

Calgary Transit's 30-Year Strategic Plan (RouteAhead)

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Infrastructure and Planning Committee recommend that Council:

1. Approve RouteAhead (Attachment 2) as a replacement for the original plan approved on 2013 January 13;
2. Direct Administration to return to Infrastructure and Planning Committee in Q3 2023 with a RouteAhead Implementation Plan consisting of near-term operating and capital investments, to include in the Standing Executive Committee Item—Strategic Discussion on Building and Delivering on Plans and Budgets, for consideration as part of the Adjustments to service plans and budgets in 2023 November;
3. Direct Administration to return to Infrastructure and Planning Committee annually with a RouteAhead Annual Status Report, starting for the year 2023, including a report on the status of operating investments and short-term capital projects, by Q2 2024; and
4. Advocate to the provincial government for permanent and sustained transit operating funding and continue advocating to the federal government the importance of the Permanent Transit Fund.

HIGHLIGHTS

- This report seeks approval of the 10-year update to Calgary Transit's 30-year strategic plan, RouteAhead. The original RouteAhead resulted in significant improvements to transit like the MAX network, Green Line investments, mobile ticketing, the sliding-scale low-income transit pass, accessibility improvements, real-time customer information, and alternative fuels.
- Calgary's commitment to downtown revitalization, equity, and climate action drives the need for updated guidance on how The City will enhance transit over the long term.
- RouteAhead provides the tools for Administration to implement Council's strategic direction to build social, climate, and economic resilience.
- The communities we want, and are building, have transportation choice enabled by transit, with easy access to jobs, school, appointments, and activities.
- Implementing RouteAhead means supporting more service on a fast, frequent, and reliable network, improving the customer experience to enable transit-taking habits, and increasing investment to sustain service levels.
- For Calgarians, RouteAhead charts a new course by focusing on building a transit system that makes using transit faster, easier, and more convenient. Implementing RouteAhead will create a transit system that is safe and accessible, and one where customers can show up and go on key corridors without having to plan their day around a transit schedule. This provides customers with increased freedom, encouraging more Calgarians to take transit.
- A strong strategic transit plan helps our city-building partners understand new high-capacity travel options that will support developing successful communities. It signals to our funding partners that we have a well thought out vision for transit service that will create value from their funding.
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

Calgary Transit's 30-Year Strategic Plan (RouteAhead)

DISCUSSION

Achieving a resilient city by building a great transit system requires both a transit network that takes customers where they want to go quickly and reliably; and an improved customer experience that addresses barriers to taking transit like safety, accessibility, comfort, and convenience. These improvements to the customer experience and network require more investment in transit through increased funding and identifying new sustainable funding. These topics form the foundation of RouteAhead, the three core principles of:

- Customer Experience,
- Network Planning, and
- Financing Transit.

Each core principle contains actionable visions, directions, and strategies. They include timelines, progress indicators, and relative costs to enable implementation of RouteAhead and achievement of broader City of Calgary goals.

Customer Experience

Building a socially resilient city means striving for equity by breaking down barriers to access and inclusion. While increased transit service opens access to the city for those who chose not to drive or are unable to drive, feeling comfortable while riding transit plays a significant role in a customer's choice to use transit. Section 3 of RouteAhead highlights the importance of the customer experience by connecting elements of the customer's transit journey to Calgary Transit's Customer Commitment. This section of the plan supports a comfortable and safe customer experience throughout the trip including planning, paying, accessing, waiting, and riding, with actions that focus on improved customer information and increasing accessibility and safety from origin to destination. RouteAhead also outlines how new and emerging technology and trends like Mobility-as-a-service, On Demand, and electric vehicles are being used and explored to improve service delivery and the customer experience.

Network Planning

RouteAhead's key action is to enable the Municipal Development Plan goal of making transit a preferred travel choice, which in turn supports building a resilient city. Section 4 of RouteAhead outlines which transit network elements to prioritize when designing routes to support the fast, frequent transit network Calgarians have asked for. It focuses on scaling operations and state of good repair on the existing network to improve reliability. It encourages integrating transit and land use planning to realize the positive feedback loop of locating frequent transit service along high activity corridors in all areas of the city, generating economic activity and increased investment. RouteAhead introduces new principles for accessing transit station areas that remove barriers to development surrounding stations and encourage improved access to transit stations by all travel modes. Section 4 also contains an updated capital project prioritization list for network growth and connects transit capital projects to the corporate capital investment planning process. New criteria to revise the capital project list as needed over time ensures flexibility as Calgary grows and changes.

