LET'S TALK TRANSIT

EDMONTON'S TRANSIT STRATEGY

WHAT WE DID REPORT

2015-2016
INTRODUCTION

In 2014, Edmonton City Council requested that a strategic plan be developed for public transit. This Transit Strategy will provide a long term vision for transit, focusing on what should ultimately be achieved by offering transit service.

The topic of transit can be complex. Weaving these complexities into a plan is a major challenge. It was apparent that a meaningful conversation with Edmontonians about the future of transit was needed, and we needed to engage a wide range of Edmontonians. A significant communications and public engagement component was delivered to support the development of the Transit Strategy.

The communications and public engagement plan took place over three phases in 2015 and 2016:

- PHASE 1: Awareness
- PHASE 2: Vision
- PHASE 3: Explore Trade-offs

This report highlights what we did to communicate and engage with Edmontonians about the Transit Strategy. A What We Heard report will dive deeper into the feedback that we received.
APPROACH

We knew a significant amount of communication and public engagement was needed to support the development of the Transit Strategy. Development of the Transit Strategy is one of the City’s top strategic priorities, so communications and public engagement had potential to be one of the largest and most complex consultations ever undertaken by the City. We decided to use this project as a pilot for the Council Initiative on Public Engagement to demonstrate how increased investment and resources positively impacts the results of a project.

Our main objectives:

- Increase awareness on key topics related to transit.
- Gather a diverse range of input on strategic questions.

Other critical components:

- Reach people who typically face barriers to engagement by going where people are and engaging both riders and non-riders.
- Start without preconceived notions of the end result and go from asking broad questions to asking narrow questions. This enabled us to bring people along on the journey with us.
PHASE 1: AWARENESS

The focus of the first phase was to raise awareness about the Transit Strategy and to spark a discussion about transit’s role in helping to build the city’s future. This set the context for conversations about transit, its role in city-building, and how choices about how we build and run our transit system have social, environmental, and economic implications.

The official launch of the Transit Strategy project was held at the Art Gallery of Alberta on September 28, 2015 with guest speaker, Taras Grescoe. He shared inspiring stories about creative public transit ideas from around the globe.

PHASE 2: VISION

The conversation moved to discussing an aspirational, but achievable, vision for transit in our city. We engaged Edmontonians about this in both public and targeted workshops. Engagement questions focused on sharing stories and personal thoughts/experiences with transit, both in Edmonton and elsewhere. We used traditional tactics like advertising and a website but also innovative approaches like the engagement bus and street team.
PART 2A: GATHER IDEAS

We gathered “blue sky” ideas about transit from City staff, and a wide range of Edmontonians including seniors and young people, Aboriginal people, people with disabilities, the LGBTQ community, and newcomers. The key questions included:

- What are some great things about Edmonton’s current transit system?
- What are some things that could make Edmonton’s transit system greater in the next ten years?
- Why is it important for Edmonton to have a great transit system?
PART 2B: PRIORITIZE IDEAS

Some common themes emerged from the thousands of comments we received in the Gather Ideas phase. In this phase we asked people to identify their top priorities from among these themes. The top priorities were gathered into three sections, and the key questions were:

- Why is it important for Edmonton to have a great transit system?
- What terms best describe your ideal future transit system in Edmonton?
- Which terms best describe your ideal future experience using Edmonton’s transit system?

Engagement:
- Workshops: 4 (117 participants)
- Online survey: 1,908 participants
- Engagement events: 7 (252 people engaged)
- Hours worked by street team: 181
- Hours the engagement bus spent on the road: 63 (755 people engaged)
- Transit routes travelled by the engagement bus: 35
PHASE 3: EXPLORE TRADE-OFFS

Once the top priorities were identified, we went back out to gather feedback on and understand what trade-offs people were willing to make and why. We asked participants about the transit network, investment in transit, and fares including these key questions:

- Who should benefit from transit?
- How much should people pay for transit?
- How much priority should buses get on the road?

285 City staff engaged (workshop, street team at transit garages)

12,816 People engaged (total)

363 Hours worked by street team

13 Workshops 274 participants

9,655 Online survey participants
- 4,440 online survey participants
- 5,215 direct mail participants

253 Hours the engagement bus spent on the road 2,267 people engaged

17 Engagement events 620 people engaged

44 Transit routes travelled by the engagement bus
HOW WE COMMUNICATED

We used these tools and tactics to get the word out about the Transit Strategy and how Edmontonians could participate and share their ideas. These activities raised awareness about the project and significantly increased participation rates in all public engagement activities.

