

What We Heard Report

Mass Transit Study Equity Assessment

June 2024

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1. Project Summary

a) Mass Transit Project Overview

Why Mass Transit?

The City Plan - Edmonton's combined Municipal Development Plan and Transportation Master Plan – is helping shape how Edmonton grows towards an expected population of 2 million people. The intent is to create a healthy, urban, climate-resilient city where everyone can easily access amenities and services to meet their daily needs within a short walk, bike, roll or transit trip.

A robust, seamless transit system, with mass transit serving as the backbone, is critical to achieving The City Plan vision. Per The City Plan's direction, Edmonton's mass transit system is being expanded to include the development of bus-based mass transit to complement the expanded LRT network.

Expanding the mass transit network to include bus-based options will provide Edmontonians with increased access to safe, reliable and convenient transit service with faster journey times. Not only does expanding mass transit provide people with more choice in how they move around, it also helps reach our climate resiliency goals by making [less carbon intensive modes](#) like transit more viable. It also supports [regional and economic prosperity](#) and builds a more welcoming and inclusive city by removing travel barriers and making it easier for both employees and Edmontonians to get around.

Bus-Based Mass Transit for 1.25 Million People

The City is implementing bus-based mass transit in a phased approach, with the first phase supporting a population of 1.25 million people. The bus-based mass transit network for 1.25 million people includes the development of three citywide Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) routes, which provide a comparable level of service to LRT, as well as 15 District Routes, which will connect into and support the citywide BRT routes.

Three BRT routes are included in the network for 1.25 million people:

- Castle Downs to Century Park via Downtown (by way of 97 Street and Gateway Boulevard/Calgary Trail), referred to as B1
- West Edmonton Mall to Bonnie Doon via University (by way of Whitemud Drive and Whyte Avenue), referred to as B2
- Ambleside to University (by way of Terwillegar Drive – currently partially constructed as part of the Terwillegar Drive Expansion with ETS's Super Express Route 31 currently operating from Leger Transit Centre to the University LRT Station)

The City is currently in the process of developing route alignment (which streets the routes will run along) options for each of the three BRT routes. Once the route alignments are confirmed, more detailed concept planning will be done to determine station locations, corridor design (how the streets with bus mass transit will look) and ultimately transit service targets.

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The route alignments and other elements are being determined through a decision-making framework that incorporates City Plan policies, technical considerations such as connection to surrounding land uses, integration with other modes of transportation and environmental impact, an equity assessment and public input.

b) Mass Transit Equity Assessment

An Equity Assessment is one of six different ways that the City is planning and evaluating the proposed BRT routes in the mass transit network for 1.25 million people. The purpose of the Equity Assessment is to help inform the service and infrastructure design and implementation for the three BRT routes in a way that effectively serves and supports Edmonton's diverse population. The City retained Leading Mobility Consulting to undertake the Equity Assessment.

The two main equity-related questions that this project has tried to understand through the Equity Assessment are:

- How do decisions or trade-offs made during mass transit planning, design and operations affect people of different genders and demographic groups differently? In particular, how do they affect people from equity-deserving groups like racialized and urban Indigenous people, newcomers, and people with disabilities, who face barriers to transit access?
- How can the City of Edmonton implement policies and measures at the planning, design and operations stages of mass transit implementation to ensure that the new BRT network for 1.25 million people serves the needs of Edmonton's diverse communities?

This Equity Assessment analysis will also inform future capital budget submissions for the BRT network for 1.25 million people.

Findings from this *What we Heard* report will be included in the broader technical report for the project which includes the following:

- Review of city policy to identify the City's equity deserving groups
- Literature review to identify any additional groups the City should consider in mass transit planning.
- Confirmation of the equity deserving groups based on City policy priority, literature and intersectionality considerations, home or trip-based data availability and engagement potential. The confirmed equity deserving groups for this assessment are seniors, youth, low-income people, people with disabilities, indigenous people, racialized people, newcomers and women.
- Conducted home and trip-based analysis on the identified equity deserving groups
- Undertaken engagement (e.g. transit ride-alongs, in-person workshop and Edmonton Insight Community survey), findings of this engagement program are the purpose of this What we heard report.

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- Recommendations summary on the final equity principles for the mass transit program from the city policy review, literature review, home and trip-based analysis and engagement.

c) Equity Principles

Based on secondary research done to support this Equity Assessment, a series of principles were developed that reflect the barriers experienced by equity-deserving people and their needs when it comes to transit. The principles are:

1. Having routes connect to key destinations
2. Better access to transit stops and stations
3. Stations with features to improve comfort and safety
4. Frequent and reliable service
5. Bus Rapid Transit buses designed to meet customer needs

In addition to these five original principles, a sixth principle was added as one of the outcomes of this Assessment:

6. A Bus Rapid Transit system to be proud of

2. Public Engagement Approach

a) How we engaged

The process was designed to understand the transit-related experiences and needs of participants (see Section B below) and to apply that understanding to the refinement and prioritization of the principles described above.

Ride-alongs

Local service organizations were engaged in a call for volunteers to participate in a transit ride-along and workshop, which occurred in January 2024. Seventeen participants were ultimately chosen, representing a cross-section of the demographic groups being studied as well as many intersectionalities between them (see Section B below for details on specific groups that were represented). Especially given these intersectionalities of overlapping identities (e.g. racialized or Indigenous women, low-income seniors, etc.), many participants could be said to be part of one or more equity deserving communities.

