What We Heard

Mass Transit: Implementation for 1.25 Million

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Project overview PG 3
2. Engagement Process and Participation PG 4
3. How We Engaged PG 5
4. What We Heard PG 8
5. Next Steps PG 13

Appendix A: Survey Demographics

PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Edmonton is planning to expand mass transit options to improve transit service for a future population of 1.25 million residents. In doing so, the Mass Transit Implementation project team has set out to engage with residents about how Non-LRT Mass Transit can best serve 1.25 million people. The round 1 of engagement was completed in the summer of 2022. The following report highlights what Edmontonians had to say in response to questions regarding their values and support for the implementation of non-LRT transit services.

This feedback, along with input collected in the next public engagement phase will help inform decisions about future routes and service features for implementing non-LRT mass transit. The next phase of engagement involves a more detailed scope, focusing on the consideration of specific routes and corridors for non-LRT mass transit. This, along with a series of technical assessments, will ultimately guide the implementation of mass transit infrastructure. These new routes will create a more equitable mobility network, reduce the city's environmental impact and give everyone more choice in how they move around. Mass Transit is just one part of the City's long term work to build a transit network that will meet the daily needs of every person living, working and visiting Edmonton. [also add a reference to the "15 minute districts" term]

What does Non-LRT Mass Transit include?

Although LRT will always be an important aspect of the mass transit network, non-LRT services are key to providing connectivity between LRT routes and major hubs around the city of Edmonton. Non-LRT mass transit can provide additional service and infrastructure that are meant to supplement the existing and future LRT lines and bring high quality transit service to all parts of Edmonton. This can be achieved through a multitude of ways including:

- Dedicated bus lanes
- Priority traffic signals for buses
- Upgraded stations with heated shelters and other amenities
- Consideration of different types of vehicles including buses and streetcars
- Improved reliability and speed using bus priority at intersections
- High frequency service on key routes
- Better regional connections

What does Non-LRT Mass Transit not include?

It is important to outline that although non-LRT mass transit will complement many of the services provided by ETS, this project does not address all concerns related to current transit service in Edmonton. Current transit services are addressed through other ETS initiatives. Some of the services and concerns that will not be addressed in this report include:

- Safety and security
- LRT extensions and new LRT routes
- On-demand bus services
- Local bus services and routes
- Bus services that operate in mixed traffic

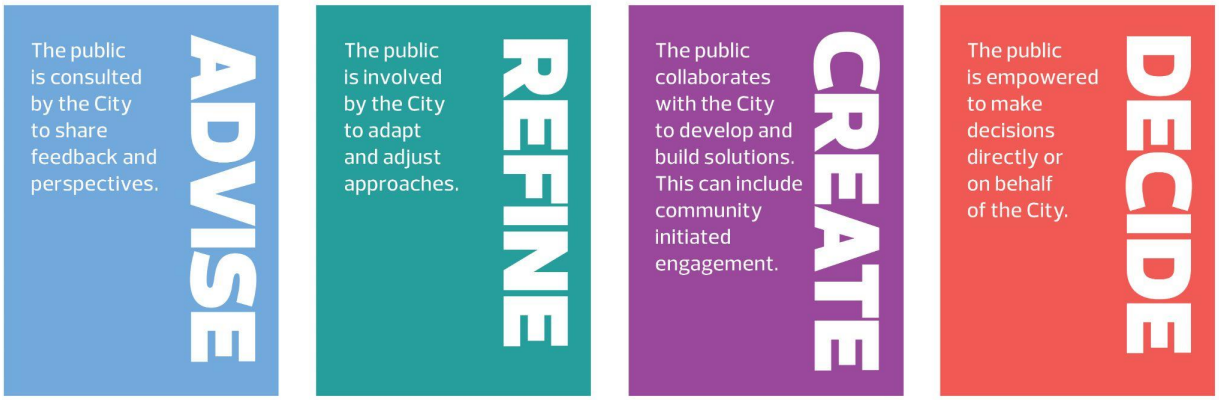
ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND PARTICIPATION

The first round of public engagement took place from July 5 to August 5, 2022. The intention was to hear from a broad range of transit users about their thoughts and feedback on non-LRT mass transit as part of the Mass Transit: Implementation for 1.25 Million project. Now that Round 1 engagement on big picture ideas regarding values and concerns is complete, the next phase of the project will focus on specifics. In Round 2 we will explore design options for specific corridors and talk station locations as well as routes for this new mass-transit system.