ACTIVITIES

Advertising
- 14 newspaper ads
- 3 Facebook boosted ads
- 2,223 transit ads
- 3 newspaper website ads
- 90 social media posts
- 34 road signs
- 114,000 direct mail invitations to Edmonton households
- 3,000 postcards distributed at City Hall and through street team

Events
- 1 media launch with Mayor Iveson
- 1 guest speaker event at the AGA

Presentations
- 1 Pecha Kucha talk
- 7 presentations
  City Hall School x2, WAVE, Accessibility Advisory Committee, Canadian Institute of, Transportation Engineers (CITE), ATU 569 (transit union), ETS field staff
- 12 videos

MEASURING SUCCESS

- 30 earned media stories
- 21,607 website visits
- 483,820 Twitter impressions
- 175,523 total Facebook impressions
- 13,582 YouTube video views
WHO PARTICIPATED

It was important to reach a wide range of Edmontonians including transit riders, non-riders and people who may face barriers to engagement. Our approach was to reach out directly to members of these communities, rather than only speak with representatives of these groups. Another important element was going to people where they are, so participants were engaged in locations familiar to them.

The foundation of our approach involves equal respect between Council’s long-term strategic direction, the technical expertise of City Administration, and the unique knowledge of Edmontonians and stakeholder groups. When these elements are balanced in a successful approach, the outcome will be closer to the ideal that we are all striving for.

EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- Edmontonians
- Current transit users
- Potential transit users
- Former transit users
- First Nations
- Children/youth/students
- Persons with disabilities
- Low income individuals
- Multicultural groups
- Newcomers
- Seniors
- LGBTQ individuals
- Employers and businesses
- Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues
- Developers
- School boards
- Post-secondary institutions
- Post-secondary student associations
- ETSAB
- ATU 569 (Transit Union)

INTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

- City Council
- Senior City Administration
- City staff
- ETS bus drivers, LRT drivers and maintenance
**ENGAGEMENT EVENTS**

Heritage Days  
Animethon  
Cariwest  
Folk Fest  
Fringe Festival  
Dragon Boat Festival  
UofA InfoBus event  
UofA grad students event  
UofA InfoMart event  
CityLab at Claireview LRT  
Viva Italia  
Grant MacEwan New Students  
Grant MacEwan Block Party  
Millwoods Seniors Centre + Library opening  
The Way We Move Day  
Zoo Free Admission Day  
Project launch  
Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation “Meet a Machine” event  
Eskimos Park and Ride  
Bent Arrow Soup & Bannock Event  
ETS Think Tank  
International Day of Persons with Disabilities  
ETS field staff  
High Risk Youth Conference  
Edmonton Motorshow  
Women's Expo  
Ben Calf Robe Powwow  
Sikh Parade  
Victoria Day at the Zoo and Fort Edmonton  
Pride Parade  
ETS Roadeo  
Seniors Health & Wellness Fair at Northgate Seniors Centre  
*Some workshops were held multiple times in multiple phases to engage with stakeholders throughout the process rather than just once.*

**WORKSHOPS**

Millwoods Multicultural Women and Seniors Services Association (MMWSSA)  
Youth/High School Bent Arrow Healing Society (First Nations)  
Persons with Disabilities  
Pride Centre  
Seniors  
Public  
ETSAB  
Intercultural Centre  
Community Partners  
ETS field staff  
City Staff  
Pride Centre  
Edmonton Aboriginal Seniors Centre  
Seniors United Now

Mayor Don Iveson and City Hall School students help launch the engagement bus, September 2015.
DEMOGRAPHICS OF ONLINE SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

PHASE 3: EXPLORE TRADE-OFFS

While we heard from transit users, we also heard from many who only rarely use transit.

In addition to transit users, we heard from many non-riders, including car drivers. This met an important objective of the engagement plan: to speak to riders and non-riders.

**HOW OFTEN DO YOU USE PUBLIC TRANSIT**

- Every weekday or more: 42%
- At least once a week: 15%
- At least once a month: 15%
- At least once a year: 21%
- Never: 6%

**TRIP TO WORK (CENSUS) / PRIMARY MODE OF TRANSPORT (TRANSIT STRATEGY SURVEY)**

- Car/Truck/Van as Passenger: 74%
- Car/Truck/Van as Driver: 14%
- Public Transit: 5%
- Walk: 4%
- Bicycle: 1%
- Other: 2%

[2016 Census]
[Transit Strategy Surveys]
Looking at the 3-digit postal codes of participants shows us that the number of surveys corresponds closely to the population in different areas of the city - both in terms of proximity to the downtown core, as well as the quadrant.
Adults were well represented in the survey results. Children were engaged through targeted workshops with high school students and City Hall School activities. Extra effort was made to reach seniors, through targeted workshops and community events.

Individuals from all employment categories were represented, with some over-representation of full-time workers and less participation from primary school and high school children.

The gender of survey participants closely matches gender balance of the population.