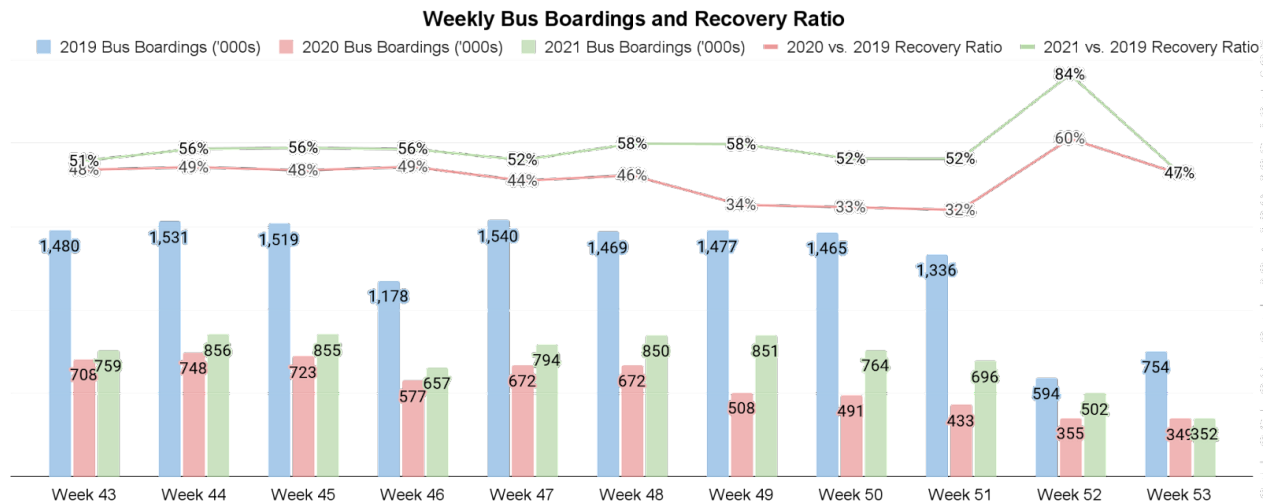


# ETS Branch Highlights Report

Date: January 31, 2022

## 1. RIDERSHIP



\* Week 43: October 20, 2019 to October 26, 2019 / October 18, 2020 to October 24, 2020 / October 17, 2021 to October 23, 2021

\* Week 53: December 29, 2019 to January 4, 2020 / December 27, 2020 to January 2, 2021 (week 1 of calendar year) / December 26, 2021 to December 31, 2021

Ridership levels have been relatively stable during November, declining slightly during the first two weeks of December (weeks 50 and 51) due to school breaks and vacations during the holiday season. The steep increase in the ridership recovery ratio during the last week of the year is due to 2019 having significantly lower ridership due to the holiday season. Weekly ridership fluctuations in 2021 and 2020 were milder as transit “dependent” riders have been driving ridership as opposed to “choice” riders in pre-pandemic times.

The surge in Omicron-driven COVID-19 cases resulted in schools extending winter breaks to the second week of January and post secondary institutions switching back to online classes in January. Therefore, it is expected that the ridership recovery ratio will further decline in January 2022.

## 2. ETS UPDATES

### **Extreme Cold Weather Response**

Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) activated the Extreme Weather Bus Route on December 14, 2021 to transport people from transit centres and other critical locations to shelters between 10pm and 6am. Expanding the existing transit service in connecting individuals from LRT stations to shelters ensures people who need access to emergency shelters have a safe and warm way to get there.

Throughout the activation, ETS continued to pick up passengers at most stops when the weather was -20 degrees celsius and below with the windchill. An average of 100 riders per day were transported to shelters on the shuttle route.

The City's extreme cold weather response was deactivated on January 10, 2022, however ETS service between transit stations and emergency shelters will remain in place from 10:30pm to 6am until April 1, 2022.

### **COVID Bus Service Adjustments**

In response to staffing shortages due to an increase in Omicron cases, temporary, short-term service adjustments are in effect for ETS. More than 98 percent of bus service, including Saturday and Sunday bus schedules, will not be affected. Capital/Metro LRT service, On Demand Transit, DATS and regional service will continue to operate at the current levels at this time.

To minimize the impact on riders, most school special routes remain on current schedules, and adjustments are targeted on routes which already have high frequency service.

### **Budget Adjustments**

The ETS fare revenue is approved as part of the four year budget, and the user fee schedule is shared with Council to illustrate the faring inputs that inform the budget. Each fall, Administration shares the user fee schedule in the fall budget adjustment materials along with other user fee schedules for other City services. On December 15, 2021, the City Council unanimously voted to freeze 2022 transit fares at the same rates as 2021 during the Fall 2021 Supplemental Budget Adjustment meeting. The fare freeze was to support people who have been starting to return to transit and also in recognition of the impacts of the pandemic on Edmontonians. Fare increases were originally proposed for 2022 when the four-year budget was built in 2018.