HOW WE ENGAGED

Engagement Spectrum

The Public Engagement spectrum is a tool that explains the four roles the public can play when they participate in City of Edmonton Public Engagement activities. As we move forward in the spectrum, there is an increasing level of public influence and commitment from the City and the public. The first phase of the Mass Transit Implementation project engaged at the **ADVISE** level on the City's Public Engagement Spectrum.



Participation Rates

Participants were encouraged to share questions, comments and insights, through the following methods:

	DATE	LOCATION	PARTICIPANT COUNT
Online Public Info Session 1	July 12	Online	2
Online Public Info Session 1	July 13	Online	4
Pop-up Engagement Event 1	July 18	South Campus / Fort Edmonton Park Transit Centre	29
Pop-up Engagement Event 2	July 19	Northgate Transit Centre	31
Pop-up Engagement Event 3	July 19	101 St & Jasper Avenue	23
Pop-up Engagement Event 4	July 20	West Edmonton Mall Transit Centre	12
Pop-up Engagement Event 5	July 20	Health Sciences / Jubilee LRT station	27
Engaged Edmonton Survey	July 5 - August 5	Online	824
Questions and Answers Tool	July 4 - August 5	Online	15
Storytelling Tool	July 5 - August 5	Online	6

Online Survey

The approach to online engagement means residents can share their insights without being limited by time and resources. This enabled the project team to gain a variety of insights into how we might meaningfully inform the public about Edmonton's mass transit goals for 1.25 million people, while hearing about what they hope to get from the bus system of the future. We asked questions about the ways they interact with various modes of transportation in Edmonton as well as their thoughts and concerns about non-LRT mass transit.

Between July 5 and August 5, 2022, the survey received 824 responses.

Pop-Up Engagements

Pop-up events were hosted at various transit stations to allow Edmonton Transit users to share their views on the upcoming non-LRT mass transit system. By going to where transit users currently are, we were able to ensure we captured feedback by users of transit including those most vulnerable who rely on transit the most for transportation around the city. We asked questions about their ideas and the opportunities for the new system as well as the concerns they had. This helped the project team understand the values held by transit users, which will inform Round 2 engagement of this project.

Between July 18 and July 20, the pop-ups received a total of 116 comments from 122 participants.

Information Sessions

Online information sessions invited members of the public to gather with key City of Edmonton project team members to explore the questions being asked about the Mass Transit: Implementation for 1.25 Million. This allowed interested individuals the opportunity to dive deeper into the nuance of the subject. Using a dynamic mix of data and visuals, the aim of the sessions were to provide project details and next steps, as well as address questions and concerns from the general public.

On July 12 and July 13, two information sessions were held, with 6 participants attending in total.

Engaged Edmonton

Through the Engage Edmonton page the team shared project details, advertised engagement opportunities, provided means for survey feedback and displayed ongoing developments as the process unfolds. The web page also provided opportunities for viewers to access the Questions tool and a Stories tool to share questions and their personal transit experiences.

Between July 5 and August 5, 2022, the web page received 2,290 visits, 15 members of the public asked questions using the Questions and Answers tool, 6 people contributed to an online discussion through the Storytelling tool and 824 online surveys were completed.

Engagement Communications

Engagement opportunities were communicated using the following:

- Edmonton.ca/MassTransit
- Engaged.edmonton.ca/MassTransit
- Local road signage throughout Edmonton
- In-person promotion during pop-ups
- Social media campaign and paid advertising
- Transit station electronic advertising
- Memo to Council
- Messaging to 311
- Project newsletter
- Post in Building Edmonton newsletter
- Emails to various community groups impacted by mass transit

