

MEETING DATE: June 26, 2023

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REPORT TITLE: Transit Update for June 26, 2023

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report provides details of what is currently occurring on the Leduc Transit service, outlining deficiencies and options for revising service levels. Administration is seeking input from Council on how to proceed.

BACKGROUND

Leduc Transit has seen significant Covid recovery growth in ridership (Attachment 1) and are one of the few transit agencies in Canada that are surpassing pre-Covid (2019) numbers. To date we are at 107% of the 2019 ridership and steadily increasing. With the ridership increases we are also seeing issues in meeting the public demand. Details are listed below outlining the On-Demand Transit service, Route 10 and LATS. In addition to the current transit services, work is progressing on sub-regional transit collaboration, in particular, with Beaumont. Any changes in transit services would require approval from both the City of Leduc and Leduc County Councils as per the Joint Venture Agreement.

On-Demand Transit

On August 16, 2021, Leduc Transit moved four of five weekday local fixed routes to an on-demand transit (ODT) service, while maintaining service hours and budget. Moving to ODT allowed for the extension of peak-periods-only to an all-day service. Plus, the service area coverage increased from approximately 42% to 100% in Leduc, including the Leduc Business Park (Attachment 2), and significantly more coverage in Nisku than what was provided with fixed routes.

On-Demand Transit has been very successful. However, with the success there have been issues in accommodating riders requests for trips (Attachment 3). Currently, ODT is averaging over 43% in percentage of failed searches due to high demand, with some weeks reaching as high as 66%. Administration has a significant concern that in September, once school is back in session, the number of unaccommodated trips will escalate along with the number of complaints unless a solution can be implemented quickly. This issue aligns with The City of Leduc 2023-2026 Corporate Business Plan that identifies Goal 2.3.16 to investigate options to increase On Demand Transit service levels.

To decrease the unaccommodated trips, thereby increasing public satisfaction, the service level for ODT should be enhanced to meet the growing demand from residents and businesses. Three options are listed below for Council's consideration for 2024 budget, plus an option for consideration for September 2023.

1. Status quo
 - a. Service will continue to operate the current weekday schedule from 5:00am to 6:50pm utilizing one to four buses depending on the time period
 - b. Equates to 28.18 hours per day of service
 - c. Annual operating expense of \$668k (excluding fuel)

2. Increase the number of buses/service hours for On-Demand Service for 2024

- a. On-Demand Service will operate from 4:30am to 11:00pm to match current Route 10 weekdays hours
 - i. Service commences 30-minutes earlier to allow more opportunity for residents to board the first Route 1 trip traveling to Edmonton
 - ii. Service operates later to provide the opportunity for residents who utilize Route 10 as a means to travel home if they do not live on the Route 10.
 - b. Equates to 56.33 hours per day of service
 - c. Addition of two ODT buses to fleet (Attachment 4)
 - d. Annual operating expense would be increased to \$1.34M (excluding fuel)
 - i. Option to end ODT service at 6:50pm; reducing daily service to 51.66 hours and annual expense would be increased to \$1.23M. Addition of evening ODT service can be phased in at a future date.
3. On-Demand weekend service for 2024
- a. Addition of Saturday service (8:30am-11:00pm)
 - i. Equates to 28.86 platform hours on Saturdays
 - ii. Annual operating expense of \$141k (excluding fuel)
 - b. Addition of Sunday service (9:30am to 8:00pm)
 - i. Equates to 20.86 platform hours for Sundays
 - ii. Annual operating expense of \$100k (excluding fuel)
4. Increase the number of buses/service hours for On-Demand Service commencing September 1, 2023
- a. Service hours remain 5:00am to 6:50pm
 - b. Addition of up to two buses depending on availability
 - i. Interim solution is to utilize one of the new LATS buses
 - c. Addition of 8 hours per day per bus
 - d. Addition of \$65k to 2023 budget

Route 10

Route 10 began operations in 2018 as per the Airport Accord agreement between the City of Leduc, Leduc County, City of Edmonton and the Edmonton Regional Airports Authority. The service connects the City of Leduc to the Edmonton International Airport via the hotel corridor on Sparrow Drive/Crescent and south Nisku; provides a means to connect with Edmonton Transit's Route 747 at the Edmonton International Airport to travel to/from Edmonton in time periods that Route 1 does not operate; and provides a service to Leduc Common. The route was later modified to provide service to the Premium Outlet Collection Edmonton International Airport and Costco once they began operations.

Administration has received requests from residents and businesses to improve the Route 10 service to better align with their needs. Options for Council's consideration are listed below.