Each participant attended one of two transit ride-alongs that were planned along the 97 Street (segment of BRT Route B1) and Whyte Avenue (segment of BRT Route B2) corridors (**see Appendix A for ride-along route maps**). Participants were paired in groups of twos or and threes with a consultant team member who interviewed them throughout the ride and recorded what they said. (**see Appendix A for what we asked**).

Workshop

Ride-along participants were also asked to attend a workshop the following morning to discuss their experiences in the context of the draft equity principles. The conversations that were had in the workshop were represented graphically in a drawing by a graphic facilitator. The image that was created can be found in Section 3B.

Participants were compensated with a \$100 prepaid Visa card for their participation in the process, and light refreshments were served at the workshop.

See Appendix A for the workshop agenda.

Online Survey

In March 2024, an online survey was conducted using the City of Edmonton's Insight Community to understand how respondents in the wider population feel about the importance and ranking of each principle and to explore any differences across demographic groups.

b) Who we engaged

At the start of the process, secondary research was conducted to identify a series of demographic groups that are understood to be most impacted by transit inequities. These became the target demographic (equity-deserving) groups of the process from which ride-along and workshop participants were chosen. The groups are:

- Youth, defined for the purposes of this project as individuals under the age of 35

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- Seniors, defined for the purposes of this project as individuals 55 and older
- Low-income people making an annual income under \$30,000
- Racialized people
- Immigrants and newcomers
- First Nations, Métis, Inuit and other urban Indigenous people
- Women
- People with disabilities

Some of the intersectional identities of the **ride-along and workshop participants** selected for this process included:

- First Nations woman
- Immigrant woman
- Racialized, low-income woman
- Disabled senior
- Indigenous senior
- Racialized, newcomer youth
- Racialized, low-income youth with a disability
- 2SLGBTQIA+ youth

The **online survey** saw a total of 3,449 responses over a period of 2 weeks in March 2024.

Of these respondents, the following statistics were indicated:

- 14% were under the age of 35
- 29% were over the age of 65
- 47% identified as a woman
- 43% identified as a man
- 3% identified as non-binary or transgender
- 5% had a household income of under \$30,000 before taxes
- 9% identified as racialized
- 14% identified as persons with a disability
- 3% identified as Indigenous
- 9% were born outside of Canada
- 10% identified as 2SLGLBTQIA+

3. What We Heard

a) Overall Themes

The following general themes represent an overall summary of what we heard:

Frequency and reliability of the transit system are the top concern of all participants, including people from equity deserving communities.

However, we heard that people from equity-deserving communities are often accessing transit during off-peak periods (e.g. evenings and weekends), so ensuring frequent and reliable service at all times of the day will improve the transit experience for many of them.

The principles that people generally don't prioritize are more important for many equity deserving people.

For example, workshop participants from equity-deserving communities identified “Stations with features to improve comfort and safety” and “Better access to transit stops and stations” as top priorities, while survey participants did not. This reflects the barriers many equity-deserving people experience related to accessibility and safety. The principle “Bus Rapid Transit buses designed to meet customer needs” also scored low across all demographic segments in the online survey, but workshop participants generally gave it a medium to high priority in their table discussions and often identified it as being important during ride-alongs. Bus layout and seating is extremely important to people with a variety of accessibility needs, and space for cargo – especially strollers and mobility devices – would improve the quality of trips for mothers, people with disabilities, and many seniors. More space for bikes would improve trip quality for youth and many low-income people.

Safety is a top priority of everyone but what is safe is different for different people.

We heard that people from equity-deserving communities may be more highly impacted by issues of safety because they tend to use transit more during off-peak hours when fewer people are taking transit in general. However, addressing safety for people from equity-deserving communities requires careful consideration of the impacts of potential solutions. For example, while some people in our process asked for more security guards or Peace Officers, one of our Indigenous participants noted that Peace Officers do not make them feel safe and they will, in fact, avoid locations where they know there are Peace Officers for fear of being unfairly targeted. Another participant suggested she would feel safer if there were restricted fare-paid areas in stations.

When thinking about the transit accessibility needs of people with disabilities, don't forget about people with invisible disabilities.

People with disabilities experience some of the greatest barriers to transit access. We heard that people with invisible disabilities experience similar barriers but that those may not always be as obvious to others. For example, many chronic conditions can cause pain, muscle spasms, or other mobility impairments that are not entirely obvious to other people,

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which may make it awkward to ask someone to give up their seat. We heard that more seating would benefit this group.

Better access to real-time information supports reliability and reduces barriers.

We heard that access to real-time information, especially in the case of service disruptions or delays, can significantly improve the experience of many equity deserving people who need to plan complex trips carefully and might not have access to technology or data. Workshop participants highlighted the value of wifi on buses, enhanced stop announcements, real-time digital displays and a more customer-focused role for drivers towards improving their transit experience .

b) Principle-specific feedback

In-Person Workshop

The In-person workshop was held on the morning after the transit ride-alongs, while the memory of the experience and the discussions had were still fresh in the minds of participants. Only ride-along participants participated in the workshop.

In-Person Workshop Feedback on Principles

Key feedback from the in-person workshop by principle is summarized below, in order that the principles were ranked by participants in the workshop.

Priority 1: Frequent and reliable service

- Consider the needs of shift workers, especially those who must travel at night.
- It's important to maintain frequency and reliability throughout the day.
- For some people, especially people with disabilities or who don't speak English as a first language, reliability means drivers that are courteous and anticipate their needs (e.g. deploying a ramp without being asked) and are knowledgeable enough about the city and its transit routes to provide directions if needed.

