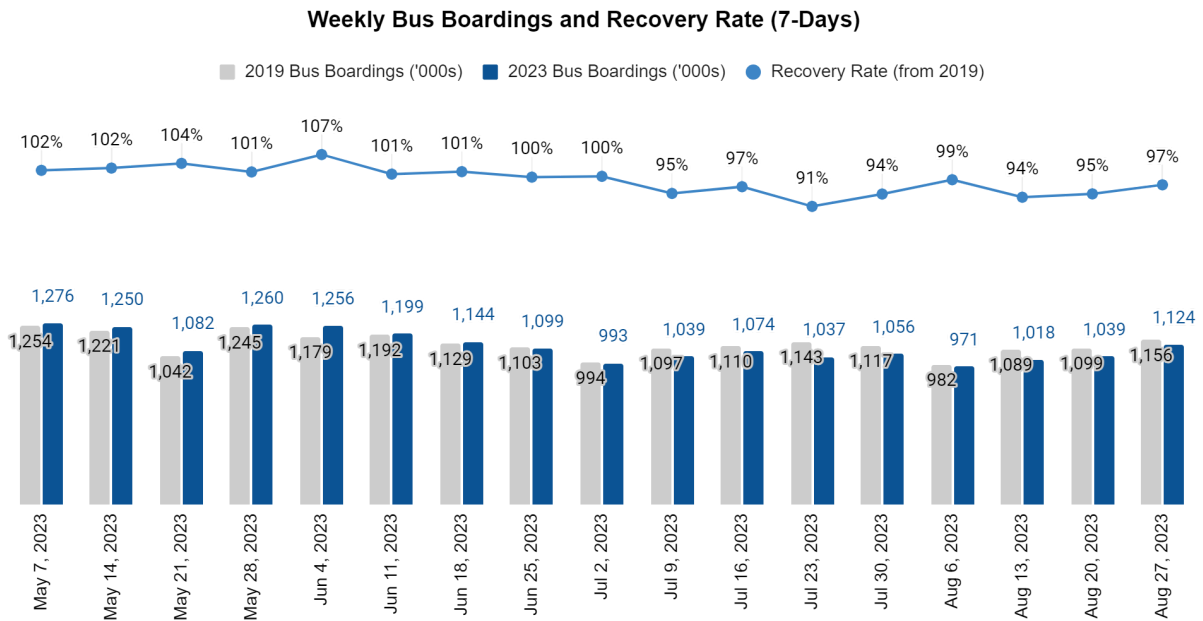


ETS Branch Highlights Report

Date: September 25, 2023

1. RIDERSHIP



After a slight decline in July and early August due to summer ridership patterns, bus boardings increased to 1.12 million in the last week of August (August 27-September 2) as students returned to school and post-secondary institutions. This represented an increase of 8% from bus boardings during the week of August 20-26. Bus boardings for the last week of August were at 97% of 2019 levels.

Overall, total bus boardings during the month of August 2023 were at 4.65 million, representing 97% of August 2022 levels. Monthly bus boardings in August 2023 increased by 3% from 4.5 million in July 2023. Ridership is expected to continue to grow over the next few months, driven by fall ridership patterns and further transit service enhancements implemented during the September 2023 service adjustments.

2. ETS UPDATES

Back-to-School Fall Outreach

During the first two weeks of school, ETS staff conduct outreach at key transit centres where large volumes of students make transfers to connect to School Specials and other bus routes that get them to school. The purpose is to help students new to ETS and people new to Edmonton navigate their way around the transit network, as well as support with trip planning.

This year's outreach activity included staging a bus on the University of Alberta campus during the university's first week of welcome events. The City of Edmonton's bike street team joined ETS to promote the city's bike network and multi-modal transportation, and demonstrate how to use the bike rack on buses. The Valley Line street team also joined ETS to educate students about the new LRT line.



Outreach at West Edmonton Mall Transit Centre



Outreach at University of Alberta

Arc Update: Youth/Student Launch

The City of Edmonton and its regional partners—Beaumont, Fort Saskatchewan, Leduc, St. Albert, Spruce Grove and Strathcona County—are excited to welcome more riders to Arc, the Edmonton region’s electronic fare payment system.

Starting September 25, Edmonton riders 24 and under, riders ages 18 and under in other parts of the region and student riders who are not part of the U-Pass or school board transit programs can sign up for youth and student Arc fare profiles and begin using Arc. The youth and student fare groups join U-Pass and Standard Adult riders who have been using Arc since August 2021 and November 2022, respectively.

