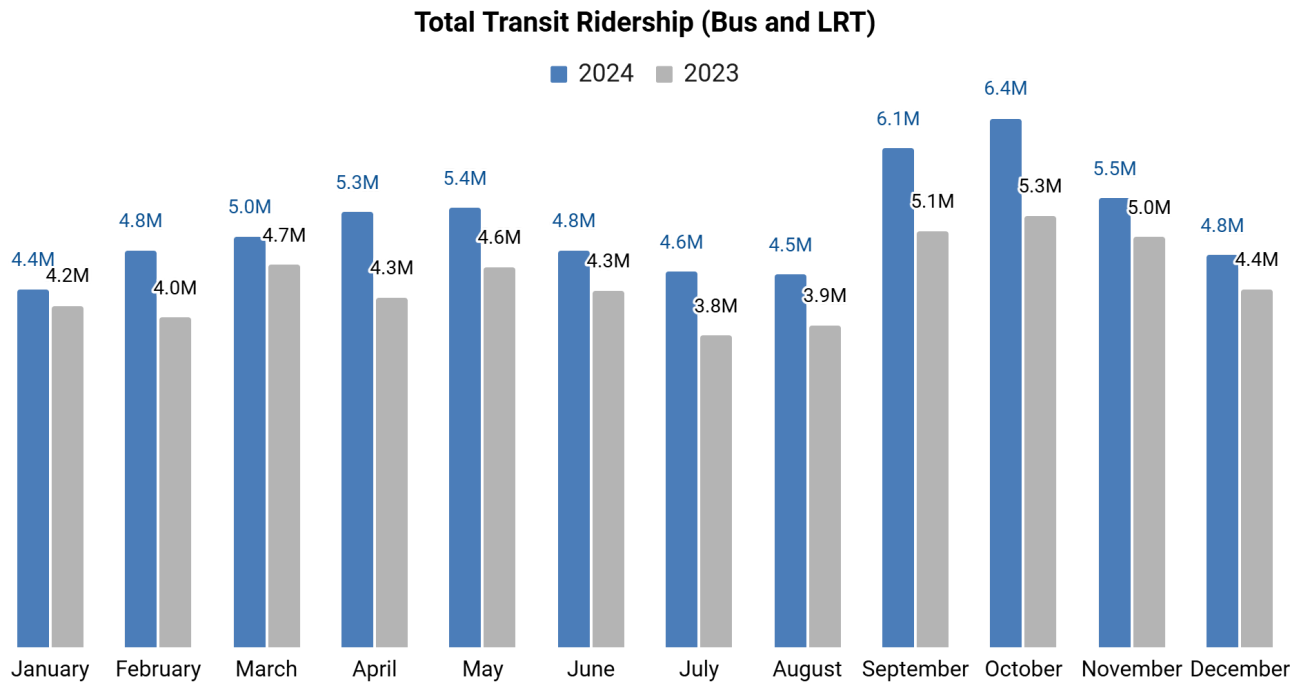


ETS Branch Highlights Report

Date: January 27, 2025

1. RIDERSHIP



Overall transit ridership was 61.6 million in 2024, a 15 per cent increase from 53.5 million in 2023 and 12 per cent higher than 55.2 million in 2019. Efforts to make transit more convenient, reliable, safe and accessible have contributed to the increase in ridership.

Notable milestones throughout the year include:

- Frequent and crosstown bus routes which enable faster rides across the city have seen significant increases in ridership in 2024.
- More safety and security measures in place than ever before, including more Transit Peace Officers (TPOs) deployed, joint patrol teams between TPOs and Edmonton Police Service Officers, surveillance cameras and other initiatives.
- An increase in service hours, with 70,000 annual service hours added to the bus network in February 2024.
- A significant increase in Valley Line Southeast LRT ridership since its launch in November 2023, which saw 2.76 million rides in 2024. The line currently represents approximately 15.5 per cent of total LRT ridership.

- Higher demand for On Demand Transit service which delivered over 696,000 trips in 2024, a 25 per cent increase over 2023.
- ETS supported connections to various events across Edmonton in 2024, including major festivals and concerts such as P!NK and Metallica as well as sporting events like the Elks football and Oilers hockey games.
- The opening of the new NAIT/Blatchford Market LRT station in January 2024, providing a larger station which can accommodate up to five-car trains on the Metro line.

Edmonton also has one of the fastest growing populations across Canada, with a forecasted population increase of 4.5 per cent in 2024, contributing to additional demand for transit services. Overall, the growth in ridership contributes to The City Plan and the Climate Adaptation and Energy Transition plan by supporting a shift towards sustainable transportation and helping the City achieve its greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets.

2. ETS UPDATES

30 Years of Stuff-a-Bus

In 2024, the annual ETS Stuff a Bus campaign marked its 30th year. Through the campaign, ETS collects non-perishable food and monetary donations to support Edmonton's Food Bank. The campaign collected 24,843 kilograms of food through stuffing and cramming ETS vehicles and \$20,666 was raised in cash donations.

