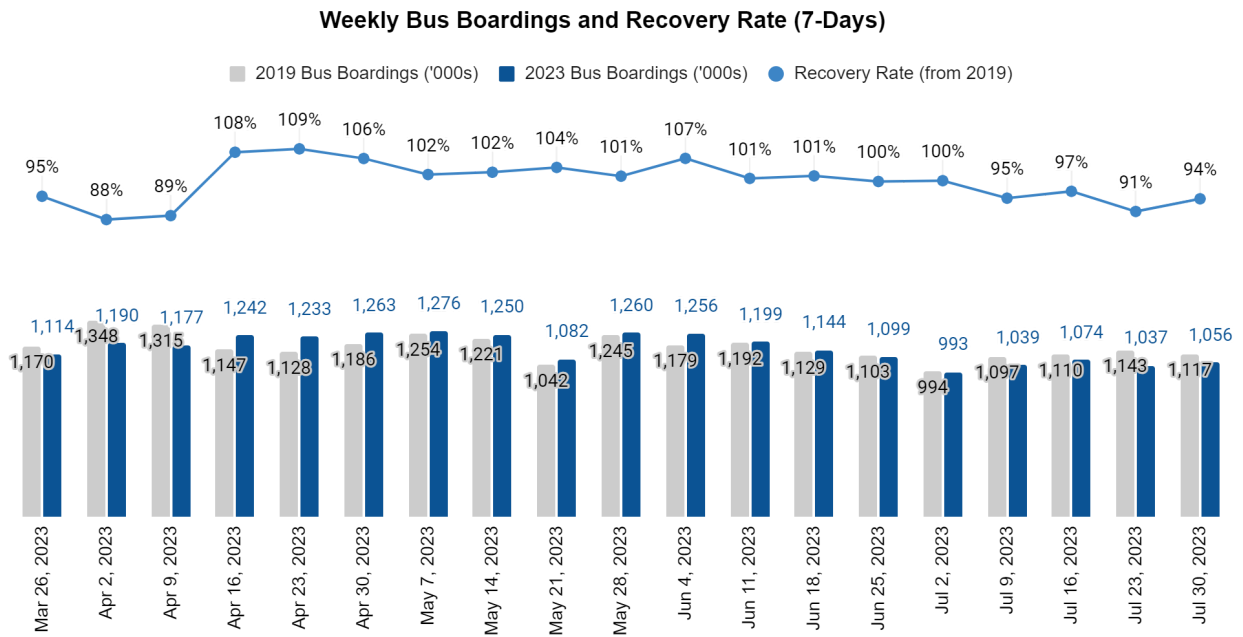


# ETS Branch Highlights Report

Date: August 28, 2023

## 1. RIDERSHIP



In the last week of July (July 30-August 5), nearly 1.06 million bus boardings were recorded, representing 94% of bus boardings for the same week in 2019. This was a slight increase of 2% compared to the previous week (July 23-29) which saw 1.04 million bus boardings.

There were a total of 4.5 million bus boardings in July 2023, representing 92% of July 2019 levels. July 2023 bus boardings decreased by 12.6% from June 2023 due to the summer holidays and lower student ridership. Overall, ETS bus ridership recovery remains one of the highest among large public transit agencies nationally as riders continue to rely on transit to travel around the city.

## 2. ETS UPDATES

### September Service Adjustments

Five times a year, ETS implements service adjustments to make service more efficient and effective for riders. Beginning September 3, ETS will implement regular fall service adjustments to various bus routes and On Demand Transit. This includes regular service changes like the resumption of school routes and trips and increased frequency on 68 regular bus routes during AM/PM peak periods, helping many youth get to school.

In addition to these standard adjustments, ETS is also increasing off-peak bus service hours by 500 hours per week (26,000 hours per year) in September, as well as adding more On Demand Transit service. This is the result of funding Council directed to ETS through the 2023-26 operating budget. These additional hours will have an immediate and direct benefit to riders, including improving equitable access to transit service through new and extended bus routes. We are also continuing several successful service adjustments that were incorporated over the summer.

### School Specials

Starting September 3, all public and Catholic school routes and trips will start running again. Four new school routes have been added for Dr. Anne Anderson (664, 668), Jasper Place (677) and St. Francis Xavier (677). School routes have also been expanded for four schools: Dr. Anne Anderson (665), Archbishop MacDonald (681), H.E. Beriault (674) and Austin O'Brien (633).

A variety of school special routes will also see an earlier start to their PM peaks to accommodate student riders.

### New Routes, Expansions and Key Updates

New and expanded routes are being added in response to growing areas around the city and to increase access to employment and recreational activities. Some of the major changes include:

- **Route 31:** Starting September 5, riders can start using Route 31 which will provide express service - using a dedicated bus lane on Terwillegar Drive - from the University of Alberta to the Leger Transit Centre. This route provides increased capacity to a growing part of the city and will initially operate on weekdays, excluding statutory holidays. Additional time periods will be explored in the future.
- **Route 56:** This route, as of July, has been extended to the Meadows Transit Centre and Meadows Community Recreation Centre. This extension adds a direct connection to the LRT and West Edmonton Mall for riders between Mill Woods and the Meadows Transit Centre, increasing community access to employment and recreational activities, and responds to growth in this area of the city.

