

Future Trolley Operations – Status Report - Results of the Community Consultation

Recommendation:

That the June 9, 2004, Transportation and Streets Department report 2004TS6537 be received for information.

Report Summary

This report provides the results of the community consultation regarding Future Trolley Operations in Edmonton, as requested in the motion passed at the March 16, 2004, Transportation and Public Works Committee meeting.

Previous Council/Committee Action

- At the June 22, 2004, Transportation and Public Works Committee meeting the March 9, 2004, Transportation and Streets Department report 2004TS7791, and the June 9, 2004, Transportation and Streets Department report 2004TS6537, were postponed to the July 6, 2004, Transportation and Public Works Committee meeting at 9 a.m.
- At the June 22, 2004, Transportation and Public Works Committee meeting the Committee heard from the following delegations:
 G. Feltham, Chair, and K. Brown, Edmonton Transit System Advisory Board; T. De Jong; F. Weichman, McKernan Community League; R. Harper; J. Farquhart; A. Lawrie; E. Paschen; M. Marriott; B. Tucker; B. Biglow; D. Good Striker, Sovereign Blackfoot Nation; D. Cowan; M. Boonstra; R. Clarke; J. Freeman; M. Parsons; S. Cheng; D. Oxenford, Rosedale Community League; J. Guthrie; L. Maisonneuve, Association Canadienne Francaise de l'Alberta; F. Sitek; Z. Schiewe and D. Linder.

- At the March 16, 2004, Transportation and Public Works Committee, the following motion was passed:
 1. That a non-statutory public hearing be deferred until late June 2004, so that Administration can adequately consult with the community and appropriate bodies, such as the Edmonton Transit Advisory Board and Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues on the future of trolley operations in Edmonton.
 2. That Administration provide a status report, including a recommendations on a Non-Statutory Public Hearing date to Transportation and Public Works Committee.

Report

Developing the public consultation process:

A steering committee was convened to assist City Administration to develop and implement the public consultation on the future of trolley buses operations in Edmonton. It was composed of representatives from the following organizations: Edmonton Transit System Advisory Board; Edmonton Federation of Community Leagues; City of Edmonton Corporate Services Department - Communications Branch; and Transportation and Streets Department - Edmonton Transit (ETS).

The steering committee summarized the intended outcome of the public consultation as follows:

- To have an informed public discussion on the future of trolley bus operations in Edmonton; and
- To find out what informed Edmontonians think about the future of trolley bus operations in Edmonton.

The steering committee used the Community Services Department publication 'Building a Public Participation Process' dated April 2003 as a foundation to develop the consultation process.

Elements of the public consultation:

Agreed Upon Statement of Facts – this statement was developed with the assistance of an external facilitator in cooperation with representatives from the Edmonton Trolley Coalition, the ETS Advisory Board, ETS and Mobile Equipment Services (MES). The outcome of three facilitated sessions was the document entitled 'ETS Trolley Bus Operations in Edmonton - Future Directions Discussion Paper April 28, 2004' (Attachment 2). This document was designed to assist the public to be more fully informed on key aspects of the trolley bus matter.

Surveys – Two surveys (Attachment 3) were undertaken to gather the opinions of the public and transit riders.

1) Random Telephone Survey – this survey involved interviews with 400 adult Edmonton residents. Telephone interviewing occurred in two parts.

Respondents were first contacted and asked about their use of transit services, if any. Then, they were mailed a copy of the “agreed statement of facts” discussion paper regarding the trolley issue. Respondents were invited to call back to complete the interview after reviewing the information, or alternatively, they were re-contacted by interviewers.

2) Transit Rider survey – As was the case in the telephone survey, interviewing occurred in two parts. Interviewers were stationed at a variety of transit centres in Edmonton, on a variety of days and times. They approached transit riders at random, first confirming that they are Edmonton residents and asking about their use of transit services. Then, respondents were given a copy of the “agreed statement of facts” discussion paper regarding the trolley issue. Respondents were invited to call back to complete the interview after reviewing the information, or alternatively, they were re-contacted by telephone interviewers.

Public Meetings – Two public meetings were held May 11 and 12, 2004 – one on the south side at Harry Ainlay High School and the second on the north side at the Stanley Milner Library. A total of 60 people attended the two public meetings.

To inform public meeting participants on several aspects of the trolley bus discussion, three presentations were provided at each meeting. These presentations were provided by the

Edmonton Trolley Coalition, the Society of Citizens for Better Transit and Edmonton Transit. Wayne Mandryk from Edmonton Transit provided meeting attendees with City Administration's recommendation and the rationale for it. An external facilitator moderated the two meetings. Attendees were given an opportunity to ask questions and make comments. At the end of survey each meeting attendees were asked to complete a questionnaire similar in content to the one used in the random telephone and transit rider survey. The two public meetings were widely advertised and promoted to transit riders, community leagues and the public generally.

Outcome of the Public Consultation:

Survey Results

After being provided with some general background on the decision ETS faces with respect to trolley operations, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed that ETS should replace its trolley buses with diesel buses and the reasons for their opinion.

1) Random Telephone Survey

- Nearly half (48%) of the 400 Edmonton adult residents surveyed either strongly agreed (17%) or agreed (31%). More than one-third (37%) either strongly disagreed (12%) or disagreed (25%) that ETS should replace trolleys with diesel buses.

- Reasons offered most often for agreeing that ETS should replace trolleys with diesels included potential cost savings (58%). The most-often offered reasons for disagreeing related to trolleys being cleaner, less polluting (53%).

