current weather conditions.

ETS will monitor shelter use throughout the winter to ensure the needs of transit riders are being met.

Figure 3: Interim West Edmonton Mall Transit Centre



ETS Stuff a Bus 2021

The 27th annual ETS Stuff a Bus took place on November 24-28 in support of Edmonton's Food Bank. ETS resumed in-person donations as ETS vehicles participated at Save-On-Foods locations by collecting non-perishable food donations. Volunteers from the City and the food bank collected food donations on ETS vehicles, with most volunteers being from ETS.

ETS Stuff a Bus also continued with multiple donation options for those who preferred to donate from a distance, including by text, at Save-On-Foods checkout counters and online through the Edmonton's Food Bank website.

Winter Bus Service Updates

As part of the regular winter service changes this year, ETS will resume full service on all routes. ETS is thankful for transit riders' patience as bus schedules were temporarily adjusted in early November due to workforce availability and vaccine policy requirements. The health and safety of staff and riders are a top priority and ETS continues to take the steps necessary to keep riders safe and the services they rely on running as smoothly and safely as possible.

Notable Route adjustments

Several routes and schedules are adjusted to meet typical ridership changes throughout the year, as well as feedback gathered from transit riders since the implementation of the bus network redesign in April. Starting November 28, a portion of Route 519 is being adjusted to better serve residents in communities adjacent to Ellerslie Road and 66 Street. This change will improve service and reduce walking distances. Route 111 is also being adjusted to provide improved access to the Kingsway Mall entrance from both directions.

Riders can expect a return to regular routings for several bus routes traveling on Jasper Avenue now that construction detours have ended. Another key construction project has wrapped up with the completion of Duggan Bridge on Saskatchewan Drive, and riders who take Route 701, which connects the Kingsway/Royal Alex and Southgate transit centres, will see a return to regular service.

Stony Plain Road shuttle service

Effective November 29, a shuttle bus will provide service to riders between Unity Square at 116 Street and 104 Avenue and Jasper Place Transit Centre. To start, a shuttle (a DATS vehicle with DATS markings removed) will run every 60 minutes, seven days a week and provide consistent, reliable service for riders during the Valley Line West LRT construction.

While the service is available for anyone who needs it, due to limited seating on the shuttle, transit riders, who are able, are asked to use routes on 102 Avenue, 107 Avenue, 116 Street and 142 Street, so that seniors and individuals with increased mobility needs can access the shuttle. Over the coming days, information about the service will be shared with the local community, Stony Plain Road and area Business Improvement Areas and seniors residences nearby. Printed materials inside the bus along with scheduling information will be available at edmonton.ca/routebrochures.

Feedback from residents, the surrounding community, business and the Amalgamated Transit Union all played a role in identifying a public transportation service need. The Stony Plain Road Shuttle service, which can safely accommodate LRT construction, is a good example of what can be accomplished when we work together on creative solutions.

Over the coming weeks, ETS will monitor the use and frequency of the Stony Plain Road shuttle service and look to make any needed adjustments. All winter service adjustments will be communicated via a Public Service Announcement, social media, digital media and online at edmonton.ca/TransitAlerts.

2021 Fall Budget Adjustments

On November 29, Administration will present to City Council the fall Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment (SOBA), Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment (SCBA) and COVID budget adjustments. The semiannual budget process adjusts the approved 4-year operating and capital budgets. This will be the last fall budget adjustment before the new 4-year budget for 2023-26 is approved in the fall of 2022.

The fall 2021 budget adjustments include an adjustment to the opening of Valley Line Southeast and the related operating budget requirements, such as extending the operations of the Valley Line Precursor bus service (Route 510X). These changes result in \$1.6M in tax levy savings and additional savings to the LRT reserve fund.

As announced on November 18, the City announced a decision to not to move forward with a contract for bus cleaning and refuelling, and that Transit Fleet Maintenance employees will continue to do this important work. As a result, the SOBA report reflects a return of the budget and positions for this work to Fleet and Facility Services.

The COVID budget adjustment is a new process initiated in fall 2020, to adjust the approved 4-year budget for COVID related impacts. The proposed adjustments for 2022 include increased costs for cleaning transit vehicles and facilities, and decreased fare and non-fare revenue.

New Cameras for LRT Maintenance

ETS' LRT Track Maintenance team recently started using an exciting new camera system to take photos of the LRT Track and Right of Way. The camera provides a 360 degree view that the team can use remotely from their computers to navigate down the track, similar to Google street view. (Example provided below). The new system is improving working efficiencies in a number of ways. The images are being used as a planning tool for referencing the locations, condition, and configuration of assets. They can be given to work crews so that they know exactly which area and which components they will be working on. Engineering and technical staff can also use the images to reference sections of track, which reduces the number of site visits needed to verify data. ETS is also planning to introduce these cameras into their public facilities for the same purposes.



