

Bus Rapid Transit Opportunities

Report Purpose

To update Council on collaboration efforts with the City of Edmonton and other interested parties on exploring Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) opportunities along Baseline/98 Avenue and Sherwood Park Freeway/82 Avenue

Recommendation

THAT Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) be identified as the priority future transit opportunity along Baseline/98 Avenue and Sherwood Park Freeway/82 Avenue.

Our Strategic Goals

Goal 4 - Municipal Excellence
Goal 2 - Healthy and Safe Community
Goal 3 - Responsible Development

Goal 4 Priority - Relationships with all levels of government and key stakeholders that are strategic, purposeful, and productive

Goal 2 Priority - Social supports that enhance community well-being and safety, and build community connection

Goal 3 Priority - Investment in our infrastructure that supports development and complete communities

Report

Council requested that Strathcona County Transit (SCT) work with the City of Edmonton and other interested parties as part of Edmonton's current Mass Transit Study, to explore Bus Rapid Transit opportunities along Baseline/98 Avenue and Sherwood Park Freeway/82 Avenue.

Since that time, SCT has met with the City of Edmonton on several occasions to discuss long term strategic transit planning. Most recently, the City of Edmonton met with SCT and other regional agencies to provide an update on the progress of their Mass Transit Study.

Edmonton's Mass Transit Study will focus on two different types of mass transit routes. City-wide routes that will consist of LRT and BRT (with dedicated bus lanes) and District Routes that may be in mixed traffic but potentially have signal priority, rapid or express type routes between districts.

As part of SCT's discussions with the City of Edmonton on their Mass Transit Study, they have confirmed that the Energy Line LRT is no longer in their plans. In support of their study, Edmonton administration has requested confirmation that Strathcona County also no longer has a desire for an LRT line to Sherwood Park and would instead prefer to collaborate on BRT. SCT administration agrees with this direction and that Strathcona County should continue to work with the City of Edmonton on BRT routes to Sherwood Park.

For next steps, SCT will be working with the City of Edmonton and other regional partners on addressing strategic transit planning as part of the requirements for the Permanent Public Transit Funding.

The Permanent Public Transit Fund is a federal government initiative to invest three billion per year in permanent transit funding starting in 2026/2027. A large portion of the capital funding will be tied to regional collaboration on transit initiatives and priorities over a 10-year period. The funding will be tied to initiatives that show support for and compliment housing needs/affordable housing. Base funding will be slated for small expansion and state of good repair capital needs.

SCT has an upcoming technical working group session with Edmonton's Mass Transit Study team, ETS and other regional transit partners to discuss strategic alignment and collaboration opportunities.

Council and Committee History

October 4, 2022 THAT Administration work with the City of Edmonton and other interested parties, as part of Edmonton's current Mass Transit Study, to explore Bus Rapid Transit opportunities along Baseline/98 Avenue and Sherwood Park Freeway/82 Avenue including any potential infrastructure upgrades, cost estimates, funding options, and timelines and prepare a report with this information by the end of Q4 2023.

Other Impacts

Policy: N/A

Legislative/Legal: N/A

Financial/Budget: N/A

Interdepartmental: As work starts to advance, SCT will coordinate with Transportation Engineering and Operations on transportation, as well as Family and Community Services and Planning and Development Services on housing needs connection.

Master Plan/Framework: Strathcona County's Transit Master Plan recommends studying the Baseline Road corridor for future transit priority. The Integrated Transportation Master plan supports collaboration on regional transit to promote connectivity. It also recommends protecting right-of-way for higher order transit and to implement transit priority measures on key corridors. The Municipal Development Plan supports studying future opportunities for higher order transit in cooperation with surrounding municipalities.