Arc is also being rolled out to youth participating in school board transit programs in a phased approach throughout the 2023-2024 school year. ETS is thrilled to offer Arc to youth and students, ETS’ most active ridership group. While youth and student riders can start using Arc on September 25, riders who already have a September monthly transit pass are encouraged to wait to start tapping on and off the system until October 1 to receive the full benefit of the monthly fare cap. The monthly fare caps are the same price as existing monthly transit passes. Once riders reach the monthly fare cap, they can ride transit for free for the rest of that month.

Starting the week of September 25, staff and outreach teams from the participating transit agencies will be handing out complimentary Arc cards, while supplies last, to youth and student riders at various transit centres and LRT stations across the Edmonton region. Complimentary Arc cards for this fare group will also be available at select recreation centres and in-person service centres across the region. For riders’ convenience, pick-up locations and the outreach team schedules will be shared on the participating transit agencies’ social channels and/or websites.

Arc cards are also available for purchase [online](#), by phone at 1-888-302-0001, at transit centres and LRT stations through Arc fare vending machines and at select retailers. For a list of participating Arc retailers, visit myArc.ca.

Arc allows riders to pay for transit when and how they use it. With Arc, riders can:

- Conveniently tap on and off buses and LRT without having to carry exact change or paper tickets and passes.
- Sign up, check their balance and add money to their Arc accounts anytime, anywhere, including online, by phone or on site at transit centres.
- Load as little as \$4—or as much as they need—to their Arc accounts.
- Load money on their accounts using credit, debit or cash.
- Avoid paying upfront for a monthly pass through regional price caps.

DATS Q3 Update

DATS highlights from the third quarter of 2023 include:

- Trip volume has recovered to 90% of 2019 levels.

- DATS continues to exceed key service targets of 90% on-time performance and 98% trip accommodation, with 100% accommodation for reservation trip requests.
- Improvements to real-time information options for DATS clients, including options to check on estimated vehicle arrival times via text or automated phone call.
- 33 new replacement buses featuring a more stable suspension for smoother rides as well as air conditioning and enhanced heating were put into service.
- Three DATS Operator training classes for new DATS Operators are beginning this fall to help accommodate increasing trip volume.
- Testing is ongoing for a new on-board-time matrix that will allow for more consistent ride times.

Northwest Territories Wildfire Evacuation ETS Support

On August 18, 2023, the City of Edmonton activated an emergency response to provide assistance for displaced individuals forced to evacuate their homes and communities due to the Northwest Territories wildfires. The City has been collaborating with partners to facilitate access to food, temporary shelter, City-owned recreation facilities and connections to local organizations. ETS has also been delivering transit service for Northwest Territories wildfire evacuees, transporting them from the Edmonton International Airport to evacuation centres. Transit support was coordinated with regional transit partners, including Leduc Transit, Strathcona County Transit and St. Albert Transit.

Many evacuees arrived in Edmonton without personal transportation. Providing free transit to displaced evacuees is a compassionate and practical way to assist those in need during challenging times. Between August 18-22, ETS provided 400 free transit tickets to wildfire evacuees, distributed through the City of Edmonton's Emergency Support Response Team (ESRT). In response to increasing demand for transit tickets, on August 23 ETS activated a temporary measure to allow evacuees with ESRT wristbands to ride for free on transit until the emergency response was deactivated. This is just one example of how ETS and the City fast-track operational decision making to better support people in need during emergencies.

Metro Line to Blatchford Operating Options

On September 20, City Administration presented the City Operations CO01885 Metro Line to Blatchford Operating Options report to Executive Committee, available for the public to access through the September 20 Executive Committee agenda [here](#). The report outlines two scenarios for the operation and maintenance of phase one of the Metro Line Northwest LRT extending the LRT line by 1.6 kilometres from NAIT to Blatchford Gate station, which will be completed by the end of 2023. In the first scenario, both the new permanent NAIT station and Blatchford Gate station would open, with service commencement planned for Q1 2024. In the second scenario, the new permanent NAIT station would be put in service, however the opening of Blatchford Gate station would be deferred until the criteria for service commencement in alignment with City Policy C539A - Transit Service Policy and the Transit Service Standards Administrative Procedure is met. Both options will be presented in the fall 2023 Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment, with the second scenario presented as a funded service package and the first scenario presented as an unfunded service package.

Revenue Source For Transit

Sustainable and predictable funding sources are a critical success factor for enabling transit service growth and Mass Transit Network for a population of two million people. In April 2022, the City Operations report CO00607, Mass Transit System - Sustainable Funding and Service Growth analyzed a set of revenue-generating tools, and evaluated them for alignment with City of Edmonton goals. Following up on this analysis, on September 20, City Administration presented the Financial and Corporate Services report FCS01246 Revenue Source For Transit - Potential, Risk and Implementation and Intergovernmental Advocacy outlining further analysis on additional revenue-generating tools as well as advocacy opportunities with other orders of government for transit funding support. The report is available for the public to access through the September 20 Executive Committee agenda [here](#). On September 20, Executive Committee passed a motion directing Administration to return with another report which outlines options for a holistic, multi-year plan to fund future transit service growth, and in alignment with the upcoming Permanent Public Transit Fund - a funding program from the Government of Canada that is scheduled to start in 2026.