1. Status quo
 - a. Route 10 currently operates on a 60-minute frequency
 - i. weekdays from 7:20am to 10:17pm
 - ii. Saturdays from 9:06am to 10:17pm
 - iii. Sundays/Holidays from 10:06am to 7:17pm.
 - b. Equates to 15.20 platform hours per weekday; 13.43 platform hours on Saturday; and 9.43 platform hours on Sunday
 - c. One bus used in service throughout the day
 - d. Annual expense is \$400,000 (excluding fuel)
2. Increase frequency of service to 30-minutes on weekdays only
 - a. Routing modification to provide service to additional hotels. No longer travel to Leduc Common (would be served by On-Demand Transit service).

- b. Requires a second bus to be added in order to maintain 30-minute frequency
 - c. Annual expense would be increased to \$713k (excludes fuel)
3. Addition of 30-minute frequency on weekends
- a. As in Option 2, a second bus would be required to meet 30-minute frequency
 - b. Saturdays
 - Equates to an additional 15.34 hours per day
 - Operating expense would be increased by \$61,000 per year
 - c. Sundays
 - Equates to an additional 9.09 hours per day
 - Operating expense would be increased by \$35,000 per year

Opportunities

- Leduc Transit will be conducting a survey of hotels along Route 10 in July. The information gathered will indicate the strengths of the service, what the deficiencies are and if there are synergies that can be found that would benefit both Leduc Transit and the hotels. Details will be provided later in 2023.

Fleet Options

- The Arbocs (small buses) that are used on Route 10 are at the end of their lifecycle. Administration is examining the economics of purchasing the buses or have PWTransit purchase the buses for the Route 10 service. The major difference between the two options is that if Leduc Transit procures the buses it will require capital expenditures plus operating expenses for maintenance/repairs. With PWTransit procuring the buses there will be an increase in hourly contract rate under operating expenses. Maintenance/repairs will be provided by PWTransit. These were originally budgeted for replacement in 2024 but funding was removed with the decision to join EMTSC. Funding will be required in 2024 to either replace the buses or have PWT procure as part of operating agreement.

Leduc Assisted Transportation Services (LATS)

LATS contracts Edmonton Transit (DATS) to provide booking, scheduling and dispatching administrative services, in which LATS pays a rate per booked trip. In 2022, the ridership on LATS did not increase to a level that Administration projected, and resulted in a decision to decrease the contracted services budget for 2023 based on lower ridership. In mid-February 2023, Edmonton Transit (DATS) increased the rate per booked trips from \$3.98 to \$4.52 effective February 1st. Ridership has been slowly increasing resulting in increased expenses leaving a projected shortfall in 2023 of \$27,000.

With the rate increase, Administration has been examining the potential of co-mingling the LATS service with the On-Demand Transit service. Recent modeling conducted by our ODT App provider (RideCo) indicated that the comingling is feasible and would result in efficiencies to increase ridership and revenues, while increasing service levels during certain time periods. A report will be forthcoming upon completion of a full analysis, including costing.

Sub-Regional Transit

1. Leduc County conducted a Transit Feasibility Study in 2023 that outlined a number of options for transit growth that can be phased in as demand warrants.
 - a. Commuter Service (Route 1)
 - b. Improvements to Route 10

- c. Commuter service for Beaumont
 - d. Commuter service for Devon
 - e. West connector via Devon-Calmar-Leduc
 - f. West connector via Warburg-Thorsby-Calmar-Leduc
 - g. East connector via New Sarepta-Rolly View-Leduc
 - h. East connector via New Sarepta-Beaumont-Nisku-EIA
 - i. Combine LATS with On-Demand
2. Stony Plain/Spruce Grove
 - a. Preliminary discussions occurring with regards to collaboratively work with App provider (RideCo) to use same App for paratransit services
 3. Edmonton Transit Route 747
 - a. Discussions to occur with regards to decreasing hourly rate for Route 747.

At this time, there are no definitive commencement dates set for items on the County's Feasibility Study and are therefore, not being included in the 2024 budget. The commuter service for Beaumont is currently in discussions with Transit Administration but will not impact City of Leduc budget.

NEXT STEPS

Based on Council's feedback, Administration will prepare a service level adjustment for Council's consideration as part of the 2024 budget process.

ATTACHMENTS

Transit Update Attachment:

1. Leduc Transit Ridership
2. On-Demand Transit Heat Map of Leduc
3. On-Demand Trip Data (August 16, 2021 to May 31, 2023)
4. Increase of Fleet Requirements for On-Demand Transit in Weekday Time Periods