Priority 2: Stations with features to improve comfort and safety

- Improving safety is a top priority, especially for customers travelling at night.
- Design for safety – good lighting, clear sightlines.
- Curbside stations are more accessible than centre-lane stations.
- Consider an education campaign to promote use of the help phone and other emergency features.
- Consider implementing a fare paid area with restricted access.
- Consider the experience of boarding a bus for a person with a disability.
- Stations should be clean.
- Consider the impacts of cold weather and design stations for comfort.
- Ensure supporting infrastructure is maintained and in-service as often as possible (i.e. elevators).
- Provide screens with real-time information and wayfinding.

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Priority 3: Routes that connect to key destinations

- Significant destinations include downtown, school (e.g. University of Alberta), grocery stores, Doctors Offices/Hospitals.
- Important to consider frequency off-peak (e.g. very early and late morning, late evening, night).
- Important to consider the needs of shift workers.
- Make it easy to plan a trip.

Priority 4: Bus Rapid Transit buses designed to meet customer needs

- Dedicated Accessible Transit System (DATS) for seniors with mobility challenges needed.
- Consider the cargo needs of equity-deserving groups – mothers with strollers, mobility devices of people with disabilities, bikes – and make room for them. Consider flexible designs that can accommodate more cargo when needed.
- Design the seating plan to make room for people with mobility devices.
- Many women prefer single seats.
- Consider air conditioning on buses.
- All-door boarding would make boarding easier, especially for people with disabilities.
- Look to Vancouver as a best practice.
- Provide on-board real-time route information (e.g. current stop, next stop, final destination, any temporary route changes or service disruptions) and enhanced stop announcements.
- Provide wifi on buses.
- Consider high-capacity buses (e.g. articulated buses) so people are always able to board.

Priority 5: Better access to transit stops and stations

- People with mobility challenges need to find places to rest along the way if the trip to a transit stop is long.
- Prioritize pedestrians over cars along major transit corridors.
- Consider the experience along transit corridors of people with disabilities – it can be difficult to cross a wide street.
- Consider the transfer experience, especially for people with disabilities.
- It's important to achieve proximity between transfers.
- Snow presents a major impediment to accessibility in the wintertime – important to prioritize snow clearing and address windrows to ensure accessibility.
- Access to information needed to plan your trip is an important element of access, especially for people from equity deserving communities.
- Access to cellular data/wifi is important so that people can access transit information on their phones.

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In-Person Workshop Feedback on Missing Principles

Affordable: Consider that affordability is a barrier to many people.

Facilitating Access and Comfort: Driver behaviour has an outsized impact on the transit experience of some people, especially those requiring accessibility assistance and people with cargo, including seniors with disabilities and mothers with strollers. Drivers who provide excellent customer service significantly improve the transit experience for these people.

Creating an experience that inspires pride: Taking transit can be a stigmatizing experience, especially for people who have no other choice other than to take public transit with North America's societal preference for driving. Delivering a service that people can feel proud of can give transit riders a greater sense of dignity and improve the overall transit experience for everyone.

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Mass Transit Study - Equity Assessment

Some people are more significantly impacted by transit challenges (ie. if they are newcomers and need an elevator and could lose job if late for work)

THE BRT and PRINCIPLES SHOULD ALSO CONSIDER....

- Being safe and warm in the winter. And air conditioning
- Shift work
- Late nights
- Security + Lighting
- 311 is not accurate
- Reliable service means reliable information
- RESPECT: we need more time to enter and exit
- PRIDE IN TAKING TRANSIT
- SHOW THE TIME TOO. And wayfinding digital screens on buses.
- BIKE LOCKERS are needed at stations or secure parkades.
- WORKING ELEVATORS need to be at all stations.
- CHARGERS + WIFI ON BUSES AND STATIONS WOULD BE NICE.
- It can be far to cross the street to get to the stop.
- It can be a long walk to access transit. DATS helps.
- BIKE LOCKERS are needed at stations or secure parkades.
- Fares are not affordable.
- Close proximity between stops and transfers.
- THE "TRANSIT MATH" takes a lot of energy.
- Buses need more space for mobility aids + cargo. (Different seating layouts)

TRANSIT NEEDS TO WORK FOR EVERYONE

Comfort and safety DRIVERS are a big part of this.

SUPPORTED

RESPECT

PRIDE IN TAKING TRANSIT

Close proximity between stops and transfers.

THE "TRANSIT MATH" takes a lot of energy.

It can be a long walk to access transit. DATS helps.

CHARGERS + WIFI ON BUSES AND STATIONS WOULD BE NICE.

BIKE LOCKERS are needed at stations or secure parkades.

WORKING ELEVATORS need to be at all stations.

Fares are not affordable.

Being safe and warm in the winter. And air conditioning

Shift work

Late nights

Security + Lighting

311 is not accurate

Reliable service means reliable information

RESPECT: we need more time to enter and exit

PRIDE IN TAKING TRANSIT

SHOW THE TIME TOO. And wayfinding digital screens on buses.

BIKE LOCKERS are needed at stations or secure parkades.

WORKING ELEVATORS need to be at all stations.

CHARGERS + WIFI ON BUSES AND STATIONS WOULD BE NICE.

It can be far to cross the street to get to the stop.

It can be a long walk to access transit. DATS helps.

BIKE LOCKERS are needed at stations or secure parkades.

Fares are not affordable.

Graphic recording by Kristen Elkow
ELK ELKPLAN DESIGN INC.

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Online Survey

In March 2024, an online survey open to a wide cross-section of Edmontonians collected feedback on the value and prioritization of the equity principles. Shared below is data on the percentage of times each principle was selected by a participant as being amongst the top three most important principles that would most improve their transit experience.