October 2023 Council Reports

In October 2023, City Administration will be presenting several reports to Council, including the Administration response report to ETSAB's Review on Winter Mobility and Accessibility of Pathways to Transit Stops; Administration response to the City of Edmonton Youth Council (CEYC) report on Youth Perspectives on Transit; fare policy amendment to allow children 12 and under to ride free without an accompanying fare paying rider; an update on transit safety and security; and a private report on the EPCOR contract extension. A detailed schedule of upcoming reports is available in the ETS Council Report tracking section below.

Fall 2023 Budget Adjustments

Twice a year, City administration brings forward the Supplemental Operating Budget Adjustment (SOBA) and Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustment (SCBA). Administration is in the process of finalizing the operating and capital budget to be brought forward for Council discussion and consideration in November 2023. The following is a summary of key timelines for the Fall 2023 SOBA and SCBA:

- October 26: Public release of the Fall 2023 SOBA and SCBA reports;
- November 7: Administration will present the Fall 2023 SOBA and SCBA to Council and there will be one round of Councillor questions; and
- November 21, 22, and 27-29: Council budget deliberations will take place.

Additional details on transit budget items will be provided in the October ETSAB Branch Highlights reports.

3. ETSAB INFORMATION REQUESTS

Valley Line Southeast Update

The City and TransEd are working closely together and Valley Line Southeast is anticipated to open in fall 2023, as final testing and independent certifications occur. TransEd submitted the required documentation to the independent certifier (IC). The IC will then need approximately 2-3 weeks to complete their independent review. Once TransEd has received approval from the IC (anticipated for the end of September), the City will decide on an official opening date for the Valley Line Southeast.

Bus Stop Infrastructure

There are currently over 2,300 bus shelters in service, representing approximately 45% of bus stops in Edmonton. Bus shelter allocation is based on physical characteristics of the stop location, including whether there is suitable space to meet the needs of those with limited mobility, how busy a stop is and how long people have to wait at a stop. Bus shelters are also used for bus stops that meet minimum ridership volumes and are within 150 metres of the following land uses:

- Senior's residences
- Seniors associations and activity centres
- City Recreation Centres and YMCA Health and Wellness Centres
- Medical facilities including hospitals, clinics, etc.
- Public libraries
- Inner city major social service agencies/shelter locations

Bus stops are assessed annually based on ridership volumes and feedback from transit riders. As outlined in the July 4, 2023 City Operations report CO01834 Implementation of the Edmonton Transit Safety Plan, ETS is conducting an equity analysis of bus stop locations and bus shelter amenities to further identify opportunities to enhance the bus stop experience.

4. ETS COUNCIL REPORT TRACKING - 2023

Report #	Report Title	Meeting Date*	Committee*
EXT02023	External Report from ETSAB: A Review of Winter Mobility and Accessibility of Pathways to Transit Stops	October 11, 2023	UPC
EXT02022	External Report from City of Edmonton Youth Council: Youth Perspectives on Transit in Edmonton: An Analytical Report of Ongoing Transit Issues From the Youth Lens	October 11, 2023	UPC
CO02029	Administration Response - Youth Perspectives on Transit in Edmonton: An Analytical Report of Ongoing Transit Issues From the Youth Lens	October 11, 2023	UPC
CO02028	Administration Response - ETSAB: A Review of Winter Mobility and Accessibility of Pathways to Transit Stops	October 11, 2023	UPC
CO01580	Fare Policy Amendment - Children Under 12	October 13, 2023	Exec
CO01955	EPCOR Contract Extension - D&T for Substation Remote Monitoring	October 13, 2023	Exec
CO01974	Opportunities to Enhance Transit Safety and Security - Further Information and Plans	October 24, 2023	CC
CO01552	Commingle Paratransit and On Demand Services	December 5, 2023	UPC
EXT02025	External Report from ETSAB: Ridership Improvement Strategies	December 5, 2023	UPC
CO02060	Administration Response - ETSAB Ridership Improvement Strategies	December 5, 2023	UPC
CO01632	Direct Downtown to Airport Bus Route	December 6, 2023	CC

*Subject to change

CC = City Council

CPSC = Community and Public Services Committee

Exec = Executive Committee

UPC = Urban Planning Committee