

# Department business plan update

Transit

March 10, 2020

# Department overview

- Transit provides access to all aspects of the community including employment, social, medical, shopping, and government destinations
- Transit services are highly integrated to reduce costs and enhance efficiency
- Our staff are customer focused while maintaining safety and reliability
- Over 3,000 individuals use conventional transit on a typical weekday
- Annually, conventional transit travels over 3.3 million kilometres and provides over 1.7 million trips
- Annually, Mobility Bus travels over 362,000 kilometres and provides over 26,000 trips

# Department overview

- Customer Satisfaction Survey - November of 2019
  - Respondents that were either very or somewhat satisfied - 85%
  - Respondents feeling safe while using SCT - 95%
  - Respondents feeling buses are operated in a safe manner - 95%
  - Respondents satisfied with the cleanliness of the buses - 98%
  - Bus arrives at its scheduled time – 79%
  - Commuter and local buses connect on a regular basis – 76%

# Core business functions

- Core business function #1 – Inter-Municipal transit
- Core business function #2 – Local transit
- Core business function #3 – Mobility Bus
- Core business function #4 – Special events

# Progress on core function forecast

## Inter-municipal Conventional Transit

- In 2019 ridership increased by 2.27%
- Regional Smart Bus technology was installed on all County buses in late 2019 with full implementation scheduled for Q2 2020
- We continue to work with our regional partners on the Regional Smart Fare system which is scheduled for implementation in 2021
- Further work is being done on recommendations coming out of the Transit Master Plan such as improved evening service to the U of A and improved service to NAIT
- The County participated in the Regional Transit Services Commission (RTSC) work that was completed in December 2019
  - February 11, 2020 Council elected to opt out of the RTSC
  - Council though voted to continue regional partnership collaboration

# Progress continued

## Local Conventional Transit

- In 2019 ridership increased by 5.81%
- Regional Smart Bus technology was installed on all County buses in late 2019 with full implementation scheduled for Q2 2020
- We continue to work with our regional partners on the Regional Smart Fare system which is scheduled for implementation in 2021
- Further work is being done on recommendations coming out of the Transit Master Plan such as Dynamic Transit, an on demand delivery option for evenings/weekends and holidays

# Progress continued

## Local Conventional Transit

- In 2019 Transit introduced the **Safe Bus Program** which includes:
  - **Neighborhood watch**
    - Operators are the eyes and ears of the community on the street keeping watch on communities
  - **A Safe Place**
    - Buses and Transit Centers are considered safe places that can be accessed by people who maybe hurt, lost or in trouble
    - Also safe places to shelter during extreme cold conditions
  - **Night Stop Request**
    - Through the Night Stop Request initiative, passengers can make a request to be let of in between stops during the evening hours starting at 7:00 pm
  - **Transit Watch**
    - A public awareness program that encourages the active participation of SCT passengers and employees in maintaining a safe transit environment

# Progress continued

## Mobility Bus

- Trip requests increased 13.60% in 2019
- New scheduling software was implemented in July 2019
  - Notifications module implemented in February 2020
  - Passenger portal module to be implemented in Q3 2020
- Rural weekend/holiday service implemented in February 2020
- We continue to work with our regional partners on the Regional Smart Fare system which is scheduled for implementation in 2021
- Further work is being done on recommendations coming out of the Transit Master Plan eligibility and travel training



# Progress continued

## Special Events

- Special events services provide access to annual festivals and events throughout the region, including:
  - Birkie Ski Festival – 2020 over 1,700 trips provided
  - New Year's Eve – 2019 over 1,500 trips provided
  - Heritage Days – 2019 over 5,000 trips provided
  - Canada Day – 2019 over 2,300 trips provided
  - Chamber Trade Show – 2019 over 700 trips provided

# Employee engagement

Engagement survey theme	Engagement initiative	People Plan focus area
Leadership, communication	Supervisors will have face-to-face conversations with their teams and use new available technologies to share information with their groups	Clear purpose, accountability, trust, team
Recognition and Rewards	Work with the Employee Engagement and Recognition Committee (EERC) to continue looking for ways to recognize our team on their level, in ways that they want to be recognized	Team

# Employee engagement

Engagement survey theme	Engagement initiative	People Plan focus area
Communication, recognition and rewards	Use new resources such as the new email addresses for front-line workers, the revamped Insider, and videos as opportunities to improve how we communicate to staff, tell our story and share what we have accomplished	Clear purpose, accountability, positivity, trust, leadership
Communication, recognition and rewards	Quick videos of staff sharing what the department's workplace culture of accountability, collaboration and empowerment means to them	Clear purpose, accountability, positivity, trust, leadership

# Initiatives

## Smart Fare/ Smart Bus Technology Implementation

- Approved in the 2016 Capital Budget
- Smart Bus equipment has been installed on all Strathcona County buses
  - Implementation planned for early 2020
  - Customer focused technology providing real time information that will enable passengers to track their bus using their smart phones
  - It will also provide audible and digital next stop announcements on the buses
- Smart Fare will have a phased implementation
  - Phase one will feature pay-as-you-go and fare capping
  - Phase two will include distance based fares and the ability to use credit cards

