

Assessing a Closed System as Part of The City of Calgary Transit Safety Strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the Infrastructure and Planning Committee recommends that Council:

1. Receives the Assessing a Closed System as Part of The City of Calgary Transit Safety Strategy Report in Attachment 2 for information.
2. Directs Administration to report back to Council in 2023 Q3 with a comprehensive multi-disciplinary transit safety strategy outlining the roles, responsibilities, and resources required for an integrated customer and safety service delivery model between Calgary Transit, Emergency Management and Community Safety, Corporate Security, Calgary Police Service and Community Partners to be included 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. Approves the one-time operating budget transfer of \$3.4 million in 2023 to the Public Transit Services from the Fiscal Stability and Operating Budget Savings Account Merged Reserve to enable the immediate hiring of permanent staff as set out in Table 1 of Attachment 3, in anticipation of approving \$6.7 million in additional base funding for these staff through the Adjustments to the service plans and budgets in 2023 November.
4. Approves the one-time operating budget transfer of \$5.3 million in 2023 to the Public Transit Service from the Fiscal Stability and Operating Budget Savings Account Merged Reserve for immediate safety and infrastructure improvements as set out in Table 2 of Attachment 3.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Calgary has faced the same challenges as other municipalities in Canada including increased unemployment, homelessness, drug use, and mental health issues due to the global pandemic. This has resulted in an increase in violent crime and social disorder in public spaces such as public transit.
- These are very complex social problems that require collaboration between all orders of government, community groups, Administration, and Calgary Police Service.
- In 2022 Q2, The City of Calgary (The City) developed a Transit Recovery Strategy focused on increasing service, public safety, and improving customer experience on transit as it builds back better and safer after the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of this strategy, The City committed to hiring a third-party consultant to investigate the feasibility of implementing a closed LRT system.
- In 2022 Q3, The City retained Leading Mobility Consulting to assess the feasibility of implementing a fully closed, partially closed, or enhanced staff model on Calgary's LRT system to improve safety. Each option was assessed against six criteria including safety, cost, integration, operations, equity, and customer experience. Engineering and risk considerations were also integrated into the evaluation process.
- Impacted City Services and Business Units, emergency services, community service providers and City partners were engaged in the feasibility study. See Attachment 2—Assessing a Closed System as Part of The City of Calgary Transit Safety Strategy for the consultant's final report.
- Administration has been working on a multi-disciplinary transit safety strategy to improve the safety of Calgarians on the transit system. To implement the strategy, Emergency

Assessing a Closed System as Part of The City of Calgary Transit Safety Strategy

Management and Community Safety, Calgary Transit, Calgary Police Service, and Corporate Security require significant resource support. Administration will report back to Council in 2023 Q3 with a transit safety strategy that includes an implementation plan for option 3—enhanced staff model and associated infrastructure.

- In advance of the transit safety strategy, Administration is recommending the one-time transfer of \$3.4 million operating budget in 2023 for 49 permanent positions to increase visibility on the transit system utilizing Community Outreach Team members and Transit Public Safety Officers. This request includes operating budget for eight (8) new permanent positions for the Community Outreach Team in alignment with the consultant's recommendations in Attachment 2.
- Additionally, Administration is requesting the one-time transfer of \$5.3 million operating budget for the development of an LRT Station Continuous Improvement Program. This multi-year program will identify enhancements to customer and employee safety, increase visibility, and identify opportunities for station improvements through Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design assessments.
- Background and Previous Council Direction is included as Attachment 1.

DISCUSSION

Over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic, transit spaces were one of the few public spaces that remained open. The homeless in Calgary used these spaces for shelter and social gatherings. This led to an increase in social disorder on transit platforms and raised concerns for public safety. This section summarizes the actions The City has taken to respond to social disorder on the transit system along with the findings and recommendations from the consultant's report (Attachment 2).

Transit Safety Actions in Calgary

The City recognizes the need for immediate action to ensure the safety and security of the public on our transit system. No single solution can address the societal complexities we are seeing on our transit system; however, The City is working collaboratively to address the multi-faceted nature of these challenges. Administration has increased enforcement resources and visibility on the transit system. The staffing complement of Transit Public Safety Officers has increased from 113 to 141 officers. The number of Community Outreach Teams has also increased from three to four. Calgary Transit in 2022 Q4 launched the Transit Ambassador Program to help maintain visibility of City staff for transit riders on train stations. The program focuses on building rapport and providing customer service during planned and unplanned service disruptions.

In May 2022, Administration enhanced its cleaning and servicing of the transit system. The City now provides twenty-four-seven coverage for station cleaning. This included additional 14-day porters and 4-night cleaners hired with funding from the provincial RESTOR grant. The Government of Alberta recently committed one-time grant funding of \$5 million to The City to further improve cleaning on and around transit stations. In addition, lighting, infrastructure, and public amenities are being assessed and repaired across the transit system to improve safety and security. This includes lighting upgrades on all transit platforms on 7th Avenue from Downtown West/Kerby to City Hall.

Assessing a Closed System as Part of The City of Calgary Transit Safety Strategy

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In 2022 Q3, Leading Mobility Consulting was retained to undertake a comprehensive feasibility study for implementing a closed transit system in Calgary. This study can be viewed as an important step in developing the necessary resourcing and infrastructure required to improve transit safety and includes a comprehensive review of societal trends experienced on public transit in Calgary and beyond.

The study's objectives included a detailed comparison of three options—a fully closed, partially closed, and an enhanced staff model without fare gates. These options were evaluated against six criteria including safety, cost, integration, operations, equity, and customer experience. The study includes a detailed environmental scan of five comparable North American transit agencies with varying access typologies which includes Edmonton, Vancouver, Toronto, Boston, and Los Angeles. The environmental scan includes desktop research and agency interviews and focused on gathering available data and insights on crimes against persons and property, fare evasion, costs, system interdependencies (operations, emergency response, fare technology, etc.), accessibility, and lessons learned from the perspective of transit agency staff who were interviewed.