- **Route 500X:** This route will begin two-way service between Downtown (MacEwan) and Meadows and will also include mid-day service. This route will also have a minor routing change downtown: trips will now start and end at 103 Avenue and 106 Street westbound (#11382) instead of 108 Street and 104 Avenue (#1824). This route provides additional service for the city's growing southeast communities and addresses rider requests for more service along Connors Road.
- **Route 727:** Route 727, which was originally added in June, will be made permanent, providing weekday peak service between Chappelle and Century Park. This route will provide additional service for the west Chappelle, including service to Dr. Anne Anderson School and Community Centre.

### On Demand Transit

- Seniors On Demand Transit service has been extended as of July, moving from 9 a.m.-4 p.m. to 7 a.m.-7 p.m. This five-hour service extension significantly increases flexibility for these riders and directly addresses their feedback.
- Residents in portions of Maple, Tamarack, and Aster will also see additional On Demand Transit service. This expansion addresses a specific transit need for these communities and will provide riders with enhanced access to employment, recreation and other activities.
- On Demand Transit Service will also commence in Blackmud Creek. In Fall 2022, ETS conducted public engagement with the Blackmud Creek community. After reviewing this feedback, changes were implemented that considered public feedback, ridership data, Transit Service Policy, budget and resources.

In response to these factors, ETS is rerouting the high frequency bus service on Route 722 within Blackmud Creek and replacing it with On Demand Transit service. This change will see transit service restored further south along Blackmud Creek Crescent, providing the following benefits and outcomes:

- Provide On Demand Transit service throughout the Blackmud Creek community and restore service in south Blackmud Creek Crescent to reduce walking distance within the neighbourhood.
- The service span of Route 722 is weekdays from 5:30 a.m. to 1 a.m., on Saturdays from 5:30 a.m. to 12:30 a.m. and Sundays from 6 a.m. to midnight.
- The service hours of On Demand Transit are weekdays from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m, Saturdays from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m.
- Reduced bus volumes and noise on Blackmud Creek Drive by rerouting Route 722 to James Mowatt Trail.
- Most of Blackmud Creek is still within 600 metres of bus stops on Ellerslie Road (Route 521 - Century Park/Mill Woods) or James Mowatt Trail (Route 722 - Century Park).

ETS will carefully evaluate the impact of these service changes over the next year, gathering feedback from both riders and residents as well as monitoring ridership data.

## Detours and construction

Some routes will also experience detours and changes due to construction work, while others will resume to normal service due to construction expected to complete in October.

More information on service adjustments and detours is available on [edmonton.ca/ETSservicechanges](http://edmonton.ca/ETSservicechanges).

## **Transit Garage Open Houses**

ETS is opening its doors to the public to show what happens behind the scenes to keep the City's transit system running. These include tours of Centennial Garage (bus) on September 16, Percy Wickman Garage (DATS) on September 21 and D. L. MacDonald Garage (LRT) on September 23. Transit riders and the public will be able to see where transit vehicles are stored overnight and the maintenance bays where they are repaired and maintained. ETS and Fleet and Facility Services staff will provide guided tours to the public and answer their questions. A historical fleet vehicle will also be on display at Centennial.

Transit riders can use route 718 from Century Park and Leger to access Centennial Garage, and shuttles will be running from the Belvedere and Eaux Claires transit centres for the D. L. MacDonald garage tour.

## **Post-secondary and Back-to-School Outreach**

In late August and early September, ETS will conduct its annual post-secondary and back-to-school outreach activities. These include participating in orientation week activities hosted by the major post-secondary schools in Edmonton. ETS staff will be on-site to answer students' questions about how to use ETS and assist with trip planning. During the first week of school, staff will be stationed at four key transit centres (Century Park, Mill Woods, Northgate and West Edmonton Mall) where a higher number of junior and senior high school students connect from regular service to School Specials. Staff will support riders in finding connections and answer general questions from transit riders about fall service adjustments.

## **First Riders**

For the first time since 2019, the Edmonton Public School Board and the Edmonton Catholic School Division hosted the annual First Riders event at the Edmonton Expo Centre. This is an opportunity for students who will be using yellow buses or ETS to get to school for the first time to learn to ride the bus. An ETS bus was on display for students to explore, and ETS staff and Transit Peace Officers were on hand to answer questions from families.