To celebrate the 30th year, local schools were invited to participate in the campaign. An ETS vehicle visited six schools where students were invited to stuff the bus with the donations they collected during their school food drive.

Post-Secondary Winter Outreach

To support university and college students starting their studies in the winter term, ETS participated in new student orientation events. Though generally smaller, these events are similar to the fall outreach events where ETS staff provide transit information and help students in planning their transit trips. ETS staff participated in events hosted by the University of Alberta, MacEwan University, NAIT, NorQuest College and Concordia University.

Junior and Senior High School Open Houses

This February and March, ETS will be supporting over 40 junior and senior high school open house events. Transportation often factors into a family's decision when deciding the school they will enroll their children in September. ETS staff across the branch will be onsite to answer questions and help families plan their transit trips.

Winter Festival Partner Activations

Deep Freeze: A Byzantine Winter Festival

For the second year in a row, the Indigenous bus was at the annual Deep Freeze: A Byzantine Winter Festival hosted by Arts on the Ave on January 18 and 19. This annual event brings

together artists for a celebration of winter on 118 Avenue between 90 and 95 Streets. It provides visitors with an opportunity to appreciate the artwork on the Indigenous bus. Visitors were encouraged to spend some time inside the bus where they were treated to performances by local artists. Additional support for the festival included free transit access for volunteers assisting with set up, tear down and executing the event. ETS staff were also on site to provide transit information and answer questions from event goers.

Lunarlicious by Asiafest

To celebrate the Lunar New Year, organizers behind the summer festival Asiafest are hosting Lunarlicious on January 31-February 2 in South Edmonton Common. This festival brings together artists, vendors, community groups and young entrepreneurs in Edmonton's Asian community. This event is expected to attract many newcomers, and ETS will be on site to answer questions on how to use the transit service, assist with trip planning and provide information about fare products available to them.

February Fare Adjustments and New Arc Fare Options

On February 1, transit fare adjustments take effect for most fare groups. As the city grows, fare adjustments help ETS continue to provide safe and reliable transit service, and maintain buses and trains.

The fare adjustments were approved by Edmonton City Council as part of the 2023-26 Operating Budget. These are the first ETS fare adjustments since February 2021.

Fare adjustments on February 1:

- Arc single trip (90 minutes) fares increase from \$2.75 to \$3.
- Cash fare increases from \$3.50 to \$3.75.
- The standard adult Arc monthly fare cap increases from \$100 to \$102.
- The seniors monthly fare cap increases from \$35 to \$36 and the seniors annual fare cap increases from \$385 to \$396.
- The youth monthly fare cap decreases from \$73 to \$66.
- Ride Transit monthly fare cap increases from \$35 to \$36 or \$50 to \$51 (depending on income).

Along with adjustments to fare rates, the youth fare age eligibility will adjust to 18 years and under. This means riders aged 19-24 years, who were previously eligible for the youth fare category, will now be in the standard adult fare category. Consistent with ETS' previous fare policy, children 12 and under continue to ride free when accompanied by a fare paying adult. The UPass and other discounted fare options remain available to eligible riders in this age category.

Additionally, ETS is launching two new Arc multi-day pass options: a three-day and a five-day pass for single riders, at a cost of \$24 and \$30. The Arc multi-day passes can be purchased in Edmonton at Arc vending machines in all LRT stations and at the West Edmonton Mall and Mill Woods Transit Centres starting February 1. The Arc multi-day passes will be valid on ETS

vehicles only and allow riders unlimited trips for three or five consecutive days after the first tap.

February Service Adjustments

On Sunday, February 2, mid-winter service changes will take effect. These service changes include minor adjustments to increase service reliability and to align transit schedules with upcoming holidays as well as public, Catholic and post-secondary school calendars.

Service adjustments occur five times per year. Adjustments are based on transit data, rider feedback, seasonal changes and ridership growth, and make service more efficient and effective for riders. Riders are encouraged to plan their trips early by using the trip planner on edmonton.ca/transit or Google Maps and selecting a date after February 2.

Bus Service Changes

- ETS will move Route 9 from Bay P to Bay R at Southgate Transit Centre to help reduce congestion.
- Route 684 will now permanently run on Groat Road and 111 Avenue instead of 114 Avenue and 135 Street.
- Routes 658, 659, 663, 664 and 669 - Afternoon school trips will leave five minutes later to help ensure students have sufficient time to get to the bus after the school day ends.
 - Morning trips on Routes 663 and 664 were adjusted in early January to start 10 minutes earlier to help ensure students have sufficient time to get to their morning classes.

In addition, schedule adjustments are being made to a number of routes to help buses start and end their trips on time.

On Demand Transit: Additional stops have been added - northbound, eastbound and southbound - at 111 Street and Blackburn Drive SW for the Blackburne and Blackmud Creek neighbourhoods.

Construction and Detours

Due to the Capital Line South LRT construction, a number of routes are experiencing delays, and these delays are expected to increase as construction intensifies around Century Park Transit Centre. As construction progresses, ETS will continue to review current routes and detours to determine if additional changes need to be made.