Infrastructure design and cost estimates were also performed by a third-party engineering firm. LRT stations were grouped into five typologies based on station access and design. Design solutions were prepared, and a Class 5 capital cost estimate was developed. Interviews were conducted with several City Services and Business Units, emergency services, community service providers, and City partners to gather insights, issues, risks, and opportunities for the implementation of the three options.

See Attachment 2 for the consultant's technical report. Here is a high-level summary of the findings and recommendations of the report.

- There is no correlation between the provision of fare gates and increased transit safety on existing systems with fare gates. Other transit agencies with closed and partially closed transit systems experienced increased safety-related incidents throughout the pandemic and increased complexity with intersecting societal considerations impacting public transit.
- A fully closed system is not feasible within the scope of this study, primarily due to the urban integration challenges and operational issues present at stations on the 7th Avenue corridor.
- A partially closed system is not recommended as it will require substantial modifications to most existing stations, poses significant technical risks and is not favored by community groups, City partners, and City Services and Business Units that were interviewed. Additionally, it would take up to five years for complete installation of a partially closed system.
- It is recommended that The City explore an enhanced staff model and associated infrastructure as specified in option 3 for inclusion in The City's multi-disciplinary transit safety strategy.

Calgary Transit Safety Strategy

Based on the consultant's findings, Administration has started to develop a multi-disciplinary transit safety strategy with an enhanced staffing model in alignment with option 3 of the consultant's report. This option will provide more flexibility, better resource management, and the ability to adapt to changing conditions. The City will be equipped to better respond to complex societal issues impacting public transit.

Assessing a Closed System as Part of The City of Calgary Transit Safety Strategy

The strategy will include targets for performance measures which will relate to safety events, customer experience, and social disorder. The strategy will acknowledge the collaborative relationships required to manage safety risks on Calgary's transit system. Emergency Management and Community Services, in collaboration with Calgary Transit, Calgary Police Service, and Corporate Security, is developing the strategy which is anticipated to go to Committee and Council in 2023 Q3 for approval.

The City is developing a Station Continuous Improvement Program which will transform the customer experience at train stations throughout the transit system. The program will use Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design assessments among other tools to enhance safety, increase visibility, and improve infrastructure to make transit stations safer. In preparation for next winter's weather conditions, Administration is requesting one-time operating budget to start this work.

EXTERNAL ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION

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

A robust engagement plan was conducted with civic partners, community groups, and City Services and Business Units. They were presented with the typologies that were assessed as part of the study and associated conceptual station designs. They were asked to provide feedback on their operational requirements, potential impacts and risks to their service delivery, and interdependencies. A half-day site tour of five LRT stations was organized with all engaged partners to discuss the benefits, implications, and trade-offs associated with the typologies. Interviews were also conducted with fare gate and technology vendors.

IMPLICATIONS

Social

Transit plays an important role in connecting customers with the people and places that they care about. The City is committed to strengthening Calgary's community. The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a significant decrease in ridership and an increase in social disorder on the transit system. While progress has been made, social disorder is a complex issue and is not limited to public transit. Administration is working collaboratively to take a compassionate approach while ensuring the transit system is safe for customers.

Environmental

Public transit reduces a significant amount of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and will help The City meet the objectives of the Council approved Calgary Climate Strategy. If customers view transit as unsafe, they will rely on personal vehicles, and this would lead to more GHG emissions.

Economic

Calgary's economy benefits greatly from public transit by providing workforce mobility, reducing household transportation costs, promoting efficient land use development, and reducing the

Assessing a Closed System as Part of The City of Calgary Transit Safety Strategy

need for new or expanded road infrastructure. Improving safety concerns would attract ridership and help with the downtown revitalization as people return to work in the office.

Service and Financial Implications

If approved, Administration will transfer one-time funding of \$8.7 million operating budget in 2023 from the Fiscal Stability and Operating Budget Savings Account Merged Reserve to the Public Transit service.

RISK

Calgary Transit continues its steady recovery from the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Transit riders are returning to Calgary's transit system; however, unemployment, homelessness, drug use, and mental health issues have resulted in an increase in violent crime and social disorder on and around public transit stations. These complex social issues may negatively impact citizen perceptions of transit safety and reduce ridership. This cover report is recommending the transfer of one-time operating budget for resources to improve safety and security on Calgary's transit system in advance of the transit safety strategy including hiring permanent positions. An ongoing funding source will be required to support the strategy and overall transit improvements likely by adding tax-supported base budget to the Public Transit service through Adjustments to service plans and budgets in 2023 November. If ongoing funding is not approved then these positions will have to ended, which may cause reputational damage and incur additional costs (e.g., severance payments to staff).

ATTACHMENT(S)

1. Previous Council Direction, Background
2. Assessing a Closed System as Part of The City of Calgary Transit Safety Strategy
3. Calgary Transit Safety Actions

Department Circulation

General Manager/Director	Department	Approve
Doug Morgan	Operational Services	Approve
Sharon Fleming	Calgary Transit	Approve
Iain Bushell	Emergency Management Community Safety	Approve
Deputy Chief Chad Tawfik	Calgary Police Service	Inform
Carla Male	Chief Financial Officer	Inform
Katie Black	Community Services	Inform
Sheryl McMullen	Downtown Strategy	Inform
Paula Yung	Community Safety Strategy	Inform
Feisal Lakha	Public Spaces Delivery	Inform
Darshpreet Bhatti	Green Line	Inform