WHAT WE HEARD

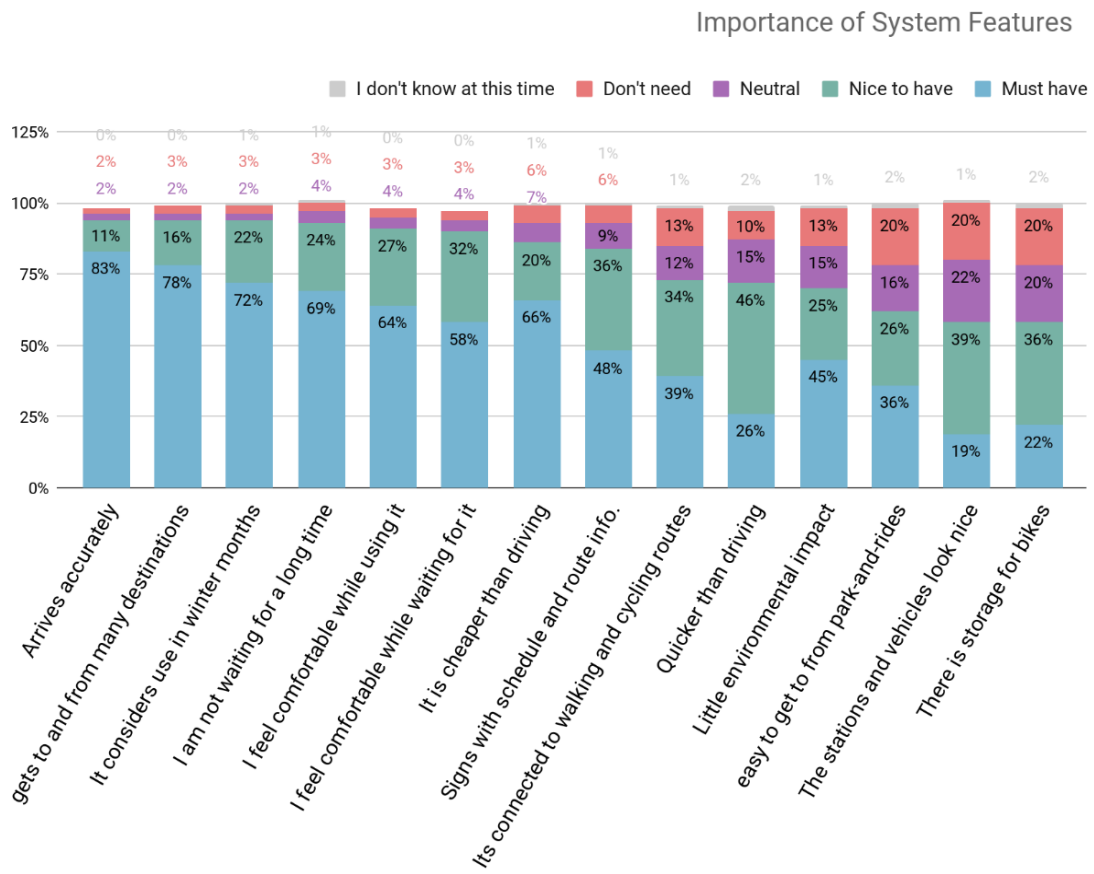
The following reports on the top ideas, concerns and themes heard from the 952 participants who were part of the community engagement process. We heard from residents that represent a wide range of demographics including drivers, transit users, active transportation users, racial minorities, members of Indigenous communities, newcomers, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community, people with disabilities, low income earners, parents and more.

Transportation features and impacts

In order to understand what transit users value most about mass transit, we asked respondents how important various transit system features were to them, the types of negative impacts they would consider to be acceptable and their general thoughts about a new non-LRT mass transit system.

