

Priorities Committee Meeting_Oct22_2019

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Transit – Department Business Plan Update

Report Purpose

To provide Priorities Committee with an update on Transit's 2019 – 2022 Business Plan.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents

Goal 6 - Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents

Report

Strathcona County Transit (SCT) provides four core functions that enhance the mobility of the community:

- Inter-municipal
- Local
- Specialized (Mobility Bus)
- Special events

These services help build a strong community to support the diverse needs of residents for an affordable transportation option within an efficient and effective multi-modal transportation network. This is needed to enable residents to have access to the many opportunities within our community such as education, employment, health care and social activities. The services Transit provides can be life changing for our customers as it may provide their only access to these opportunities.

This report will focus on our current capital projects and provide an overview of the recommendations from the 2019 Transit Master Plan (TMP). These recommendations will be brought forward for Council's consideration as part of the annual budget process over the next few years.

Transit's first capital budget project is the addition of three Mobility Buses to help accommodate the anticipated increase in trip requests from the fare parity implemented on July 1st, 2018. The implementation of fare parity for Mobility Bus clients has resulted in a reduction of about 56% in transportation costs, which translates into a reduction of up to \$165/month for some clients. With this significant decrease in costs it was expected that trip requests would increase from 23,000 in 2017 to about 45,000 in 2021. This increase includes the annual growth rate of approximately 8% that we have been experiencing. In the first year of fare parity we have already seen a 34% increase in trip requests while still being able to deliver over 99% of all trip requests received.

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The successful implementation of the fare parity required the following actions:

- The expansion of the Mobility Bus fleet by three buses in 2018 by extending the life of three buses scheduled for replacement.
 - The 2019 – 2023 Capital Budget included initiative AUTO 1791 for the purchase of three expansion buses in 2021 to replace the buses being extended.
- Implementation of new scheduling software which was implemented in August 2019
 - Implementation of the Notifications (Q4 2019) and Passenger Portal (Q1 2020) modules
- Implementation of a new accessible taxi contract to be completed in Q1 2020
- Implementing a department-based performance measurement of completing 98% of the trip requests received as per the 2017 Mobility Bus Fare Implication Review – Final Report

While we expected to see an increase in trip requests, a 34% increase in the first year is significant when compared to the estimates within the 2017 Mobility Bus Fare Implication Review – Final Report of 36% (low estimate) to 68% (high estimate). This is significant as it shows how important this initiative has been in providing affordable transportation options, as identified in the County's Social Framework, for residents with mobility challenges.

Transit's second Capital Budget initiative is the Smart Bus/Smart Fare Technology Implementation project which was approved in the 2016 Capital Budget. The Smart Bus equipment has been installed on all Strathcona County buses as of April 2019. We are currently testing the system with plans to officially launch the technology once the regional Operating Agreement has been completed which is estimated to be early 2020. This technology will provide real time information for customers that will enable them to track their bus on their smart phones. It will also provide audible and digital next stop announcements on the buses.

The Smart Fare portion of this project has seen a delay due to a longer than expected design phase. A new phased implementation schedule has been agreed to with the Smart Fare vendor. This new phased approach will see the first phase feature pay-as-you-go and fare capping. Phase two will include distance-based fares and the ability to use credit cards. Dates for the phased implementation plan are still being worked on.

Moving forward the following are some of the recommendations from the new TMP that will be brought forward for Council's consideration as part of the annual budget process over the next few years:

- Implementation of a Dynamic Transit on demand pilot for local service during evenings, weekends and statutory holidays
- Expansion of evening service to the University of Alberta for September to April
- Expansion of rural Mobility Bus service to weekends and holidays

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- Extending mandatory attendants ride free to conventional services
- Implementation of travel training for Mobility Bus clients who could use conventional transit for some of their trips
- Review of Mobility Bus eligibility requirements to be completed in 2020
- Evening and weekend inter-municipal service plan to be completed in 2020
- NAIT service plan to be completed in 2020
- Park and Ride strategy to be completed in 2020

Council and Committee History

Date	February 26, 2019 – Council approved the new Transit Master Plan
	January 29, 2019 – Transit provided Priorities Committee with an update on the Mobility Bus fare parity
	June 12, 2018 - Priorities Committee received an update on the Regional Smart Fare Project and the market research completed on the fare options being considered.
	February 13, 2018 - Priorities Committee received an update on the Regional Smart Fare Project and fare options being considered.
	November 21, 2017 - Priorities Committee received an update on the Regional Smart Fare Project.
	June 6, 2017 - Council approved a Capital Budget amendment to increase the Smart Fare budget.
	October 18, 2016 – Transit presented an update to the Priorities Committee on the fare strategy
	April 19, 2016 – Transit presented Council with an update on the consultant's Transit Fare Strategy Final Report June 2015.
	December 8, 2015 - Council approved the Smart Fare and Smart Bus project budget as part of the 2016 Capital Funding Plan.
	September 23, 2014 - Council formally endorsed the Regional transit grant submission for Smart Fare and Smart Bus technologies.
	April 9, 2013 - Council formally endorsed a joint application between the City of Edmonton, the City of St. Albert and Strathcona County to the provincial GreenTRIP program to help fund a Smart Fare system.

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Other Impacts

Policy: N/A

Legislative/Legal: N/A

Interdepartmental: A Regional Smart Fare System may impact Information Technology Services and Financial Services.

Master Plan/Framework: Transit Master Plan

Enclosure

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