Online Survey Feedback on Principles

Below is a high-level summary of the feedback received through the online survey. For the simplicity of reporting, this table only shows the percentage of people who picked each principle as being within their top three. For a summary of what was asked, see Appendix A. Priority ranks are based on the percentage of people who picked that principle to be in their top three.

Frequent and reliable service

Priority rank: #1 **54% see it as one of 3 most important principles**

Key principle-related feedback:

- Frequency and reliability are the backbone of good transit service and are of primary importance above all the other principles.
- For transit to compete with driving, it needs to be frequent, reliable, and fast.
- More frequent service improves connections.
- Frequency during off-peak is important to support tradespeople and shift workers.
- Important to achieve better than every 15-minute frequency.
- Frequency can impact perceptions of safety.
- Real-time updates and accurate tracking are crucial to help manage expectations and support trip planning, especially during delays.
- Maintain frequency during bad weather so that people can rely on transit when they need it most.

Routes that connect to key destinations

Priority rank: #2 **50% see it as one of 3 most important principles**

Key principle-related feedback

- Routes and schedules should be simple and understandable.
- Straightforward, easy to navigate routes and clear schedules will improve usability of the system.
- Routes should connect to major employment areas and should serve more than just the weekday 9-5 office crowd. Consider industrial areas and other areas where shift work is common.
- There's a strong need for more off-peak service, including late-night and early morning service, to accommodate a wider range of schedules and to reduce wait times.

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- Routes should ensure easy and direct access to universities, colleges, schools, hospitals and clinics.
- Routes should be designed in consideration of the social and cultural destinations that are important to local communities, including places of worship.
- Routes should cater to shopping and entertainment needs.
- Routes should reach deeper
- into residential communities to minimize walking times and better connect communities to major transit hubs.
- Support of multi-modal travel through integration with other modes is crucial. Connections should be seamless with other buses, trains, bikes, and walking paths.
- Frequency is key to improving connections, so that user do not have long wait times.
- Ensure routes are safe to travel.

Stations with features to improve comfort and safety

Priority rank: #3

34% see it as one of 3 most important principles

Key principle-related feedback:

- Ensure that the system is designed to support comfort during the harshest of weather conditions, especially winter weather. Incorporate heated shelters at stations and stops.
- Design stations for increased passenger safety through better lighting and strong sightlines.
- Install emergency communication systems at all stations/stops to support safety.
- Increase the security presence at stations.
- Keep facilities, including washrooms, clean and well-maintained to improve the overall comfort and experience of transit users.
- Enhance comfort for waiting passengers by providing essential amenities including washrooms and ample seating.
- Install digital information displays to provide real-time information about transit schedules, service changes and other essential information to assist passengers in planning their journey.

Better access to transit stops and stations

Priority rank: #4

27% see it as one of 3 most important principles

Key principle-related feedback:

- Stations and stops should be within walking distance of residential and commercial areas to make it easier to access transit.

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- Enhance pedestrian infrastructure like sidewalks, crosswalks, and pedestrian paths leading to transit stops and stations to make them safer and more accessible, especially for those with mobility challenges.
- Offer sufficient park-and-ride options at major transit stations to accommodate those who need to drive as part of their commute.
- Feeder bus services that connect outlying areas to main transit lines should be more frequent and reliable, reducing wait times and transfer hassles.
- Implement on-demand transit in areas with lower density to improve access for all users.
- Install clear, visible signage and wayfinding at and around stations and stops to assist passengers in navigating to and from the transit system easily.

All of the above are equally important

Priority rank: #5

25% see it as one of 3 most important principles

Key principle-related feedback:

- Take an integrated approach that prioritizes all principles.
- Take a holistic approach that enhances the user experience by carefully designing and integrating everything from the layout of buses and stations and to scheduling and routing.
- Prioritize equitable access by designing for the needs of seniors, disabled, and low-income people.
- Develop transit services with an emphasis on user feedback and real-world usage patterns, ensuring that all elements of the transit service are aligned with actual customer needs and preferences.

Bus Rapid Transit buses designed to meet customer needs

Priority rank: #6

15% see it as one of 3 most important principles

Key principle-related feedback:

- Accommodate people who use wheelchairs and walkers and/or who are traveling with strollers or grocery carts. Provide sufficient space for these needs as well other types of cargo.
- Provide enough priority seating to accommodate all customers comfortably.
- Make the bus ride comfortable by providing comfortable seating, effective heating and cooling systems, and noise reduction technology.
- Include visual and audio announcements for stops and route information to ensure accessibility for visually and hearing-impaired passengers.
- Include real-time tracking systems accessible via mobile devices.

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- Increase safety for riders by equipping buses with safety features like secure handrails and anti-slip flooring.
- Consider the use of surveillance cameras.
- Design bus interiors to maximize space, improve flow, and reduce congestion, especially around entrance and exit points, to speed up boarding and disembarking processes.

None of the above are important

Priority rank: #7

5% see it as one of 3 most important principles

Key principle-related feedback:

- Skeptical that principles will be implemented effectively based on past efforts.
- Proposed principles do not align with the actual needs and priorities of transit users.
- There are other, more pressing priorities, including operational efficiency, management practices, and fiscal responsibility.
- Doubt that, even if implemented, principles will have any measurable impact.
- Based on past experiences, transit agencies can't be trusted to effectively prioritize and implement changes that truly benefit users.
- The cost of implementing all of these principles will be too high and will not yield proportional benefits.