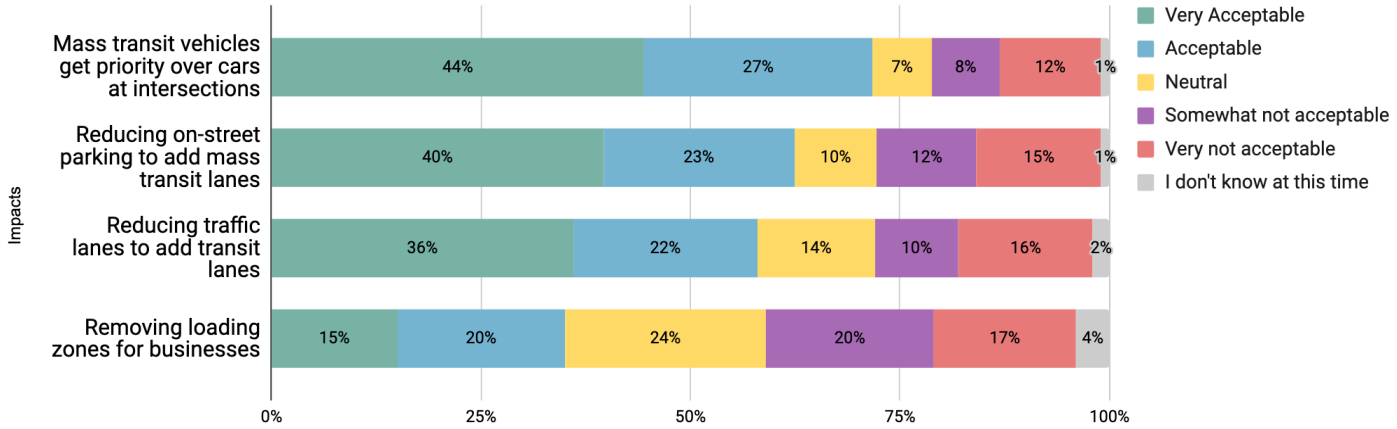
The top must have transit system features as per the survey are ranked below:

1. It arrives reliably so I can plan my trips accurately
2. It is easy to get from my house to everyday destinations (school, work etc.)
3. It considers use and operation in winter months (snow clearing, heat etc.
4. It arrives frequently so I'm not waiting for a long timeIt's cheaper than driving (gas prices, parking, maintenance etc.)



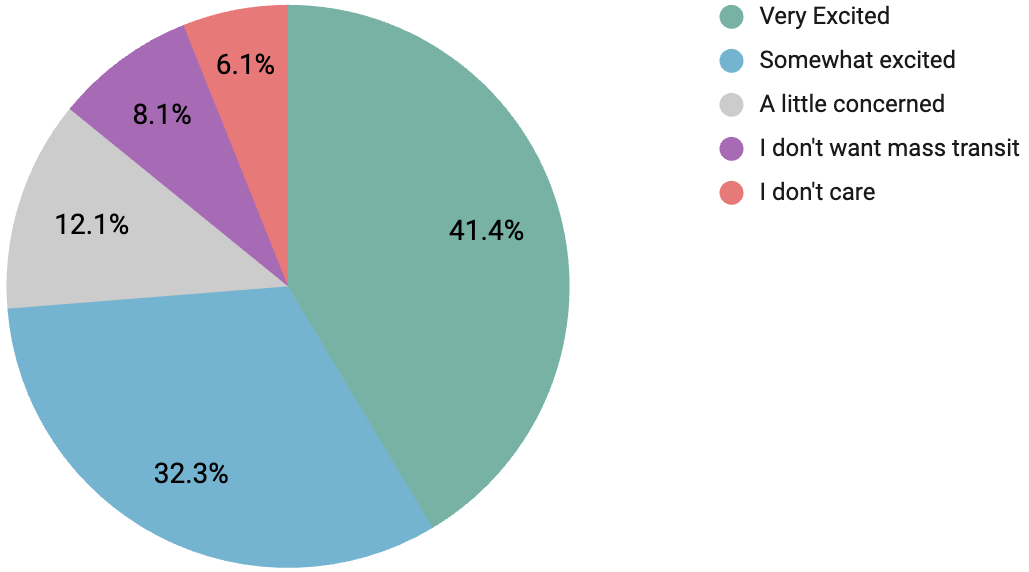
The level of acceptance for various impacts. The top three most acceptable impacts as per the survey are ranked below:

1. Mass transit vehicles get priority over cars at intersections, similar to the LRT potentially
2. Reducing on-street parking to add mass transit lanes
3. Reducing traffic lanes to add transit lanes



Overall, respondents were excited about adding non-LRT mass transit to the City of Edmonton, with the majority of respondents stating that they were somewhat excited or very excited about the project. The chart below illustrates the level of excitement indicated by respondents.

