

Night Ride Pilot Project Frequently Asked Questions

What is Night Ride?

The Night Ride Pilot Project is a late-night weekend bus and taxi plan, intended to help patrons and workers in the congested late night entertainment zone of Whyte Avenue to get home more easily and safely after closing time.

The original plan was for the Night Ride pilot to operate for three months (September to November 2011) however it was delayed pending additional consultation with communities along the route. The pilot is now running from January 6, 2012 to April 14, 2012. This will allow the pilot to operate for a full university term, providing enough time to evaluate its full impact on Whyte Avenue and ridership.

What did you learn in your consultations?

A paper and online survey was part of the consultation process and 272 responses were received. The survey confirmed support for the pilot with 65 per cent of respondents strongly supporting or supporting the initiative. As well 77 per cent of respondents supported the need for late night transit services.

Other key information we learned from this most recent survey was that 65 per cent of people stated they were well informed, while others wanted more information in the areas of safety and security issues and the route. Some of the input that was given will be added to the evaluation criteria for the pilot. We will provide more information to address any additional questions or concerns.

Information gathered through the consultation resulted in enhanced security and safety measures being put in place at the Southgate Transit Centre with the addition of an Edmonton Police Service officer on site. Consideration was also given to the impact of cold winter weather, and passengers will be picked up along the entire route.

The complete survey results are available at www.responsiblehospitalityedmonton.ca or www.edmonton.ca/nightride.

Where did the idea for the Night Ride pilot come from?

Late night transportation is not a new issue, particularly in entertainment zones. Cities around the world have grappled with this issue for years.

In Edmonton it has been an issue for several years and different groups in late night entertainment zones have raised the need for late night transportation for patrons and workers to help alleviate the impacts of congestion on Whyte Avenue. As part of this most recent survey, 77 per cent of respondents said they strongly support or support late night transit.

These results coincide with information in a 2009 report of the Jasper Avenue Entertainment Working Group, which identified late night transportation as a city-wide priority. Another study in the spring of 2011 reinforced the need for late night transportation serving the entertainment zones of Whyte and Jasper avenues.

Who was involved in the design of the pilot?

Night Ride is a pilot that was collaboratively created by Responsible Hospitality Edmonton, the Edmonton Transit System (ETS), taxi brokers, the Vehicle for Hire Commission, the Jasper Avenue Entertainment Working Group, the Edmonton Police Service (EPS), the University of Alberta, Whyte Avenue bar owners and patrons, the Old Strathcona Area Community Council and the Central Area Council of Community Leagues.

What will be the cost to take the Night Ride bus?

Regular ETS fares apply. U Pass, monthly passes and ETS tickets are valid.

What hours will the bus run?

Buses will run Fridays and Saturdays from 1:30 a.m. to approximately 3:30 a.m. on a 12-minute frequency.

Given the delay in starting the pilot and the change from a fall pilot to a winter pilot, the City will review the operational plan and determine if any adjustments need to be made. Adjustments would be communicated to stakeholders, if required, closer to the start of the pilot.

Where will it pick up on Whyte?

ETS buses will pick up riders along Whyte Avenue west bound between 104 Street and 109 Street. The buses will then proceed to the University and Southgate Transit Centre, dropping passengers off along the way. Riders will be able to also use Stop on Request. Additional stops along 51 Avenue from 111 Street to 104 Street have been added to the route to provide more service options for riders.

Where will the bus stop after it leaves Whyte?

Current plans have the bus going north to 87 Avenue, west to the University and then south to the Southgate Transit Centre, dropping off passengers as requested.

The bus will stop at all regular bus stops along the route as requested, including stops at the University of Alberta area and the Southgate Transit Centre.

The regular ETS Stop Request program will also be available. This means the bus will stop on request at locations other than regular bus stops, provided the location is along the route and the bus driver determines it is a safe location to stop. This will allow passengers to get off close to their homes or final destination.

A taxi stand will be situated at the Southgate Transit Centre. It will be staffed by an individual who will assist bus passengers in accessing taxis and getting them on their way to their final destination. Taxis will have easy access to the Whitemud Drive for quick trips to further destinations. Parents will also be able to pick up their children easily from this location.

Why was it decided to stop the service at the Southgate Transit Centre?

In research done in spring 2011 with late night patrons on Whyte Avenue we found that the majority said they lived in the area between Whyte and Southgate (including the University area) and that they just want to get home safely at closing time.

Southgate Transit Centre was also selected because it provides easy access for buses, taxis and parents, and is located close to the main thoroughfare of Whitemud Drive. This makes it easy for taxis to go to other parts of the city further south, east or west.