Route 131 was rerouted in early January to operate northbound on 100 Street until the construction at the CN Tower is complete. This change will be in effect until November 2025.

Rider Respect Campaign

With ongoing input from Edmontonians who have sight loss or low vision, ETS has made several enhancements to facilities and vehicles to help improve accessibility, with further improvements planned for 2025.

Following feedback received from Canadian National Institute of the Blind (CNIB)'s Get On Board campaign in 2023, ETS made several improvements to address CNIB's recommendations. These improvements included improving colour contrast by changing the colour of the emergency push strips from yellow to red in newer LRT vehicles, painting the curbs blue starting with a test at Westmount Transit Centre, and modifying digital bus signage on the side of buses to only display the route number and destination, ensuring crucial route information is clear at all times at transit centres.



In 2025, the practice of painting transit centre curbs blue will be expanded across the City. Another key project will be re-tiling benches in downtown LRT stations to improve colour contrast with the floor, improving visibility and reducing tripping hazards.

Respect on the part of transit riders and operators can go a long way when it comes to ensuring people who are blind, Deafblind or have low vision feel more comfortable on transit. Per CNIB's recommendation, ETS has partnered with them to launch the Rider Respect campaign, raising awareness about ensuring transit is accessible and inclusive for all. As part of the campaign, riders will see signs in transit spaces with suggestions on how to help all riders feel more welcome. These tips include:



- Show you care and offer your seat to riders who may need it more, and respect priority seating and shared spaces.
- Understand that disabilities are not always obvious. They can be visible, invisible or episodic.
- Recognize and respect everyone's autonomy. Don't make assumptions about people's abilities. Ask before you help someone.

New ETS Trip Planner Pilot

ETS is in the process of implementing a new transit trip planner tool to replace the existing web application, as well as the ETS Live app. The new tool will be available via website (desktop and mobile) for riders to plan their trips, view schedules and alerts. It will also be accessible with both Apple and Android smartphones. The new tool will also include transit information from Edmonton's regional transit partners - St. Albert, Strathcona County, Fort Saskatchewan, Beaumont, Leduc and Spruce Grove.

A pilot to test the new trip planner is currently being conducted with residents of Edmonton and surrounding regions who use trip planners to plan their public transit trips. Feedback will be used to fine tune user experience before the tool is rolled out to the public in early 2025.

January-February Council Reports

LRT Rider Cellular Connectivity

On January 22, City Administration presented the LRT Rider Cellular Connectivity report to Executive Committee. The report recommended agreements with Telus Communications Inc. (Telus) to address connectivity gaps in LRT tunnels and stations to enhance safety and communications in these locations. Council approved \$4.7 million in capital funding for this work through the 2023 Fall Supplemental Capital Budget Adjustments. Executive Committee passed a motion to approve the agreements with Telus. The report and supporting documents can be accessed through the [January 22, 2025 Executive Committee agenda](#).

Valley Line West 2025 Roadway Construction Options and Impacts

On February 11, City Administration will present a report providing an update on the roadwork schedule for Valley Line West in 2025. The report responds to Council motion passed on October 22, 2024 for Administration to provide a report on the steps that need to be taken to ensure that the road construction work from 107th Street to the west end of the Valley Line West LRT is complete by November 30, 2025.

Administration Response to Dedicated Accessible Transit Service (DATS) Audit

On February 18, the Office of the City Auditor will present their DATS Audit report. The Administration response to the audit will also be presented. The report responds to recommendations and identifies timelines for closing each recommendation.

Transportation Projects Traffic Management

The Q1 2025 Transportation Projects Traffic Management report will be presented to Council on February 25. This report provides an update on the status of ongoing or imminent major capital construction projects, including roads, bridges, transit infrastructure (e.g. bus stops) and LRT projects such as Valley Line West and Capital Line South. It provides traffic management plans and disruptions, project progress, and mitigation strategies.

3. ETS COUNCIL REPORT TRACKING - 2025

Report #	Report Title	Meeting Date*	Committee*
Upcoming reports being led by ETS:			
CO02762	Administration Response to DATS Audit	February 18, 2025	Audit
CO02673	Increasing Efficiency of the Top Bus Routes	March 4, 2025	UPC
EXT02558	External report from ETSAB: Perception of LRT Safety	March 4, 2025	UPC
CO02559	Administration Response: ETSAB Perception of LRT Safety	March 4, 2025	UPC
CO02675	Edmonton Transit Service Fare Policy C451H Review	March 5, 2025	Exec
CO02718	Options to Further Enhance LRT Safety	March 18, 2025	CC
Other reports of interest:			
IIS02745	Valley Line West 2025 Roadway Construction Options and Impacts	February 11, 2025	UPC
IIS02750	Transportation Projects Traffic Management (Q1 2025)	February 25, 2025	CC

Note: New reports will be added once a report number has been assigned.

*Subject to change

CC = City Council

CPSC = Community and Public Services Committee

Exec = Executive Committee

UPC = Urban Planning Committee

Audit = Audit Committee