How do you feel about adding non-LRT mass transit to the City of Edmonton?



n= 810

Mass-transit concerns, ideas, opportunities and key trends

This section provides an overview of what we heard from the online survey responses as well as the in-person pop up engagement sessions. We asked participants about their biggest concerns, their ideas, and opportunities for improvement of services and the key trends. The responses have been organized by the top five** recurring themes that were heard throughout.

**Although safety and security was one of the top themes throughout this engagement process, it is not a part of the scope of the mass-transit project and therefore will not be included in the findings below.

Frequency/Reliability

- *Service that comes every 15 minutes or less*
- *Ensuring all routes are served frequently*
- *Minimize the inconvenience of waiting for a bus*
- *Respondents indicated that a 30-minute wait is too long*
- *Ensuring that transit is arriving on time*

Traffic/Delays

- Concerns about mass transit vehicles causing an increase in congestion
- An increase in personal vehicle traffic as well as bus traffic
- Delays for buses and increased personal vehicle commute times
- Concerns that a reduction in car lanes to accommodate dedicated bus lanes or other BRT infrastructure will increase traffic congestion
- Continual delays in the bus scheduling, causing disruptions in daily schedules

Accessibility

- Vehicle, station and bus stop accessibility need more attention
- Improving the elevator access, access to seating, sidewalks and other structural features
- Improving accessibility measures throughout the transit system including signage, seating, elevators, sidewalks and more

Connectivity

- Current bus routes do not provide convenient connections to key locations and destinations *
- Reviewing current bus routes to ensure there is adequate connectivity to destinations outside of the downtown core *
- Easy access to key destinations has been reduced since the routes have changed *
- Respondents indicated that the buses are not going to the locations that they need to reach, or they need to transfer many times

Cost for Fare

- Decreasing the cost of transit services, or providing services for free *
- Rethinking transit as a public service instead of a business
- Considering how other cities operate transit services at a loss to keep fares low *
- Ensuring that speed and cost of service will rival the use of a personal vehicle
- The cost of transit fares is a factor that limits use of public transit *
- Transit costs were considered to be too high for the quality of service received
- Improve the cost of group travel on transit to rival carpooling costs*

* Indicates items such as fares or local service that are not part of the current study on mass transit

Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA+)

Demographics

Throughout Round 1, various considerations were made to provide an accessible engagement experience for all participants. Through the virtual sessions and pop-up engagements, we were able to hear from residents that represent a wide range of demographics including racial minorities, people with disabilities, members of Indigenous communities, newcomers, members of the LGBTQ2S+ community and other groups that often experience inequalities while participating in engagement processes.

Virtual sessions

The online engagement sessions were hosted on Zoom, which reduced the time and space barrier that often limits or restricts participation from working people, parents of young children, people with mobility limitations and others. By providing the information sessions in a digital format, participants could log in from home which reduced the need for travel, child care or other considerations in advance of the session. Another highlight of the online format is the assistive technology such as closed captioning, volume controls, and transcription services that created a welcoming atmosphere for all participants to engage with relative ease despite the various limitations they may experience.

Pop-up Engagements

Large boards, with oversized and bolded fonts were used at the pop-up sessions displaying two key questions from the online survey. The engagement team conducted the pop-up sessions to get feedback from transit users who may not have the time or technology to complete the survey online. Technical considerations during the pop-ups included a QR code that directed participants to the survey through their mobile devices and the listing of the Engaged Edmonton website which provided further information about the project.

Participant responses from pop-up engagement event in July 2022.

NEXT STEPS

Round 1 of the Mass Transit: Implementation for 1.25 Million project is completed and the project is moving into Round 2. In the upcoming phase of the project there will be continued public engagement to examine potential routes and trade offs for the non-LRT mass transit implementation to understand the feasibility and support of various route options for the project.

For more information on the project and to stay in touch with the process, please visit: Edmonton.ca/**masstransit**

Thank you to all who participated! We are grateful for your time and appreciate the energy you put into planning for the future of the Mass Transit: Implementation for 1.25 Million project.