Online Survey Prioritization by demographic group

Survey participants generally agreed on the order in which the equity principles should be prioritized. However, it is interesting to note where certain demographic groups prioritized principles slightly differently, because it suggests needs that are more specific to that community. In the case of equity-deserving communities, such as low-income, immigrant, racialized, and Indigenous people, those differences tell an important story about ensuring an equitable bus rapid transit system. Below is a table which shows the percentage of people who selected each principle to be in their top three most important principles by demographic group under consideration in the Equity Assessment. Percentages in each demographic group do not add up to 100% because they represent the percentage of people who selected each principle as one of their top three and the top three. Values in each row are colour-coded along a gradient to highlight differences in how different groups prioritized each principle.

| Top 3 Choices | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------------------------|---|--|---|---|--|---------------------------------|
| | Frequent and reliable service | Routes that connect to key destinations | Stations with features to improve comfort and safety | Better access to transit stops and stations | Bus Rapid Transit buses designed to meet customer needs | All of the above are equally important | None of the above are important |
| Women | 1 (54%) | 2 (47%) | 3 (35%) | 4 (29%) | 6 (16%) | 5 (28%) | 7 (3%) |
| Seniors (55+) | 2 (47.7%) | 1 (47.8%) | 3 (36%) | 5 (22%) | 6 (15%) | 4 (30%) | 7 (6%) |
| Youth (under 35) | 1 (68%) | 2 (55%) | 4 (31%) | 3 (36%) | 6 (16%) | 5 (21%) | 7 (2%) |
| Low-income people (household income under \$30,000) | 1 (44%) | 3 (39%) | 4 (28%) | 5 (26%) | 6 (11%) | 2 (41%) | 7 (3%) |
| Racialized people | 1 (56%) | 2 (54%) | 3 (29%) | 4 (28%) | 6 (17%) | 5 (26%) | 7 (6%) |
| First Nations, Inuit, Metis & Urban Indigenous people | 1 (53%) | 2 (49%) | 3 (32%) | 4 (25%) | 6 (14%) | 5 (22%) | 7 (11%) |
| Immigrants | 1 (55%) | 2 (51%) | 3 (29%) | 5 (25%) | 6 (17%) | 3 (29%) | 7 (4%) |
| Newcomers | 1 (53%) | 2 (50%) | 3 (22%) | 3 (22%) | 7 (11%) | 3 (22%) | 6 (19%) |
| People with disabilities | 1 (52%) | 2 (40%) | 3 (33%) | 4 (31%) | 6 (23%) | 5 (30%) | 7 (3%) |
| All Participants | 1 (54%) | 2 (50%) | 3 (34%) | 4 (27%) | 6 (15%) | 5 (25%) | 7 (5%) |

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Below is a similar table, but demonstrating which principles were selected as the top most important principle of participants in different demographic groups. In the table below, all of the Above and None of the Above are excluded.

| Top Choice | | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|--|---|---|
| | Frequent and reliable service | Routes that connect to key destinations | Stations with features to improve comfort and safety | Better access to transit stops and stations | Bus Rapid Transit buses designed to meet customer needs |
| Women | 1 (27%) | 2 (14.%) | 3 (12%) | 4 (5%) | 5 (3%) |
| Seniors (55+) | 1 (21%) | 2 (15%) | 3 (14.%) | 4 (4%) | 5 (3%) |
| Youth (under 35) | 1 (42%) | 2 (15%) | 3 (10%) | 4 (4%) | 5 (1%) |
| Low-income people (household income under \$30,000) | 1 (25%) | 2 (10%) | 3 (9%) | 4 (4%) | 5 (2%) |
| Racialized people | 1 (29.%) | 2 (18%) | 3 (9%) | 4 (4%) | 5 (3%) |
| First Nations, Inuit, Metis & Urban Indigenous people | 1 (31%) | 3 (10%) | 2 (15%) | 4 (2%) | 5 (1%) |
| Immigrants | 1 (29.%) | 2 (18%) | 3 (8%) | 4 (4%) | 5 (2%) |
| Newcomers | 1 (36%) | 2 (8%) | 3 (6%) | 4 (0%) | 4 (0%) |
| People with disabilities | 1 (27%) | 2 (10%) | 2 (10%) | 4 (7%) | 5 (6%) |
| All Participants | 1 (28.%) | 2 (15%) | 3 (12%) | 4 (4%) | 5 (3%) |

4. Transit Customer Personas

The customer personas below represent fictional people developed through the feedback heard through this Equity Assessment, in particular through the ride-alongs. They were created to represent some of the specific equity-deserving communities that participants in this process were part of. Each persona's story is an aggregate of the experiences of participants from the transit ride-along.

Sally - Senior, low-income immigrant woman with a disability



What taking transit is like for me: I take transit often to get to medical appointments. I have bad knees and use a walker, so walking to a transit stop is hard for me. I injured my brain in a fall and my English is not as good as it used to be as a result, which makes it extra difficult to navigate the transit system.

My barriers to transit access: My walk to the bus stop is long, and I need to find frequent places to rest. Crowding can make it difficult for me because I have a walker, but it also saves me sometimes when there aren't any seats because I

can use it to sit down.

How I work around my barriers: I pay close attention to the schedule and plan my trip carefully. I write down the routes I need to take and their schedules. When I need to sit down, I can use my walker.

My desires for the transit system: I want it to be easier to get on the bus, especially in the wintertime when there's a lot of snow. I also want more comfortable stops that are heated in the winter. As someone who doesn't speak English well and has a disability, I sometimes rely a lot on the driver. Drivers who deliver excellent customer service anticipate my needs and are responsive and helpful when I engage them.