3. ETSAB INFORMATION REQUESTS

On Demand - Wheelchair Accessibility

Each on-demand vehicle being deployed for the pilot is equipped with a wheelchair lift. The dimensions of the wheelchair lift (34" x 34") are sufficient to load or unload a wheelchair, motorized wheelchair or mobility scooter without issue. The lifts have enough capacity to lift 800lbs.

Depending on the make and model of the device being loaded, there may not be sufficient space for a service animal to load safely at the same time. If for any reason there is not sufficient space, PWT would do their best to adapt to the situation and likely board the service animal through the main entry door. Overall percentage of requests for WAV vehicles is very low (less than 0.5% of all requests).

On Demand Trip Planning Tools

Trip planning across multiple 3rd party tools currently works in a consistent way due to the General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS), which is an industry standard way of sending data to multiple vendors, but is currently only configured for scheduled transit service.

On demand service is an emerging need in the transit industry. Currently, the only way for on demand service to be part of a trip planner is for a specific integration to be developed between the trip planner and the on demand technology company. For ETS, this was done with the Transit app because the app integrates with Via, which is the technology platform for the ETS on demand service. For other trip planners, there may or may not be the ability to integrate with Via, and in many cases there would be fees that ETS would have to pay to have that developed.

For Google specifically, they determine which integrations they pursue and there is not an option to develop custom integrations such as with Via. A new GTFS-flex extension has been developed and is used by some agencies, but this is done with a customized trip planner. It's possible that this flex data standard (or a variation of it) will be adopted by all trip planners in the future, including Google.

Transit Watch Issue

ETS takes the safety and security of riders seriously and the Transit Watch program is one way riders can discreetly report safety concerns, like harassment, disorder or suspicious behaviour directly to ETS staff in our Control Centre. Any calls or texts that come in from riders to the Transit Watch number are priority and ETS staff are trained to respond accordingly.

ETS staff monitor incoming calls and messages around the clock in real-time and when a call or text is received, ETS staff respond with a text as quickly as they can. Multiple texts may come into ETS at one time and staff are trained to prioritize and dispatch the appropriate resources.

Depending on the nature of the safety concern and the location, it may take security resources or ETS staff several minutes to be on location.

ETS has reviewed the issue brought forward by the ETS Advisory Board and is actively working on an investigation and solutions. In our review of what occurred, we experienced technical difficulties with a specific cell phone provider, which impeded our ability to respond in a timely manner.

In addition, there are some areas in the LRT tunnels that do not have cell service; therefore, if a text is made to Transit Watch it would not be transmitted until there is cell service causing a delay in response. This limitation is a concern as the success of the program relies on the trust we build with riders in this service and our ability to respond quickly and consistently, as per the professional standards we adhere to. We are actively looking into any steps and possible solutions required to prevent such a delay from occurring now or in the future.

Upon the first text to the Transit Watch line, a rider will receive an automatic text confirmation stating that their SMS has been received. If a confirmation text is not received, riders can send the message again or call the Transit Watch number. ETS is adding an internal testing protocol to the Transit Watch text line to ensure that the system is working correctly and any issues, including third party connection failures, are identified proactively and in a timely manner.

4. ETS COUNCIL REPORT TRACKING - 2020-21

Report #	Report Title	Expected Meeting Date	Committee
CO00882	Hydrogen Bus Initiative Update	Nov 30, 2021	CC
CO00605	Bus Network Redesign - Interim Review / Bus Network and On-Demand Service Implementation Update	Jan 19, 2022	Exec
CO00606	Bus Network Redesign - Options for Expansion	Mar 23, 2022	Exec
CO00607	Mass Transit System - Sustainable Funding and Service Growth	Mar 23, 2022	Exec
CO00803	Bus Network Expansion Opportunities	Q1 2022	UPC
CO00574	Access to Supports and Services Within Transit Stations - Program and/or Delivery Proposal(s)	Q1 2022	CPSC
CO00576	Transit Fare Fines - Repayment Options	Q1 2022	CPSC
CO00778	Snow and Ice Control - Options to Increase Service Standards*	Apr 1, 2022	CPSC
IIS00416	ETS Fleet Storage and Maintenance Facility Project*	Feb 15, 2022	UPC
7789	The Bike Plan Implementation Guide*	Feb 15, 2022	UPC
UPE00342	Mass Transit Planning - Update*	Feb 15, 2022	UPC
UPE00491	Mobility Network Assessment*	Feb 15, 2022	UPC

*Not an ETS lead report

**ETS has requested that these reports be merged due to overlapping scope

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