Feedback from taxi officials told us that shorter trips are more attractive to taxi drivers, reducing the length of return trips without passengers. This reduces wait time for patrons.

How will the situation at the Southgate Transit Centre be monitored?

When the pilot is launched in January 2012 our initial plan is to have a special duty officer from Edmonton Police Service at the transit centre to help bus passengers access taxis and address any issues that arise. We anticipate that this officer will not be required on an ongoing basis. This resource will be paid out of the pilot budget and will not affect existing police resources in the city.

In addition, there will be ongoing monitoring of the use of the pilot, and adjustments will be identified and made as required.

ETS Security will also be available should the need arise as is usual ETS practice.

Will the Southgate Transit Centre and adjacent pedway be available to passengers getting off of the bus?

No, the transit centre will be locked and as a result the pedway will be unavailable to passengers.

Those passengers who live in communities on the west side of 111 Street would be best to get off the bus at the last stop before 51 Avenue to get home otherwise they would have to walk back to 51 Avenue and cross 111 Street.

Will there be extra EPS presence in the area?

EPS beat officers who regularly patrol Whyte Avenue are aware of and supportive of the pilot.

A special duty EPS member is being added at the Southgate Transit Centre. There are no plans at this point to increase patrols. However, the pilot will be monitored and adjustments made as required.

Isn't this just taking the issue of congestion and problems at closing time and moving them to another area of the city?

Responsible Hospitality Edmonton (RHE) research estimates that by the time the Night Ride bus actually reaches the Southgate Transit Centre, the majority of passengers will have already gotten off the bus at an earlier stop.

If the pilot supports the research, RHE estimates that approximately 10-12 people will get off the bus at the Southgate Transit Centre. It is expected that these individuals will have already left the transit centre before the next bus arrives.

As well, in a survey completed in spring 2011 we heard from late night patrons on Whyte Avenue that when closing time hits they just want a safe way to get home.

The project will be monitored closely and if necessary, adjustments will be made.

Why are you only doing this on Whyte? What about getting people from Whyte to other parts of the city?

As we heard in our recent survey, this is a small start but we want to pilot the service in a targeted area so we can evaluate the project. We know that late night transit has been identified as an issue in the city, a fact that was reflected in the September 2011 Night Ride survey in which 77 per cent of respondents either strongly supported or supported late night transit in the city.

We also have good baseline data (e.g. congestion at closing time on Whyte Avenue) available for the area which will allow us to better assess the impact of the pilot. Once the pilot is completed, we expect to have some valuable information on this type of service that can be used going forward.

We are optimistic that Night Ride will move some of the congestion off Whyte Avenue, getting people who live along the route closer to home, and allowing others who live further south to take a taxi from the Southgate Transit Centre, it will free up additional taxis for individuals going in other directions.

If there aren't enough taxis on the street now to manage the number of patrons and workers at closing time, how will this help?

We believe that providing an alternate mode of transportation to move people living in the University area and further south out of the taxi line-ups on Whyte Avenue at closing time will free up cabs for people going in other directions.

We have worked closely with the Edmonton Transit Service and city taxi brokers to design an integrated late night transportation system.

Feedback from taxi drivers told us that shorter trips are more attractive to taxi drivers, reducing the length of return trips without passengers. This reduces wait time for patrons.

How will the proposed pilot be evaluated?

There is already some solid baseline information for activity on Whyte Avenue that will allow us to better assess the impact of the Night Ride service.

We will also monitor usage of the Night Ride service and include stakeholders as part of the evaluation. The consultation provided additional insight into evaluation criteria and evaluation methods which will be shared with stakeholders shortly.

What can I do if I have questions or concerns?

Citizens can call 311 or email concerns or feedback to nightride@edmonton.ca.

Who is Responsible Hospitality Edmonton? What do they do?

Responsible Hospitality Edmonton (RHE) is a community-wide, multi-disciplined initiative established by the City of Edmonton to oversee and support the management of bars, licensed venues and hospitality zones in the city.

The goal of Responsible Hospitality Edmonton is to promote a safe, thriving late-night environment in the city by planning, policing and managing the many aspects of hospitality zones throughout the city.

Hospitality zones are gathering places for socializing, dancing, enjoying music, eating at restaurants, shopping or just hanging out.

RHE draws on the expertise and perspectives of the hospitality industry, the business community, the residential community, safety providers and City departments and patrons.

RHE's three main areas of focus are:

- Promoting patron responsibility
- Managing Whyte and Jasper avenues as a venue
- Ensuring licensed venues know and comply with rules and standards meant to keep people safe