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Priya - Female, racialized newcomer youth



What taking transit is like for me: I'm new to Canada and I take transit 5 days a week to get to both school and work. I find it overwhelming and confusing to figure the routes and I spend a lot of time doing that. I'm often left planning excessively to avoid getting lost. I often feel scared when I'm on transit and I'm extra vigilant about making sure I know what's going on around me.

My barriers to transit access: My main barrier is bus infrequency and the wait times that result from that, especially during off-peak hours. This makes every trip a hassle and means I can't really rely on transit when I need it the most. The lack of a really good transit app compounds this problem. The other thing that acts as a barrier is feeling unsafe by some of the people I encounter on the transit system, especially people who are doing drugs or are in emotional distress.

How I work around my barriers: To cope, I listen to music to relax and help me not to think about the wait. When I feel unsafe, I look for security guards. I'll also spend a lot of time planning alternate routes to avoid complicated bus centres and other places that I know are less safe.

My desires for the transit system: More frequent service that reduces wait times and better heated shelters in the winter to make waiting more bearable would make my life a lot better. I'd also love to see a real, functioning ETS app that helps me with real-time planning. Simplifying big transit centres like Meadows, where there are lots of transfers, would make the system safer and more straightforward. I also think safety could be improved by implementing fare-paid areas with restricted access.

City of Edmonton

Zoe - Urban Indigenous non-binary person



What taking transit is like for me: I mostly drive but I do take transit periodically when I expect not to be able to find parking where I'm going.

My barriers to transit access: Frequency, reliability and trip times are big problems. If I'm going to choose transit over my car, it needs to make sense. It can't take 3 times longer, and it would be nice to have a seat. I also don't often feel safe when I take transit, which also discourages me from taking it.

How I work around my barriers: When the bus is crowded, I try to stay close to the doors to avoid being squished. When I'm taking transit and I don't feel safe, I'm extra vigilant. I won't put on headphones or wear any visible jewelry or anything. I try to avoid places where I expect there to be peace officers. As an Indigenous person, I do not feel safe around them.

My desires for the transit system: I would take transit more often if it were more comfortable and reliable. I would love for the system to be less crowded and for wait times to be lower. I also want to feel safe but I don't want to feel policed.

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Katy - Racialized woman with a disability



What taking transit is like for me: I take the bus with my young daughter. I have cerebral palsy, which is an invisible disability. As a disabled person, travelling is always difficult, but it is even harder when you are travelling on transit with a baby stroller. I don't feel like people respect me and I'm scared to ask for a seat. They won't even move for a senior, why would they move for me?

My barriers to transit access: Accessibility is a significant issue. I need to be able to sit down to be comfortable and I need to be able to have my baby next to me in her stroller. Safety is also a

major concern. I do not want to encounter people taking drugs or drug paraphernalia lying around, especially when I'm with my daughter.

How I work around my barriers: When I can, I travel at off-peak hours when it's less busy and I also feel safer.

My desires for the transit system: I want a safe transit system with more peace officers patrolling stations and stops. I want my experience to be as comfortable as possible, with reliable service, snow removal at transit stops, heated shelters and wifi on buses. I would love for the walk to my nearest bus stop to be shorter, and for there to be digital real-time next bus and route information when I get there. Finally, I want drivers to deliver better customer service, be more courteous and helpful when I need it.

5. What we did

We used the feedback from the in-person transit ride-alongs, workshop and the online survey to help inform updates to and finalize the principles. Below is a summary table of the original principles, followed by the final principle text with revisions highlighted in bold, based on feedback from the engagement program.

| Having routes connect key destinations | |
|--|---|
| Original Text: | Final Text: |
| <p>Connected Provide transit access to places and destinations that will improve the lives of Edmontonians without cars and create economic and social opportunities.</p> <p><i>This includes transit access to schools, hospitals, medical and social services, shopping and leisure destinations, community service facilities and employment zones with high levels of shift work.</i></p> | <p>Connected Provide transit access to places and destinations that will improve the lives of Edmontonians without cars and create economic and social opportunities.</p> <p><i>This includes transit access to high schools, post-secondary institutions, hospitals, medical and social services, shopping and leisure destinations, community service facilities, places of worship and employment zones with high levels of shift work.</i></p> |
| Better access to transit stops and stations | |
| Original Text: | Final Text: |
| <p>Inclusive Design streets and Bus Rapid Transit stations in a way that eliminates barriers to access and ensures universal accessibility. Incorporate visual, tactile, and audible elements that support wayfinding for people of all abilities.</p> <p>Walkable Consider the specific needs and abilities of transit customers at key destinations (e.g. hospitals, shopping, leisure destinations, community service facilities and employment zones with high levels of shift work) to determine appropriate walking distances to Bus Rapid Transit stations.</p> | <p>Inclusive Design streets and Bus Rapid Transit stations in a way that eliminates barriers to access and ensures universal accessibility. Incorporate visual, tactile, and audible elements that support wayfinding for people of all abilities.</p> <p>Walkable Consider the specific needs and abilities of transit customers and minimize walking distances to Bus Rapid Transit stations from residential communities, key destinations, and between transfers.</p> |

