

Regional Commuter Service Phased Implementation Plan

Three Phase Implementation Plan

The development of a regional commuter service should be implemented in a measured and phased approach where each phase adds definition and clarity to the service concept and implementation requirements.

In general, three phases are contemplated:

1. Governance Design
2. Establishment and Transition
3. Service Operation

Phases 2 and 3 to be further confirmed and defined once governing principles have been agreed to by the elected Councils of St. Albert and Edmonton. It is recommended this phasing plan be implemented with the endorsement of the participating councils, and with the benefit of consultation with the provincial government.

Phase 1 – Governance Design – Joint City Manager’s Regional Commuter Service Task Force

Before considering operational matters, the Administrations of St. Albert and Edmonton recommend that the informal discussions exploring issues of regionalization of commuter services now need to evolve into a more formal process as the two cities need to agree to a governing model for an entity that both cities will be contributing assets to. A report produced by Stewart Group recommended a group composed of elected and non-elected officials augmented with members from the private sector create an appropriate governance model for the regional entity acceptable to both City Councils.

Formation of a Joint City Manager’s Task Force comprised of elected officials, Administration and private citizens.

- 2 elected (mayor or councillor) members from each of St. Albert and Edmonton
- City Managers or their designates as members
- A project chairperson acceptable to and appointed by both City Managers
- Consideration to include a provincial appointee/representative
- Administrative support from both municipalities

City Managers to determine the need for ad hoc or standing private sector representatives with specific skills and perspectives.

Mandate:

- Establish governing principles for the regional entity
- Determine if a Regional Services Commission as defined in Alberta Statute is an appropriate and preferable legal structure for the commuter service
- Define commission:
 - Mandate and scope;
 - Determine entity composition, terms, voting procedures for transition;
 - Recommend appointment process for elected representatives to governing board;
 - Recommend profiles (qualification criteria) and process for appointment of non-elected board members of the regional entity;
 - Recommend entity compensation framework; and,
 - Identify staff and resource requirement for the entity.
- Identify transition costs and determine scope of interim/transition funding to request from province
- Recommend the composition of a Transition Team to carry out Phase 2
- Assess the resourcing requirements of the Transition Team
- Engage in communication and consultation with other regional partners

Deliverable:

The Task Force will create an MOU to establish a regional entity for the approval of the respective Councils. Once approved by Edmonton and St. Albert Councils, other municipalities in the region will be invited to join the regional entity as part of Phase 2 of this Implementation Plan.

Phase 2 – Entity Establishment and Transition (1-2 years)

Stewart Group further recommends a non-operational entity be established to carry out the tasks as defined by the Task Force in Phase 1 (subject to the endorsement of the MOU's recommendations by the sponsoring councils). Phase 2 will finalize direction on four key areas for the regional entity.

Mandate:

- Scope and delivery of regional commuter service
 - Confirm the scope of services at launch, and transition path/timing for expansion of services;
 - Development of service guidelines, a first year plan, and development of a strategic plan; and,
 - Select a preferred service delivery model.
- Funding and financial management

- o Establish specific funding model – including funding tools as available through provincial regulations and fare structure/levels;
 - o Identify timing and phasing of revenue sources, providing financial capacity to meet long-term financial requirements of expansion and capital investment;
 - o Determine approach for cost and revenue sharing to align with funding model; and,
 - o Develop an asset transfer plan, including approach for the transfer of associated debt.
- Administration and logistics management
 - o Determine the appropriate entity type to match funding and service delivery model;
 - o Establish administrative and managerial functions;
 - o Appoint interim (staff) executive committee/team responsible for management/implementation;
 - o Coordination of supporting services (“back-office”); and,
 - o Undertake negotiations with impacted Unions.
- Integration of entity with planning and municipal functions
 - o Assess requirements, dependencies or relationships to regional integration of other services/infrastructure (e.g. economic development, land use planning, roads); and,
 - o Define processes to engage in and support requirements for municipal planning functions.

Deliverable:

As a final approval to create the entity, incorporating documents will be developed defining direction on the key area as outlined in the preceding section. The agreement will also outline a weighted voting structure, which will take into account the municipalities within the area of services, the geographic extent/scope of funding (regional versus local), the amount of service within subareas funding model, value of assets transferred to the entity and the constituency base of taxation. The formal agreement will then be ratified by each municipality and meet provincial requirements.

Phase 3 – Service Operations (1 year)

Based on precedent from other regions, it is expected that a new commuter service entity can be in operation approximately 1 year following approval of the formal agreement. The specific launch date must be driven by an assessment of readiness as measured by customer service expectations and not arbitrary deadlines.