

# ETS Trolley Bus Operations In Edmonton - Future Directions

Discussion Paper  
April 28, 2004

**Introduction:** This discussion paper is designed to assist citizens to understand the issues surrounding the future of trolley bus service in Edmonton.

**Background:** Administration has recommended to Council that trolley bus service be discontinued in 2004 and wishes Council to make a decision on the future of trolley bus operations this year. Council has asked administration to find savings where possible, and administration has identified the elimination of trolley bus operations as an opportunity to reduce the costs of transit services. City Council's Transportation and Public Works Committee passed a motion to undertake additional public consultation on the future of trolley operations.

Decisions of City Council and recommendations of Administration are

guided by two major plans - Plan Edmonton and the Transportation Master Plan. These plans direct Council to provide affordable public transit that minimizes community and environmental impacts, especially on inner city residential areas.

A portion of the diesel bus fleet is being replaced every year. Trolley buses are planned for replacement in 2010. In 2004, new diesel buses cost about \$400,000 and new trolley buses cost about \$900,000.

In North America over 98 percent of transit properties operate diesel buses. Nine cities also continue to operate trolley buses - two in Mexico, five in the US and two in Canada.

The balance of this document identifies key topic areas that may be discussed throughout the consultation process.

## 1. Community Impacts

Points for keeping trolley bus service	Points for eliminating trolley bus service
<p><b>A. Noise Impacts</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Trolley buses are quieter than diesel buses.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>B. Vehicle Emission Impacts</b> (environmental impact of emissions from buses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The trolley bus is considered a zero emission vehicle</li> <li>● Diesel bus emissions have declined steadily since 1988 and in 2007 regulations go into effect requiring greater reductions.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>C. Impacts on Accessibility for All Users</b> (the differences for all users in accessing and using different buses)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New trolley buses would be accessible.</li> <li>● Accessible buses could be provided on trolley routes using existing diesels now.</li> </ul>	

## 2. Financial Impacts

Points for keeping trolley bus service	Points for eliminating trolley bus service
<p><b>A. Operating Costs</b>  <i>(defined as the day to day expenses such as fuel and maintenance)</i> The total bus and LRT operating budget for 2004 is \$132 million.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The savings are projections only at this point and may change over time, that is, be better or worse.</li> <li>● Administration has projected operating savings of \$1.9 million per year between mid-2004 and 2013.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>B. Capital Costs</b>  <i>(defined as the purchase of new buses, upgrades to the overhead wire system, transit centres, etc.)</i> The total funding contained in the City's Long Range Financial Plan for ETS from 2004 to 2013, excluding South LRT construction, is \$434.4 million.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● The City will lose its investment in the trolley overhead wire system. (\$12 million over the past ten years)</li> <li>● There are a number of scenarios that could change the projected savings.</li> <li>● Administration has projected savings of \$43.2 million in capital costs between mid-2004 and 2013, e.g. from buying diesels instead of trolleys.</li> </ul>	
<p><b>C. Future Diesel Fuel and Electricity Prices and Supply</b>            The supply and price of energy to power the fleet may affect operating cost and savings projections.</p>	

## 3. Operating Issues

*(the way the transit fleet is operated and the differences between operating trolley buses and diesel buses in the fleet)*

Points for keeping trolley bus service	Points for eliminating trolley bus service
<p><b>A. Service reliability</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● New trolley buses can have special equipment that allows them limited travel away from overhead wires when necessary.</li> <li>● With Edmonton's present trolleys, a power outage or street blockage can disrupt several trolley buses.</li> </ul>	

**NOTE:** All dollar figures provided by City Administration.

For more information on these topics check out the following Web sites:  
[www.bettertransit.ab.ca](http://www.bettertransit.ab.ca)      [www.takeETS.com](http://www.takeETS.com)      [www.geocities.com/trolley\\_coalition](http://www.geocities.com/trolley_coalition)