| Stations with features to improve comfort and safety | |
|--|---|
| Original Text: | Final Text: |
| <p>Safe Create a safe environment for all transit customers (e.g. ensuring sightlines, lighting, access to help phones).</p> <p>Winter-Ready Include consideration for winter maintenance in station design (e.g. covered pedestrian waiting areas, prioritized snow and ice clearing).</p> | <p>Safe Create a safe physical environment for all transit customers by incorporating clear sightlines, good lighting, access to help phones, and restricted paid areas.</p> <p>Winter-Ready Design stations with winter weather in mind including covered pedestrian areas, heated shelters, and prioritized snow clearing (e.g. windrow removal to ensure accessibility).</p> <p>Real-Time Information Provide real-time information at stations to indicate next vehicle arrival times, support trip planning, and communicate planned and unplanned disruptions to improve the transit experience for everyone but especially for many equity-deserving people, including newcomers, seniors and people with access to technology.</p> <p>Clean Maintain Bus Rapid Transit stations to a high degree of cleanliness.</p> |
| Frequent and reliable service | |
| Original Text : | Final Text: |
| <p>Frequent Provide access to high frequency transit (e.g. service every 15 minutes or better, everyday), throughout the day and night to facilitate trips to serve the travel needs of all Edmontonians to key destinations (e.g. hospitals, shopping, leisure destinations, community service facilities and employment zones with high levels of shift work).</p> <p>Reliable Provide a predictable and reliable transit service.</p> | <p>Frequent Provide access to high frequency transit (e.g. service every 15 minutes or better, everyday), throughout the day and night to facilitate trips to serve the travel needs of all Edmontonians to key destinations (e.g. hospitals, shopping, leisure destinations, community service facilities and employment zones with high levels of shift work). Frequency supports reliability.</p> <p>Reliable Provide a predictable and reliable transit service. Introduce all-door boarding to support reliability.</p> |

| Bus Rapid Transit buses designed to meet customer needs | |
|---|--|
| Original Text | Final Text |
| <p>Accessible <i>Ensure transit vehicles are both universally accessible (e.g. dedicated seating for accessibility, enhanced audio and visual stop announcements).</i></p> <p>Cargo-Friendly <i>Ensure that transit vehicles can accommodate travel accessories or equipment such as strollers, grocery carriers and other large cargo.</i></p> | <p>Accessible <i>Ensure transit vehicles are both universally accessible (e.g. dedicated seating for accessibility, enhanced audio and visual stop announcements). Additional seating on transit vehicles would assist people with and without physical disabilities, both visible and invisible.</i></p> <p>Cargo-Friendly <i>Ensure that transit vehicles can accommodate travel accessories or equipment such as wheelchairs, walkers, strollers, bikes, grocery carriers and other large cargo.</i></p> <p>Real-Time Information <i>Provide real-time information on buses including next stop announcements, route information, and information on planned and unplanned disruptions to improve the transit experience for everyone but especially for many equity-deserving people, including newcomers, seniors, and people without access to technology. Wifi on board will also improve the customer experience and support improved wayfinding.</i></p> |
| A Bus Rapid Transit system to be proud of | |
| Original Text: | Final Text: |
| <p><i>New principle developed from findings from the engagement program.</i></p> | <p><i>Transit should not be a tool of last resort for Edmontonians. Edmontonians deserve a transit system that they can be proud of.</i></p> <p><i>Providing a good transit system and experience that makes taking transit not just a viable, but preferred option over driving which will attract new transit riders and vastly improve the transit experience for existing riders.</i></p> |

6. What's Next

Feedback from the transit ride-alongs, in-person workshop and online survey helped the project team finalize the six equity assessment principles for the Mass Transit Program. These six principles will be incorporated into the final equity assessment report. The equity assessment report will be posted publicly on the City's Mass Transit study website and referred to in an upcoming City Council report.

Appendix A: What We Asked

Transit Ride-Alongs

Participants in the transit ride-alongs were asked the following questions relating to transit:

- What is taking transit like for you?
- What barriers do you experience accessing or taking transit?
- What is pleasant about your experience?
- What would make your experience better?
- What do you do (if anything) to address the barriers that you experience? What are some of the things that you do to overcome/work around these barriers?
- How has the transit ride-along made you feel?
- Are those feelings similar to or different from what you usually feel when you take transit? (Why do you think that is?)
- What have you seen on the ride-along that reflects your typical transit experience? What has been different?
- Reflect on the barriers that you experienced during the ride-along. Were these the same or different than the barriers you said you typically experience taking transit? What can the City do to help make those barriers go away?

In-Person Workshop

At the Day 2 Workshop, participants sat at round tables with a member of the consultant team facilitating at each table. The workshop began with a presentation by the City and consultant teams, followed by a small group discussion and a report-back. The meeting closed with a second small group discussion.

For the first small group discussion, participants were to reflect on their ride-along and typical transit experiences to evaluate the draft transit equity principles. To facilitate the conversation, the following prompts were used:

- *Reflect on yesterday's ride-along and your typical transit experience*
- *Do these principles address the key barriers you experience?*
- *Do they speak to opportunities that are important to you?*
- *How can they be improved?*
- *Should any be prioritized over others?*
- *Is there a principle or principles that you think is missing?*

For the second small group discussion, facilitators led a short discussion about each principle, asking participants to discuss how each might relate to different aspects of their typical commute.

