

BRIEFING

Page 1 of 2

Item # 16.2

Transportation Briefing to
Combined Meeting of Council
2022 July 26

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Calgary Transit On Demand Update

PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

This briefing provides an update to Council and Calgarians on the On Demand pilot projects. Calgary Transit has adopted On Demand as a way to deliver public transit services to Calgarians based on the success of these pilot projects.

On Demand service enables customers to book trips in the On Demand zones using an app or calling the Calgary Transit Call Centre. This type of service works well in Calgary in specific contexts, such as new and developing communities, and areas with low ridership. On Demand can be used to introduce public transit service into new communities as a first step in the progression to fixed-route services. With funding, On Demand can lead to new communities getting access to public transit services sooner because On Demand is more cost-effective, responsive, and can achieve lower greenhouse gas emissions in areas of low ridership demand when compared to fixed-route services. This new proven tool means public transit service can be expanded in new ways and connect more Calgarians with the rapid transit network. The pilot projects were successful in two different contexts: one was in a developing community with low population and jobs that did not previously have public transit (Carrington/Livingston), and the other in a developed community with low ridership on existing routes due to the pandemic (Springbank Hill).

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The City of Calgary is a leader in On Demand service given our early adoption of the service in 2019, and the productivity of our services.

In the Carrington/Livingston On Demand zone, customer adoption of the service was rapid. Residents in these new communities did not have access to public transit prior to implementation of On Demand in 2019 August. The new service provided trips within the communities, but the primary destination is the North Pointe bus terminal and commercial/institutional hub in Country Hills Village. Ridership quickly grew and hit record highs in 2020 February before the onset of the pandemic. The service recorded excellent productivity with over eight passengers per revenue operating hour (PROH), meaning for every hour of service eight passengers were taking trips to their destinations. 2020 February also saw approximately 190 passengers per weekday, and a total weekly ridership over 900 trips. Ridership is recovering and in 2022 June there is an average of over 120 trips per weekday, and a total weekly average over 660 trips. The average cost to deliver each On Demand trip in 2022 June was just under \$12, meeting the project goal of 'less than \$20 per trip'. For context, the system-wide average cost per trip in 2019 (the last pre-pandemic year) was \$3.98. Generally, high ridership routes have a lower cost per trip (i.e., Route 301 – BRT North/City Centre at \$3.07), and lower ridership routes have a higher cost per trip (i.e., Route 83 – Parkland at \$17.24)

In the Springbank Hill On Demand zone, implementation was motivated by the pandemic. Four existing fixed-route services were removed from the area and replaced with On Demand service. This provided a responsive public transit system at a time where system-wide ridership

BRIEFING

was reduced by 85 per cent. This means Calgary Transit was able to provide a service with short wait times (better than previous fixed-route frequencies) and an equivalent span of service (all day service on weekdays and weekends). In 2022 April, Calgary Transit achieved industry-leading productivity with over five PROH during weekday service, and over seven PROH during peak period service. With ridership recovering in June 2022 there are an average of over 280 trips per weekday, and a total weekly average over 1,620 trips. The average cost to deliver each On Demand trip in 2022 June was \$17.30, meeting the project goal of 'less than \$20 per trip'.

Lessons Learned

Research undertaken before and during the pilot projects and sharing experiences from other transit agencies who have implemented On Demand in the Calgary Region and beyond, as well as lessons learned from the pilot projects in Calgary have provided many data points for Administration to consider when implementing future services. The following list highlights some, but not all, of the lessons learned:

- Calgarians are accepting of new and different ways to deliver public transit services.
 - Counterpoint: Ensure equity by providing multiple means to book trips. Customers without a smartphone can call the Calgary Transit Call Centre, or use a web-based app.
- Overall operational costs can be lower than fixed-route services while providing better frequency, and a more responsive service.
 - Counterpoint: Cost per trip may be high, but similar to suburban fixed-route services.
- Technology-based solutions for On Demand transit service delivery can be successful and effective in limited and specific contexts, such as areas of low ridership demand.
 - Counterpoint: Fixed-route services are more efficient in areas of high ridership demand.
- Pilot projects with pre-determined end dates are a good way to test new service.
 - Counterpoint: Additional effort should have gone into measures to make these pilot projects feel more permanent to customers.

Attachment 2 provides additional technical details on the pilot project zones, operating costs, project metrics, and lessons learned.

Next Steps

Based on direction from Council (CD2022-0675), Administration is in the process of producing a request for proposals (RFP) to go to market to procure a technology and mobility service provider to deliver On Demand services in four to six new zones. A budget request will be included with the 2023-2026 Service Plans and Budgets for \$3.0 to \$6.0 million per year in operating funding for the new On Demand zones.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Attachment 1 – Previous Council Direction
2. Attachment 2 – On Demand Transit Service in Calgary: Pilot Project Update