



Bus Network Redesign

What We Heard Report Summary

Westridge and
Wolf Willow

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ETS

April 2019

Transit in Westridge and Wolf Willow

Within the proposed Bus Network Redesign, several difficult decisions needed to be made about providing service to areas where ridership numbers are low or have steadily declined, have a low number of residents, and/or have considerable geographic restraints that impact ETS's ability to provide traditional transit service.

Within the City of Edmonton, there are several communities facing these challenges, including Westridge and Wolf Willow. At the request of Ward 5 Councillor, Sarah Hamilton, ETS hosted three workshops with specific Ward 5 communities who will be impacted by changes to services.

The intention of the workshop was to get feedback and perspectives from the residents of Westridge and Wolf Willow to build a greater understanding of the impacts of removing regular scheduled ETS service from their community. This feedback would be used to develop alternative transit solutions including on-demand service that is more flexible in meeting the needs of communities with low ridership.

A member of our family has a medical condition which makes driving impossible. She relies on the bus service to get to work and back. She is in retail and her hours vary, so at times she has to use taxis, which she cannot afford. Without bus service, she would not be able to live with our family.

What we did

To build a deeper understanding of the community's concerns, ETS held a community workshop with 35 residents on November 14, 2018 from 6 to 8 p.m. It was held at the Westridge Wolf Willow Country Club Community League.

The workshop format included four different table conversations to understand the community's transit needs and to collect feedback about how the proposed changes to the transit network would affect them.

Leger 360, a third party professional research and engagement consultant facilitated at each table and collected participants' responses before they moved to the next conversation. Leger 360 compiled all of the input received and after the workshop, asked a volunteer from the community to review and validate the consultants' notes to ensure that what was collected was accurate and represented the fulsomeness of what was expressed.

Here is what we heard...

What does transit mean to you?

Many participants told us they use the bus to go to work, school, shopping, medical appointments and recreation.

What are the impacts of the bus network redesign to your community?

Three major concerns were identified – **walking distance, safety and lifestyle**. Westridge and Wolf Willow are surrounded by ravines and there is only one road in and out. The walking distance to the nearest transit stop in Oleskiw is further than one kilometre for most residents and there are safety concerns with crossing through the ravines to access regular bus service in Rio Terrace. Participants are also concerned about their neighbours who rely on transit because they cannot drive, cannot afford a vehicle or who made a conscious choice to reduce their carbon footprint.

What does ETS need to know about providing bus service in your community?

Participants want a **better understanding** behind the decision to remove regular scheduled service and had questions about how ETS calculated the number of riders on existing routes serving the community. They wondered if enough research had been done, about why more people don't use the bus, and if reducing the number of stops would make a difference.

Participants also want ETS to consider **future demographics** when older residents retire and younger families buy homes, which would mean more people who could use transit. They also want **easy access to transit centres and LRT stations**, and don't necessarily want to drive to a Park & Ride.

What should the City consider as it develops transit solutions for your community?

Instead of removing regular scheduled service, Westridge participants want ETS to consider other options to maintain service:

- + School specials for students
- + Peak hour service to South Campus, University of Alberta and West Edmonton Mall with a first kilometre/last kilometre solution during the rest of the day

- + Use smaller buses

If an alternative transit solution is implemented, participants want it to be:

- + Cost-effective—fares should be the same as regular transit
- + Fast on-demand service—should be able to book recurring service once
- + Pick-up window—make it as small as possible (not 2 hours) or pre-determined times
- + Use existing bus stops as pick-up/drop-off points with walking distances less than 5 minutes
- + Safe—operators and vehicles should be held to the standard as ETS staff/vehicles
- + Be implemented before the Bus Network Redesign is launched
- + Do not use DATS or Uber as a substitute

What do you think should City Council's decision criteria be?

Citizens want City Council to understand that the new bus network **does not meet their needs** and want Councillors to understand where they need to go (grocery stores, school, South Campus). They also want a strong community partnership with the school boards to ensure there is yellow bus service, consideration for the taxes they pay, meet the needs of vulnerable residents, and how their feedback is being used by ETS.

Next steps

In November of 2019, ETS will be presenting the proposed bus network report and the comprehensive public engagement report to City Council. Council members will use this feedback to help them in making decisions about Edmonton's future transit network. While these reports were initially expected to be presented in spring 2019, it was decided to bundle them with other related transit reports that are being presented to City Council in November.

If approved, the new bus network will be implemented in summer 2020. The City of Edmonton will make route maps, route schedules and other materials available in spring 2020 so citizens can begin pre-planning their trips. ETS will also have extensive public outreach in summer 2020 to help transit users plan their trips and learn the new network.

Alternative transit options

ETS transit planners identified communities that would benefit from a different kind of transit service where walking distances are greater than 600 metres. This new approach would balance the needs of residents with the ability for ETS to provide wide-ranging, high quality transit service. ETS is working on alternative transit options for:

- + communities with walking distances of greater than 600 metres
- + communities with a low ridership demand
- + communities with considerable geographic constraints
- + newer communities that are substantially built up with a population base that can support the introduction of a flexible service.

Working in collaboration is an important part of alternative transit options for Edmonton. Community engagement planning is underway and ETS anticipates hosting further workshops in communities where alternative transit options are being proposed. More information about these sessions and about alternative transit options will be made available later in 2019. Alternative transit options, along with engagement findings, will be presented to City Council for consideration in November 2019.

As a community, we felt that our needs are not listened to, and the network is already a done deal. Any input at this point (including this November 14th meeting) were just an "exercise", no feedback will be taken in consideration and/or work toward a solution that works for the community. We really hope that the BNR team hear our concerns and take concrete actions accordingly, by restoring some fixed schedule bus services (i.e. 138 and 107 peak hours buses).