



Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title: Local Route Restructure Transit Service Policy
Presented by: Kevin Bamber, Director

Sponsors:

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Attachments: 1. Transit Services Policy C-TS-01 (Jan2017) New, 2. Core Service Standards (with revisions) V3(Sep16)

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/27/2017	1	City Council	approved	

TAMRMS#: B06

Local Route Restructure Transit Service Policy
Presented by: Kevin Bamber, Director

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That City Council Policy C-TS-01 - Transit Services, provided as an attachment to the February 27, 2017 agenda report entitled "Local Route Restructure Transit Service Policy", be approved.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The revised Transit Services Policy C-TS-01 contains a series of guidelines that will serve as the basis for future transit planning and operational decisions. The approved policy will also guide Administration's upcoming local route restructure.

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On October 11, 2016 the following motion was passed:

(AR-16-276)

That Administration amend City Council Policy C-TS-01, Transit Services as per the discussion and direction provided by Standing Committee of the Whole on October 11, 2016 for presentation to Council by the end of Q1 2017.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION

In 2013, Council approved the Transit Long Term Department Plan which included recommendations to Council to consider revisions to the Transit Services Policy C-TS-01 to undertake a restructure of local transit service in St. Albert.

On October 5, 2015 Council received for information the “Local Transit Route Restructure” report. This report recommended a review of service standards prior to the restructuring of the local route network. On April 6, 2016 Administration provided Council with an update on this project.

On October 11, 2016, Administration presented to Council of the Whole the draft Core Service Standard changes, soliciting feedback. Council provided several comments and recommendations. Most of which are incorporated into the revised policy. Highlights of feedback included:

1. **Demand Driven Services** - Concern was raised that a route might justify additional service if ridership only sporadically achieved target thresholds. Language has been added to ensure that targets are met on a “consistent and sustained basis”.
2. **Max trip times** - Administration aimed at a maximum one-way trip time of 45 minutes. Council suggested a separate longer time standard for non-peak service. Administration reviewed, and determined any time longer than 45 minutes “peak or non-peak” ridership becomes unattractive. As such Administration, has not developed a separate non-peak standard.
3. **Vehicle Loading** - Council stated that a load factor of 110% of seating capacity (as presented by Administration), was too low to warrant additional buses or service, and recommended 120%. Administration supports this and changes were made.
4. **Staging of Service in New Areas** - There was debate as to whether to use a population based figure or a timeline as Transit presently does. The population figure is used by most peer transit agencies as a more accurate measurement for any new service (which the revised policy has incorporated). The revised policy does include a clause requiring a 24-month trial period, (versus the old policy of 12 months), for new service to reach minimal ridership. This will provide a bit more time to evaluate ridership.
5. **Revenue to cost ratio** - Council suggested keeping the minimum figure of 40% intact and not to lower it to 35%. The policy as been amended to reflect this.
6. **Provide a discount to seniors for the local pass.** This has been included in the pricing menu and will be implemented.
7. **Monthly student commuter pass should be equal to cost of U-Pass** - Administration does not necessarily disagree with this philosophy; however, this adjustment has significant revenue implications. Administration recommends to explore this issue further, with the possibility incorporating different levels based on local versus commuter. This change would be part of a future budget submission or a separate report to Council at a future time that details the benefits and risks of introducing this measure.

Other comments from Council included recommendations pertaining to marketing, community engagement, and communication. Transit will certainly endeavor to improve with respect to these recommendations for future service changes or restructures but this does not require amendments to the policy.

Once approved, the next steps in the Local Route Restructure can commence, as this Policy will serve as the document upon which the new network will be based. The new policy will play a greater role than just the Local Route Restructure, as it will serve as the set of guiding principles that will direct most transit planning and operational decisions in the long term for both local and commuter services.

STAKEHOLDER COMMUNICATIONS OR ENGAGEMENT

1. 2015 Transit Passenger Survey
2. 2015 Handibus Client Survey
3. 2015 Non-user Survey
4. Industry comparison of related service standards
5. Customer feedback via telephone, email and in-person
6. Consultation and feedback from on-going regular meetings with the Transit Advisory Committee
7. Internal stakeholders such as Planning and Development, Community and Protective Services, and Economic Development
8. Other stakeholders (contracted service providers to StAT)

IMPLICATIONS OF RECOMMENDATION(S)

a) Financial:

Allows StAT a greater level of flexibility to explore service options that potentially place more service where demand is greater and, to scale back service where demand is very low. This will allow for more efficient use of limited operational and capital resources.

All specific financial implications were outlined in the October 12, 2016 presentation to Council.

b) Legal / Risk:

None at this time.

c) Program or Service:

Recommended changes allow for greater flexibility in local and regional service delivery to ensure long term viability of the transit service of St Albert. The revised standards will also serve as the basis for the Local Route Restructure Project. Any network design discussed with the Transit Advisory Committee will be reflective of the service levels established in this policy.

Implementation may result in some areas or routes with service level increases, while other areas or routes may have service level decreases.

d) Organizational:

None at this time.

ALTERNATIVES AND IMPLICATIONS CONSIDERED

If Council does not wish to support the recommendation, the following alternatives could be considered:

Alternative 1. Make no change to transit service standards and guidelines. The current policy limits Administration's ability to review services and routes, to attempt to grow ridership in new areas, and to proactively manage limited resources and budgets by redirecting existing services to more productive opportunities.

Alternative 2. Approve only some of the recommended changes and leave others in their current state.

STRATEGIC CONNECTIONS

a) City of St. Albert Strategic Plan (Policy C-CG-02)

SOCIAL -

3. We believe in the strength of our neighbourhoods, ensuring that there is a diverse range of housing and transportation options available to all.

Strategies include:

3.3. Promote a transit network that enables the City of St. Albert to achieve its economic, social and environmental objectives by making transit a convenient and competitive mode of transportation.

ECONOMIC -

2. We have a diverse and robust business community, which enables economic prosperity to support community building and provide valuable jobs to our residents.

Strategies include:

2.3. Ensure the City of St. Albert supports expansion and attraction of desired business and industry through competitive policies, bylaws, taxes, infrastructure, and services.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT -

1. We are connected to one another by a safe, effective and accessible transportation network that supports public and active modes of movement.

Strategies include:

1.1. Provide for the safe and efficient movement of goods and people within the community to work, school and home.

Report Date (Council Meeting Date): February 27, 2017

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Committee/Department: Transit Services

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