

## Night Ride Program Evaluation



(Attachment 1 to Report: Responsible Hospitality Edmonton and Jasper Avenue Entertainment Group, 2012SHE104, June 27, 2012)

### Background

Late night transportation is an essential element of safe and vibrant late night economies. The lack of adequate and timely egress from Edmonton's hospitality zones was:

- identified on Whyte Avenue in reports addressing issues relative to Canada Day 2001,
- the Old Strathcona Task Force (2005),
- Responsible Hospitality Leadership Summit (2006), and
- the Jasper Avenue Entertainment Working Group (2010).

In 2010, late-night transportation was identified as an issue by 35% of public survey respondents and was the subject that generated the most comments. Most recently the need for the provision of late night transportation was identified as a key contributor to public safety at the Elements Music Festival held in April 2012.

In August 2010, as part of the work of the Jasper Avenue Entertainment Working Group, a multi-disciplinary Transportation sub group developed solution-oriented concepts for future implementation. Group members included Edmonton Police Services, Taxi Commission, the University of Alberta, a citizen representative, a business owner representative, Sustainable Development, Transportation Services and Responsible Hospitality Edmonton.

This group developed a concept that integrated buses and taxis by using buses to move people on core routes ending at existing major transit centres with taxi stands to take people to further destinations. The concept allowed for large numbers of riders to be dropped off close to their homes and existing transit centres as natural bus/taxi transfer points. Using transit centres there is also the potential for supervision, shelter, washrooms and other amenities. The concept can be matched to need, can be scaled, is customizable, and is relatively economical.

With the receipt of onetime funding through the Jasper Avenue Working Group in February 2011, planning began in earnest to complete additional consultation and determine a pilot route.

Night Ride was originally scheduled for fall 2011 and was postponed to January 2012 to allow for additional consultation with community residents. The pilot launched January 6, 2012 and finished 15 weeks later on April 14, 2012.

### Night Ride results

From a Responsible Hospitality Edmonton perspective the Night Ride pilot has been successful, having shown that similar to New Year's Eve, people who socialize late into the night can be provided public transportation home without undue concerns for passengers, bus or taxi drivers, or community.

With input from community and partners, the evaluation criteria for Night Ride was:

1. Ridership
2. Safety (at bus stops, on the bus, at the transit centre, at the taxi stand, and in the community)
3. Sustainability
4. Taxi Participation
5. Community Impact
6. Rider and public comments

Reporting mechanisms included reports and feedback from Edmonton Police Service, Edmonton Transit System, the taxi industry, 311, emails and phone calls, and user survey.

Below are the results of the evaluation:

### **1. Evaluation Criteria Ridership** Is there enough to warrant the service?

In Transportation Services' April 24, 2012, report to Transportation Infrastructure Committee (2012TS78813), Transportation wrote: "The key indicator used to evaluate bus route performance is boardings per hour (as outlined in the Transit Policy C539.) For late night service, the current standard would be a combined average of 15 boarding per hour." Night Ride met this standard 60% of the time, as stated below.

Night Ride route required 6.55 hours of service per night. Applying the current standard, the minimum ridership threshold was 98 passengers per night after 2 years, 49 passengers after 1 year. Night Ride was only a 15 week pilot.

- **Of the 15 weekends, the one year minimum target was exceeded 18 of the 30 nights it was offered (60 percent of the nights).**

Other information:

- 45 percent of riders boarded between 2:15 am and 2:45 am
- 30 percent of riders disembarked at the University
- 25 percent of riders disembarked at Southgate and took a taxi further
- 4-8 people self-identified as employees who used the service on a regular basis to get home from work
- The most regular customer was a senior citizen who is a devotee of Blues on Whyte.

### **2. Evaluation Criteria - Safety** – does the level of incidents warrant the service?

- Incidents of disorder at bus stops 0 reported
- Incidents of disorder on bus 1 reported someone lit a cigarette
- Incidents of disorder at Transit Centre 0 reported
- Incidents of disorder with taxi drivers 0 reported
- Number of 'sick' buses 1 reported

Bus drivers submitted reports to Edmonton Transit System as per usual protocols. Edmonton Transit System Security rode on the bus on occasion.