2) Transit Rider survey

- More than half (58%) of 400 transit riders surveyed either strongly agreed (23%) or agreed (35%). Just under one-third (30%) either strongly disagreed (8%) or disagreed (22%) ETS should replace its trolley buses with diesel buses.
- Reasons offered most often for agreeing that ETS should replace trolleys with diesels included the cost savings that could be achieved (32%) followed by trolley reliability concerns (29%). The most-often offered reasons for disagreeing related to trolleys being cleaner, less polluting (42%), followed by a belief that trolleys are quieter or more efficient (17% each).

Public meeting results – A total of 60 citizens attended the two public meetings of which 46 completed the survey. Meeting attendees heard three presentations on the future of trolley operations and received the “agreed statement of facts”.

- Fifteen per cent of the 46 public meeting attendees who completed the survey agreed or strongly agreed with replacing trolleys with diesels. Three-quarters of participants (76%) disagreed with replacing trolleys. Nine per cent offered no opinion.

- Reasons offered most often for agreeing that ETS should replace trolleys with diesels included cost savings (71%) followed by diesels perceived to be more versatile (57%). The most-often offered reasons for disagreeing related to trolleys being cleaner, less polluting (71%), followed by trolleys being quieter (46%) and historic reasons (23%).

Attachment 1 provides a table that summarizes the survey respondent results from the three surveys: 1) the random telephone survey, 2) the transit rider survey and 3) the public meeting attendees' survey.

Other Stakeholder Input:

ETS and Mobile Equipment Service (MES) personnel – Administration also sought the input of City staff who drive and maintain the trolleys.

- Of 101 employees surveyed in total, 94 (93%) favoured purchasing and operating only diesel buses in future; two (2%) favoured continuing with both and five (5%) abstained.
- The main reasons employees cited for discontinuing trolleys were 1) for better service for customers (accessibility for seniors and disabled); 2) can interline with other routes; and 3) can go around problems, accidents and detours – less service disruptions.

Feedback through ETS Commendations and Concerns – ETS operates a citizen commendations and concerns line to facilitate feedback on transit matters. The

two most frequent ways in which citizens contact ETS with feedback are by telephone at 496-8900 or e-mail at etransit@edmonton.ca.

Attachment 4 – ETS Customer Commendations and Concerns Analysis – Trolley Operations, offers a summary of citizen feedback on the topic of trolley buses back to 2002 and on requests for low floor bus service back to 2001 comparing requests on trolley routes with non-trolley routes.

Background Information Attached

1. Table: Survey Respondent Results Summary – Future of Trolley Operations
2. [ETS Trolley Bus Operations in Edmonton - Future Directions Discussion Paper April 28, 2004 \(also known as the agreed upon statement of facts\)](#)
3. [Marcomm Works – May 2004 Trolley Research Surveys – Summary Report](#)
4. ETS Customer Commendations and Concerns Analysis – Trolley Operations

Background Information Available on Request

1. Approach to the Public Consultation Process for the Future of Trolley Operations in Edmonton dated April 5, 2004.
2. Report of the Public Meetings (May 11 and 12, 2004) – Future of Trolley Operations in Edmonton
3. Trolley Review 2004 - ETS/MES Employee Survey Results

Others Approving this Report

- W. D. Burn, General Manager, Asset Management and Public Works Department
- J. Tustian, General Manager, Corporate Services Department

Table: Survey Respondent Results Summary – Future of Trolley Operations

The following table summarizes the results of three surveys undertaken to gather the opinion of the public, transit riders and public meeting participants.

After being provided with some general background on the decision ETS faces with respect to trolley operations, respondents were asked if they agreed or disagreed that ETS should replace its trolley buses with diesel buses. Respondents were then asked to provide the main reasons that they agreed or disagreed.

Sample	Agree - discontinue trolleys	Disagree - continue trolleys	No opinion	Main reasons for agreeing	Main reasons for disagreeing
Transit Riders (n=400)	58%	30%	12%	Cost savings important (32%) Trolleys break down (29%) Can't use wheelchair on trolleys (19%)	Trolleys pollute less (42%) Quieter (17%) More fuel efficient (17%)
Edmonton Residents (n=400)	48%	37%	15%	Cost savings important (58%) Diesel buses more versatile, reliable (14%) Trolleys are limited in where they can go (10%)	Trolleys pollute less (53%) Diesels pollute more (19%) Quieter 15%
Public Meeting Attendees (n=46)	15%	76%	9%	Cost savings important (71%) Diesels more versatile (57%) Wire unattractive (29%)	Trolleys pollute less (71%) Quieter (46%) Historic (23%)

ETS Customer Commendations and Concerns Analysis – Trolley Operations

ETS Customer Commendations and Concerns Analysis – Trolley Operations

(Citizen feedback received through telephone calls, e-mails and letters)

Coded under ‘Trolley bus issues’

Year	Reason for feedback				Total
	Saw no trolleys; use trolleys in summer	Trolley service concerns, get rid of them	Keep trolleys, trolleys appreciated	Other (inquires, etc.)	
2002	1	9	0	1	11
2003	3	2	4	0	9
2004 (to May 31)	0	4	15	6	25

Coded under ‘Request for low floor accessible bus service’

Year	Requests for low floor buses on trolley routes (i.e. 3, 5, 7, 9, 120, 133, 135)	Requests for low floor buses on non-trolley routes	Total requests
2001	8	17	25
2002	11	9	20
2003	16	25	41
2004 (YTD May 31)	3	7	10