City of Edmonton

In-Person Workshop Agenda

Date: January 26, 2024 (9am - 11am)

Location: [Edmonton Tower \(10111 104 Avenue NW, 2nd Floor Meeting Space\)](#)

| # | Item | Time |
|---|--|---------|
| 1 | Welcome & Introductions (David/Daniel) | 15 mins |
| 2 | Introductory Presentation (City) | 10 mins |
| 3 | Questions of Clarification (City/Consultant Team) | 10 mins |
| 3 | Small Group Discussions 1 (ALL) Questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Reflect on yesterday's ride-along and your typical transit experience● Do these principles address the key barriers you experience?● Do they speak to opportunities that are important to you?● How can they be improved?● Should any be prioritized over others?● Is there a principle or principles that you think is missing? | 25 mins |
| 4 | Report-Back (Daniel/Kristen) | 15 mins |
| 5 | Small Group Discussions 2 (ALL) Further reflect on the ride-alongs and the user's typical transit experience in ways that apply to the principles: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Routes connect to key destinations: 5 mins● Better access to transit stops and stations: 10 mins● Stations with features to improve comfort and safety: 10 mins● Reliable and Frequent Service: 5 mins● Buses designed to meet customer needs: 10 mins | 40 mins |
| 6 | Wrap-Up (David) | 5 mins |

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Online Survey

The online survey was a simple questionnaire conducted through the Edmonton Insight Community and designed to try to understand how people would rate the potential impact of each equity principle on their commutes if the principles were addressed in the design of the new BRT system. They were also asked to identify their top three priority principles. The survey questions were the following:

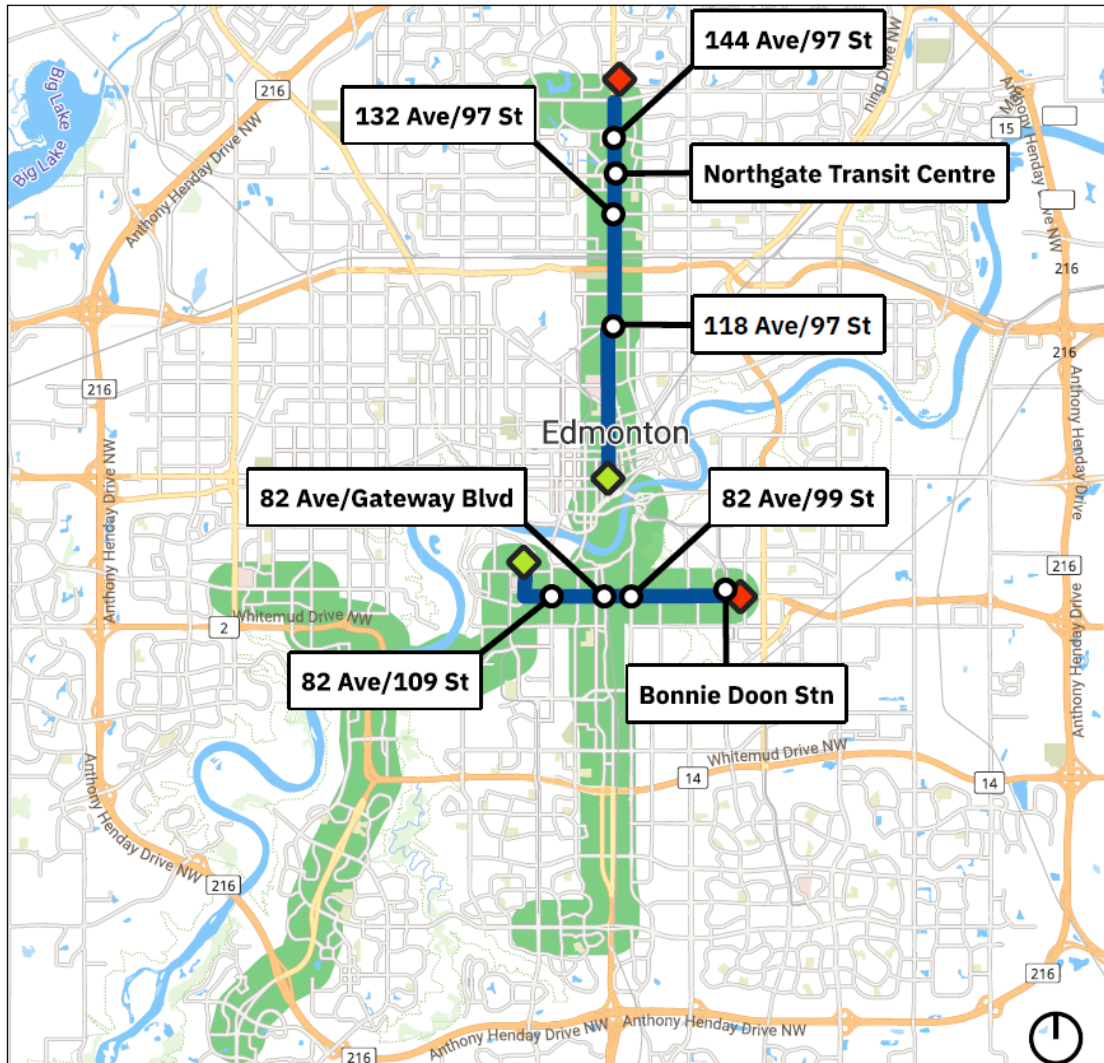
1. How often do you currently use available transit services (such as Bus or LRT)?
2. For each of the equity principles, participants were asked: Thinking about how you and your family might use non-LRT (Bus Rapid Transit) mass transit in the future, please respond to the following: Principle X will significantly improve my transit experience using Bus Rapid Transit.
3. Thinking about the equity principles presented above, which of these principles do you feel are most important to inclusive mass transit?
4. Of the ones you chose, which one do you feel is the most important?
5. Do you have any other feedback you want to share about these equity principles?

Appendix B: Ride-Along Route Map

Mass Transit Study



Equity Assessment Transit Ride-Alongs



Legend

- Notable tour stops
- Tours
- BRT corridors
- ◆ Tour Start/End
- ◆ Start
- ◆ End