At the community's request to ensure safety, Edmonton Police Service Officers were placed on site at the Southgate Transit Centre for the beginning of the pilot. This was discontinued after 3 weeks as Edmonton Police Service did not determine it to be necessary since no incidents were observed.

As agreed to with Southgate Mall, a Concierge (Paladin Security) was on site for the remaining 12 weeks and the primary function was to hail taxis and record numbers of patrons using taxi's and the wait time. This service would not be required beyond this pilot.

Edmonton Transit System Security addressed several issues at the Transit Centre; these were not outside the scope of usual late night occurrences dealt with by Transit Security which is in place 24/7.

### 3. Evaluation Criteria - Sustainability – costs/revenue or costs/benefits

<b>Edmonton Transit System</b>	
<b>Expenses (Direct, Incremental) Note 1</b>	<b>\$31,320</b>
<b>Revenue Note 2</b>	1,950
<b>Total ETS Net Expenses</b>	<b>\$29,370</b>
<b>Responsible Hospitality Edmonton</b>	
Budgeted expenses	4,500
Security (EPS & Paladin) Note 3	4,130
Bus monitor/data collection Note 3	7,800
<b>Total RHE expenses</b>	<b>\$16,430</b>
<b>Total Pilot Project Expenses (Net of revenue)</b>	<b>\$45,800</b>

Notes:

1. Base level required, not maximized
2. Cash/tickets/passes (561 riders/126 riders/1290 riders, respectively)
3. Costs non-budgeted and specific to community request

Cost/benefit analysis – It is difficult to quantify and place a monetary figure on the benefit of the value of 1,943 riders who made a responsible, safe and convenient choice to get home; plus the benefit of injuries, assaults and accidents that did not happen.

Also note that the vast majority of riders had passes and so did not contribute any new revenue to the route, but did still use the service.

#### **4. Evaluation Criteria Taxi Participation - wait time for taxi at transit centre**

- 20 percent or 314 passengers took taxis from Southgate with a majority departing within 10 minutes.
- Some patrons had issues with taxi drivers who refused to take them to their destination once in a taxi. This also occurs on Whyte and Jasper Avenues and at West Edmonton Mall.
- Increased profitability for taxi drivers, as a Southgate stand eliminated an additional 30 block drive to get a fare.
- Going forward, a mechanism to hail a taxi is needed. A suggestion is a patron activated TAXI sign that Taxi drivers can see as they cross the Whitemud overpass and thus have time to change lanes safely.

#### **5. Evaluation Criteria Community Impact**

Reported crime or disturbance (Edmonton Police Service or 311)

- Incidents of disorder in on-route communities 0 reported
- Incidents of disorder in Southgate communities 3 reports\*

\*Upon follow up, none of the incidents were supported as being Night Ride patrons, based on data collected by on-bus monitors recording bus disembarkation, taxi stand statistics, and Edmonton Police Service reports.

#### **6. Evaluation Criteria – Rider and public comments**

A small number of riders participated in a follow - up online survey (45)  
80 percent were regular transit users  
43 percent heard about Night Ride from News Article, 45 percent by word of mouth  
94 percent would use it again  
96 percent would recommend to a friend

The major complaint has been from non-riders who point out that the limited scope of the route was of no value to a large segment of the population who do not live in the area served by the pilot.

311 and Night Ride online received 15 comments: 5 were negative, 5 were positive, and 5 were requests for information.

#### **Summary**

Night Ride was a success:

- Ridership was developing at a rate anticipated to meet targets
- Behaviour on the bus was acceptable and better than expected

- An integrated Bus-Taxi system does work
- Benefits far exceed the risk with an extension of transit services for an additional two hours, until 3:30 a.m. on weekends.

Responsible Hospitality Edmonton supports the options outlined by Edmonton Transit a report to TIC on April 24, 2012, (report 2012TS7813) on late night transportation through entertainment districts. Responsible Hospitality Edmonton advocates for the service to begin on Friday and Saturday nights as soon as possible.