# Initiatives

## Mobility Bus Vehicle Additions

- Fare Parity for Mobility Bus clients was approved in the 2018 Operating Budget
- The first year of implementation (July 2018 – June 2019) resulted in about a 35% increase in trip requests
- Approved In Principle in the 2020 – 2024 Capital Budget
  - AUTO 1791 - Mobility Bus Vehicle Additions for the addition of three buses in 2021

# Initiatives

## Mobility Bus Weekend Service

- Evening and holiday service for rural Mobility Bus clients was approved in the 2020 Operating Budget
  - Increase of about 700 hours annually
  - Provides six hours of service on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays when conventional transit is operating
- This was an important initiative identified through the Transit Master Plan
- Reduces the mobility barriers that restricted rural Mobility Bus clients on weekends and holidays

# Smart Fare/ Smart Bus Technology Implementation - Status

Overall initiative status



Initiative status	Current status	Previous status
Time	Y	Y
Scope	G	G
Budget	G	G

Alignment to strategic goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goal 2: Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure</li><li>• Result: Efficient and effective multi-modal transportation network</li><li>• Goal 5: Foster collaboration through regional, community and governmental partnerships</li><li>• Result: Regional assets leveraged for mutual benefit</li><li>• Goal 6: Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents</li><li>• Result: Connected, accessible multi-modal transportation network, including trails</li></ul>

Key deliverables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smart Fare is a regional transit fare payment system that uses the latest technology to make it easier for customers to pay for their trips.</li><li>• Smart Bus is the foundation of the information and telecommunications infrastructure that allows the fare technologies to function.</li></ul>

Opportunities/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Smart Fare technology replaces paper fare media with the electronic equivalent for cash, passes, and tickets.</li><li>• Fare amounts are computed electronically without the need for a bus driver to visually validate the fare product or money dropped in the fare box.</li><li>• Payment details are recorded, which helps to reduce fare disputes, ensures the correct fare has been paid, and provides comprehensive ridership, revenue, and audit reports based on actual transactions.</li><li>• Smart Fare technologies provide real benefits to transit agencies in terms of better data collection for improving service levels, and integration with neighbouring transit systems.</li><li>• Smart Bus provides real time information to enable passengers to plan their trips while minimizing wait time and missed connections, using near real-time information.</li><li>• Smart Bus allows passengers to use web based tools such as Google Transit to display near real-time transit information.</li></ul>

Risks	Mitigation
As this is a regional project led by the COE, Strathcona County has limited ability to control the overall progress of the project.	Strathcona County continues to be actively involved with COE on the progress of the project.
	Associate Commissioner Johnston is part of the Regional Smart Fare Executive Steering Committee
	Transit Director Coombs is part of the Regional Smart Fare Resourcing and Risk Steering Committee

# Mobility Bus Vehicle Additions - Status

Overall initiative status

Initiative status	Current status	Previous status
Time	G	G
Scope	G	G
Budget	G	G

Alignment to strategic goals

- Goal 1: Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents
- Result: Diverse and inclusive communities
- Goal 2: Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure
- Result: Efficient and effective multi-modal transportation network
- Goal 6: Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents
- Result: Connected, accessible multi-modal transportation network, including trails

Key deliverables

- A permanent increase to the Mobility Bus fleet from 10 buses to 13 buses to meet demand and maintain an adequate spare rate (allow for buses out of service for maintenance or repair work).

Opportunities/Challenges

- As part of the 2015 Transit Fare Strategy Final Report, fare parity (56% reduction in average fare) for Mobility Bus clients was recommended and approved in the 2018 Operating Budget.
- With this significant decrease in cost it is expected that demand for Mobility Bus will increase up to 62%.
- Trips requests have increased by about 35% since this initiative was implemented in July 2018

Risks	Mitigation
N/A	N/A



# Mobility Bus Weekend Service- Status

## Overall initiative status



Initiative status	Current status	Previous status
Time	G	G
Scope	G	G
Budget	G	G

Alignment to strategic goals
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Goal 1: Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents</li><li>• Result: Diverse and inclusive communities</li><li>• Goal 2: Manage, invest and plan for sustainable municipal infrastructure</li><li>• Result: Efficient and effective multi-modal transportation network</li><li>• Goal 6: Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents</li><li>• Result: Connected, accessible multi-modal transportation network, including trails</li></ul>

Risks	Mitigation
N/A	N/A

Key deliverables
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An increase of about 700 service hours to be able to provide 6 hours of services on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays when conventional transit has service.</li></ul>

Opportunities/Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Despite requests from registered rural clients there previously was no service provided on weekends or holidays; thus, limiting the mobility options of the 70 registered rural clients.</li><li>• This initiative seeks to reduce the mobility barriers currently restricting rural Mobility Bus clients on weekends through the implementation of weekend service.</li></ul>

# Questions?