## ***Next Stop: Storytime Partnership***

This summer, ETS and Edmonton Public Library (EPL) successfully piloted a new initiative called *Next Stop: Storytime*. This initiative paired EPL's storytime program for young children with a bus ride to a nearby park. This provided an opportunity for families to experience transit in a safe and controlled environment while providing a memorable experience. In total, 30 children participated in the program with their parents, grandparents and other

caregivers. Feedback from parents was very positive with many participants saying it was a wonderful opportunity for their children who were excited to ride the bus. EPL also provided positive feedback with counterparts at other public libraries showing an interest in this partnership. ETS hopes to continue this partnership in summer 2024 and expand it to more EPL branches across the city.



### **Proud Partner of the Edmonton International Fringe Festival**

Once again, ETS is proud to partner with the Edmonton International Fringe Festival to provide volunteers and artists with free transit access. New this year, ETS also provided 200 tickets for the festival's community care team. This supports unhoused and vulnerable community members who may access various community supports in the immediate vicinity of the Fringe Theatre Arts Barns and Fringe Festival grounds who are often displaced from their regular use of public spaces by Festival activity. On Friday, August 25, ETS also had a bus parked at Kids Fringe to interact with young families. Children were provided an opportunity to explore the bus, get their picture taken in the driver's seat and have their transit questions answered.



## **Arc Update**

Arc implementation continues in the region, with the youth pilot well underway. Seniors will be invited to pilot Arc in September. As of August 2023, more than 180,000 Arc cards are active across the region. Updates on Arc transition for the remaining fare categories, including Dedicated Accessible Transit Service (DATS) riders and low-income fare programs will be provided in the next coming months.

## **Transit Service Reports**

On August 29, Administration will present three information reports on transit service to Council which discuss further opportunities to expand transit service. The reports will be cross-referenced and can be accessed from the August 29 Urban Planning Committee [agenda](#). The report titles are:

1. Edmonton Transit Service in Newer Developing/Developed Communities
2. Bus Service for Youth After School Hours
3. Developer-Funded Transit Service Options to Support Early Adoption of Transit in New Neighbourhoods

## **Enhanced Transit Safety Plan Update**

On August 22, Administration with partners from EPS and Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society presented a verbal update on the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan to Council, available for the public to view [here](#).

Updates on several initiatives and projects will follow in the coming months. These include focusing infrastructure upgrades at some LRT stations; continued community activations around transit spaces; implementing enhanced cleaning of transit spaces; further research and engagement work; and continued collaboration on safety and security through committees and working groups. In addition, the City will be preparing for winter response actions and integrating Valley Line Southeast into the Enhanced Transit Safety Plan.

### 3. ETS COUNCIL REPORT TRACKING - 2023

Report #	Report Title	Meeting Date*	Committee*
<b>Upcoming reports being led by ETS:</b>			
CO01337	Edmonton Transit Services in Newer Developing/Developed Communities	August 29, 2023	UPC
CO01551	Developer-funded Transit Service Options to Support Early Adoption of Transit in New Neighbourhoods	August 29, 2023	UPC
CO01562	Bus Service for Youth After School Hours - Approach and Work Plan	August 29, 2023	UPC
CO01885	Metro Line to Blatchford Operating Options	September 20, 2023	Exec
EXT02022	External report from Edmonton Youth Council: Youth Perspectives on Transit in Edmonton: An Analytical Report of Ongoing Transit Issues From the Youth Lens	October 11, 2023	UPC
CO02028	Administration Response - Youth Perspectives on Transit in Edmonton: An Analytical Report of Ongoing Transit Issues From the Youth Lens	October 11, 2023	UPC
EXT02023	External report from ETSAB: A Review of Winter Mobility and Accessibility of Pathways to Transit Stops	October 11, 2023	UPC
CO01580	Administration Response - A Review of Winter Mobility and Accessibility of Pathways to Transit Stops	October 11, 2023	UPC
CO01580	Fare Policy Amendment - Children Under 12	October 13, 2023	Exec
CO01955	EPCOR Contract Extension - D&T for Substation Remote Monitoring	October 13, 2023	Exec
CO01944	Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal Report	October 24, 2023	CC
CO01974	Opportunities to Enhance Transit Safety and Security	October 24, 2023	CC
CO01552	Commingle Paratransit and On Demand Services	December 5, 2023	UPC
EXT02024	ETSAB: Evaluation of COTT	December 5, 2023	UPC
COXXXX	Administration Response - ETSAB: Evaluation of COTT	December 5, 2023	UPC

EXT02025	ETSAB: Ridership Improvement Strategies	December 5, 2023	UPC
COXXXX	Administration Response - ETSAB: Ridership Improvement Strategies	December 5, 2023	UPC
CO01632	Direct Downtown to Airport Bus Route	December 6, 2023	CC
CO01954	Monthly Update on the Transit Safety Plan and the Downtown Core - Verbal Report	December 12, 2023	CC
<b>Other upcoming reports of interest:</b>			
FCS01246	Revenue Source for Transit - Potential, Risk and Implementation and Intergovernmental Advocacy	September 20, 2023	Exec

\*Subject to change

CC = City Council

CPSC = Community and Public Services Committee

Exec = Executive Committee

UPC = Urban Planning Committee