### **ITE 2021 Project of the Year**

ETS received the 2021 Project of the Year award for the Bus Network Redesign and On Demand Transit from the Northern Alberta chapter of the Institute of Transportation Engineers (ITE) during the December 8 ITE Annual General Meeting. The Project of the Year award is a competition to highlight and showcase a ground-breaking transportation project undertaken by a public or private organization from the Northern Alberta region. The Bus Network Redesign project won due to the

innovative use of sector-based network proposals, digital planning tools, and a collaborative internal approach and external reviews network redesign.



### **Stony Plain Road Shuttle Update**

As of November 29, 2021, a shuttle bus has provided service to riders between 116 Street and Jasper Place Transit Centre. It aims to provide a consistent and reliable interim service option for riders during the Valley Line West construction. Since its operation, ridership has varied between four and upwards to 17 individuals a day. Direct stakeholder outreach is underway to raise awareness of the service. It's also anticipated ridership will increase once the weather warms up.

## **3. ETSAB INFORMATION REQUESTS**

### **Improperly displayed data on the bus location**

Investigation into this issue has shown that some of the driver tablets were not automatically updating to the latest version of the dispatch application due to a limitation within the Google technology. All tablets have been switched to auto update mode to ensure the most up to date version of the application is loaded.

During the summer months the GPS catchment zone for each stop was increased to 150ft due to some construction limiting access to stops. This can result in a nearby bus being flagged as

arriving when the bus is still a small distance away and still travelling to the stop. Outside of construction season, the radius is reduced to 75ft.

### **Driver not getting the booking request at all**

The On Demand service delivery contractor (PWT / VIA) is actively working on a software solution, and has eliminated the majority of issues that cause this error. This work will continue until the root cause is identified and eliminated - it is a known issue.

In the meantime, PWT Dispatch is actively monitoring ongoing trips, and communicating with drivers when they receive a notification that a trip is "late" or "very late" for pickup. If necessary, an alternate vehicle will be dispatched, and the passenger will be notified of the change.

### **Communication channel between the bus driver and the passenger waiting on a stop**

Direct communication between the operator and passengers is not enabled as texting or use of a hands free device while operating the vehicle would be distracted driving and would pose a safety risk to the driver and any passengers. By using the messaging option in the application, passengers are able to communicate with PWT Dispatch. The notification for incoming message alerts has been changed to a bright color to stand out from the other notifications that PWT Dispatch has on their screen.

### **On Demand drivers not wearing masks**

PWT is compliant with the Provincial Health Order and has a policy in place to support mandatory mask usage among staff and operators. As well, PWT Covid protocols include a minimum of daily reminders for mask usage, and sanitization of buses.

Riders can submit feedback through the "contact us" button on the application, via email at [EODSupport@PWTransit.ca](mailto:EODSupport@PWTransit.ca), or by contacting Edmonton On Demand at 780-496-2400. Additionally, feedback through 311 is shared with On Demand for response or resolution. In order to assist in any investigations of non-compliant behaviour, please provide detailed information such as date, time, passenger name, bus number, request number - this will help ensure that the Operator can be identified and directly followed up with.

### **Extension of On Demand service hours**

Current service hours were initially designed to meet the majority of travel demand, based on what we heard during the On-Demand public engagement sessions in 2018 and 2019. ETS has since received requests for extended service in several areas, and is in the process of identifying priorities for future service expansion when additional resources become available. ETS has already found some operational efficiencies, which will result in new On-Demand service in Charlesworth in February, along with proposed service extension in a couple other areas this spring or summer. More information will be shared with the 2022 Annual Service Plan in March as well as the accompanying Council report on March 23, 2022.



#### 4. ETS COUNCIL REPORT TRACKING - 2020-21

Report #	Report Title	Expected Meeting Date	Committee
OCM01307	LRT Safety	February 7, 2022	CC
CO00606	Bus Network Redesign - Options for Expansion	Mar 23, 2022	Exec
CO00607	Mass Transit System - Sustainable Funding and Service Growth	Mar 23, 2022	Exec
CO00803	Bus Network Expansion Opportunities	Q1 2022	UPC
CO00574	Access to Supports and Services Within Transit Stations - Program and/or Delivery Proposal(s)	Q1 2022	CPSC
CO00576	Transit Fare Fines - Repayment Options	Q1 2022	CPSC
CO00778	Snow and Ice Control - Options to Increase Service Standards*	Apr 1, 2022	CPSC
IIS00416	ETS Fleet Storage and Maintenance Facility Project*	Feb 15, 2022	UPC
7789	The Bike Plan Implementation Guide*	Feb 15, 2022	UPC
UPE00342	Mass Transit Planning - Update*	Feb 15, 2022	UPC
UPE00491	Mobility Network Assessment*	Feb 15, 2022	UPC

\*Not an ETS lead report

\*\*ETS has requested that these reports be merged due to overlapping scope

AC = Audit Committee

CC = City Council

CPSC = Community and Public Services Committee

Exec = Executive Committee

IRCD = Inter-municipal and Regional Development Committee

UPC = Urban Planning Committee