

BRIEFING

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Item # 5.2.1

Transportation Briefing to

SPC on Transportation and Transit
2020 June 24

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Calgary Transit Service Update

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

To provide Council an update on Calgary Transit's service impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the proposed next steps.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The COVID-19 pandemic has had significant impacts on the way Calgary Transit operates and delivers transit service to Calgarians. We have been working with other City business units and Canadian transit agencies, through the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA), to share information and learn best practices (Attachment 1). Through these collaborations and dialogue, the following measures were implemented:

Caring for our employees:

Limiting interactions between employees and customers through:

- Rear-door boarding on large buses.
- Not collecting cash fares on buses and asking customers to purchase pre-paid tickets.
- Installing physical distancing signage on buses, trains and stations.
- A two-passenger-per-vehicle limit for Calgary Transit Access service.
- Distributing three-reusable cloth masks to all Calgary Transit employees and individual cleaning kits with sanitizer to all operators.
- Installing driver barriers on all community shuttles and in process of installing on larger buses.

Caring for our customers:

Providing a clean and safe transit service for customers by:

- Thoroughly disinfecting our vehicles and stations with focus on high-touch surfaces such as railings, stanchions and handles.
- Introducing on-the-go cleaning of trains (and soon buses) while in service, with a focus on disinfecting high-touch surfaces, specifically the ticket vending machines and door handles and buttons.
- Extending the Low Income Transit Pass (LITP) and Senior yearly pass validity until the end of May to prevent line-ups at our customer service centres
- Closing some CTrain station buildings to help reduce social disorder and large gatherings of non-paying customers. The closures decreased pressure on Peace Officers, enabling them to focus on the rest of the system. Platforms were still open and fully-accessible for transit service.
- With indoor public areas being closed, Calgary's displaced population was greatly impacted. To assist, Calgary Transit's Community Outreach Team (COT) have been actively connecting them with housing and social agencies.

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- Calgary Transit allowed customers to pause their parking reservation payment without losing their spot

Further measures are outlined in Attachment 2.

Taking care of our business

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on ridership and revenue, with a 90 per cent decrease in ridership and financial losses of over \$13 million per month. This forced the difficult decision to reduce transit service levels by 30 per cent. This reduction was done carefully, attempting to minimize customer impact as much as possible. Service reductions were made by cutting school service, adjusting LRT service, temporarily canceling under-performing routes and shifting resources. Unfortunately, this has resulted in the lay-off of over 450 employees.

Physical distancing requirements have created a unique challenge as we have had to limit the number of customers onboard a bus or CTrain. This has resulted in vehicles appearing to be running half-full but may be nearing capacity.

Moving Ahead

Operational Changes

We are closely monitoring ridership levels in real-time to address overcrowding issues and increased demand as restrictions relax. In partnership with Edmonton Transit Service, we have asked the Government of Alberta to relax physical distancing requirements for transit customers. This will allow us to meet an increase in the demand for service without increasing the number of vehicles on the road.

To help increase revenue, we will begin front-door boarding on July 1. The installation of driver shields will allow us to protect employees and customers while ensuring stricter fare collection. This will also coincide with the launch of My Fare, a contactless payment system which will enable customers to purchase their fare via smartphone.

In cooperation with the government of Alberta, we will also be launching a pro-active, intensive, and long-term promotional campaign to encourage customers to wear masks on transit. This campaign includes employees handing out 200,000 non-medical masks at CTrain platforms, bus stations, and on-board vehicles.

As we see an increase in ridership, we plan on re-opening the station buildings that were closed. The re-opening of the stations will be closely monitored with high-visibility patrols and through our CCTV system.

Customer Confidence

Another key element of our re-launch plan is to build confidence with customers that transit is a safe option. Measuring customer confidence with transit is being tracked through weekly online surveys to gather feedback on how we are meeting customer's needs, quality of our service and our responsiveness to their concerns. These weekly surveys complement our regular engagement tools like our Call Centre and Twitter account. In addition, feedback will be gathered through monthly surveys, which will provide insight into customers returning to using transit, service cleanliness and other customer preferences.

We will be engaging with Calgary's business community to help build confidence and respond to concerns. Learnings from these meetings will help the continued development of our re-launch strategy.

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Successful Practices

While we have had over five-million weekday boardings during the first three-months of the pandemic, we have only had one employee tested as COVID-19 positive. Increased sanitization of fleet and employees' prudence in practicing safe and healthy habits during the pandemic can largely be contributed to this success.

Next Steps

Calgary Transit will be providing a ridership report to the Standing Policy Committee of Transportation and Transit on 2020 July 22. This will provide a detailed analysis of our ridership history and future projections. There is also a planned service adjustment for September, which will be based on ridership and revenues in the coming months.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Attachment 1 – Best Practices and Peer Review
2. Attachment 2 – Calgary Transit COVID-19 Response Summary