Financing Transit

Section 5 of RouteAhead presents the investment needed from all levels of government to improve the customer experience and expand the network. The plan emphasizes the need for increased tax support and exploring and implementing other financial tools to fund transit service improvements to enable economic resilience and sustainable transit finances.

Calgary Transit's 30-Year Strategic Plan (RouteAhead)

Next Steps

Calgary Transit and the Transit Service Governance Committee will steward RouteAhead once approved. RouteAhead will guide decision-making and business planning for the public transit and specialized transit service lines through an internal implementation plan. Administration recommends a report to the Infrastructure and Planning Committee no later than Q3 2023 that identifies near-term operating and capital investments. To monitor and evaluate success, future RouteAhead annual reports will provide updates on progress towards achieving the plan's vision, key performance indicators, and progressing capital projects.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

- | | | | |
|-------------------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Public engagement was undertaken | <input type="checkbox"/> | Dialogue with interested parties was undertaken |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Public/interested parties were informed | <input type="checkbox"/> | Public communication or engagement was not required |

Public engagement took place in August and September 2022 via The City's Engage portal. Engagement asked citizens about their transit values and priorities to guide the update. The final RouteAhead document was available online for public viewing on May 19, 2023, prior to Committee.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

RouteAhead supports social resilience and the Social Well-Being Policy principle of providing equitable service delivery by removing barriers to access and inclusion. Directions and strategies in Section 3 specifically focus on improving the customer experience for all Calgarians and transit users by increasing access to transit and feelings of safety on transit and making it easier to use and understand the transit network.

Environmental

RouteAhead aligns with the Calgary Climate Strategy: Pathways to 2050 Plan to help achieve greenhouse gas reduction and environmental resilience goals. RouteAhead contains strategies enabling transit to be a leading service line in new community development, which helps build transit habits early. RouteAhead also contains strategies related to fleet electrification/new fuel technology/zero emissions, linking transit planning and land use planning, planning for net-zero communities, and promoting transit as a preferred travel choice.

Economic

RouteAhead encourages economic resilience and downtown revitalization by linking transit and land use to promote development along Primary Transit Network Corridors, activity centres, and main streets. RouteAhead promotes transit-oriented development through new station area access principles. Implementing RouteAhead will lead to increased access to jobs and downtown revitalization through improved travel times.

Calgary Transit's 30-Year Strategic Plan (RouteAhead)

Service and Financial Implications

Other: Guidance for future service plans and budgets

RouteAhead will guide future Service Plans and Budgets. It contains high-level operating and capital projections required to achieve the visions, directions, and strategies to improve transit service over the next 30 years.

RISK

Failing to implement the visions, directions, and strategies in RouteAhead presents a risk to achieving Council's Strategic Direction and The City's Climate Plan, Downtown Strategy, Municipal Development Plan, and Calgary Transportation Plan goals. Without updated direction in RouteAhead, The City will not be positioned to resource, grow, and improve transit service for current and future Calgarians. The existing document will become further outdated, leading to a lack of relevant strategic guidance for the future of transit service in Calgary, including a current capital infrastructure list to aid funding advocacy and corporate capital project planning.

If RouteAhead is not approved, social resiliency will suffer as mobility alternatives for Calgarians with lower incomes or limited transportation options will be uncertain and inequitable. This in turn affects economic resiliency and the ability and attractiveness for new industries to locate in Calgary. Land use approvals that depend on frequent transit will be unfulfilled, diminishing public support for future land use changes. Without approval of RouteAhead's directions and strategies, default alternatives to address traffic congestion, like road widening, will continue with corresponding operating costs. This risks achieving climate resiliency and city-building goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and enabling transit to be a preferred travel choice.

If RouteAhead is approved, there is a risk in achieving the appropriate funding commitments from other orders of government. There is also a risk that city-wide planning does not encourage transit-friendly design in communities. This may lead to major investments in road and parking infrastructure subsidizing cars to a greater extent, which impacts the ability to achieve economic, social, and climate resiliency.

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. RouteAhead: Calgary Transit's 30-Year Strategic Plan
3. Presentation

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve/Consult/Inform
Doug Morgan	Operational Services	Approve
Michael Thompson	Infrastructure Services	Approve
Stuart Dalgleish	Planning and Development Services	Approve
Transit Service Governance RouteAhead Sub-Committee	Multiple	Approve