



**CITY OF EDMONTON:**  
**Ride Transit Pilot**  
Program Evaluation 2018

ANDERSON DRAPER

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Introduction

Addressing poverty in a community requires examining public transportation. Accessible and affordable transit is identified by EndPovertyEdmonton as one of the six game changers for poverty elimination.<sup>1</sup>

The Ride Transit Program is intended to support Edmontonians with low income in accessing education, employment, and recreation opportunities. In 2018, the City of Edmonton entered into an agreement with AndersonDraper Consulting Inc., an independent evaluation company, to undertake an evaluation of the Ride Transit Program. The evaluation was overseen by a Steering Committee and managed internally by the Manager, Service Design, Business Performance and Customer Experience.

## Evaluation Approach

The evaluation approach was participatory, with an emphasis on utilization. The Steering Committee met throughout the project to review the evaluation framework and data collection tools, and to discuss findings. The evaluation used a multi-method, qualitative and quantitative data collection approach. Customer research included an online and telephone survey as well as passholder interviews and observations. Information was gathered through in-person interviews with staff involved in designing and implementing the program. Representatives from Edmonton Public Library engaged in a facilitated conversation with the Evaluator and agency representatives participated in focus groups.

The intent of the evaluation is to:

- Provide insight and research to better understand the impact and barriers of the Ride Transit Program
- Offer a preliminary understanding of who is using the program and where more research may be required
- Provide recommendations and understanding into the effectiveness of the Ride Transit Pilot and its implementation
- Deliver the necessary report and evaluation methodology to satisfy provincial and municipal program reporting requirements

## Major Findings

This evaluation provides insight to better understand the successes and challenges of the Ride Transit Pilot. As a result, more clarity exists as to who is using the program and how access can be improved and expanded.

Evidence collected through this evaluation indicates the following outcomes are being achieved:

- Increased access to public transportation
- Increased access to employment opportunities
- Improved participation in recreational opportunities
- Reduced social isolation

<sup>1</sup>The six game changers for poverty elimination are: eliminate racism, livable incomes, affordable housing, accessible & affordable transit, affordable & quality child care and access to mental health services. For more information on the game changers, visit <https://www.endpovertyedmonton.ca/our-strategy/>

## Highlights

### Program Users

Those who currently access the program include individuals and families who are: below low income cut-off, Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped (AISH) recipients, income support recipients, newcomers, and youth in government care.

### Impact and Benefits

- Ride Transit is making transportation more accessible for eligible Edmontonians with low income who are using the program.
- Access to affordable transportation has been linked to positive benefits. Data collected from staff, agencies, and customers indicated an increase in independence, reduction in stress, and greater access to employment, education, health care, community events, as well as reduced social isolation.
- Prior to this program most respondents felt it was too expensive to buy a pass (75%). However, the majority of respondents purchased passes before the reduced rate was offered (70%). During the customer focus group, a participant shared being less stressed having the pass at \$35 as she no longer needed to “choose between food, rent and bus.” Others noted prior to the reduced rate they would purchase and ration tickets, often running out before the month ended. Sometimes families would share passes among members, only buying one for multiple users.
- Participants generally use their pass for work, regard them as value for money and most use their pass daily. Over half of respondents (60%) said they attend more events or get-togethers because they have the pass. The majority felt it was easier to get to appointments (72%) and access work opportunities (65%) because of the pass. Almost 80 percent of respondents felt they were better able to access locations and necessary services because of this program.



### Barriers

- The majority of survey respondents felt it was easy to apply for the pass (80%), that City staff were helpful when customers were applying for the first time (77%) and when buying their pass (90%).
- Documentation was noted as a challenge, specifically for those applicants who had undergone changes in financial circumstances or who were unable to produce a Notice of Assessment from the Canadian Revenue Agency as required for the application.
- There is a segment of the population that experience difficulty getting to places where Ride Transit passes are available. Confusion remains regarding the ability for AISH recipients to receive their passes by mail. At the time of the evaluation, survey respondents were either grateful for the reinstatement of mail-outs or were still under the impression mail-outs are not available.
- There may exist a segment of the population who are unaware of the program and are not accessing it or other support services. Newcomers may learn about the program from non-traditional channels. Participants noted additional promotion of the Ride Transit Program would be beneficial. Schools may be a useful venue to promote the program to families.

## Implementation

- Although timelines were short, the program was launched as intended. Staff adjusted program delivery to address issues as they arose. Collaboration among partners supported coordinated program implementation. Records and information management system compatibility were a challenge.
- There was good uptake and overall positive user experience of the program and, for the most part, partners seem aware of the program and able to promote it.
- The most used pass pick-up location was the Edmonton Service Centre, followed by Mill Woods Recreation Centre, Jasper Place Library, Commonwealth and Clareview Recreation Centres. Overall, Edmonton Public Library pick-up locations were less utilized yet remain an option for review to determine the future of libraries as a pick-up location.

## Recommendations

Based on findings from the evaluation, the following rationale and recommendations are offered for consideration.

**1** The total number of enrolled Ride Transit users has been steadily increasing since June of 2017. However, some evaluation participants believe there is the potential a segment of the population exists who may be unaware of the program and are not accessing it or other support services. Additional promotion and sharing of information could support the continued uptake of the program.

**Recommendation:** Enhance the awareness of the Ride Transit Program by using different communication channels to target different customer groups such as newcomers, youth not currently enrolled in school, and low-income residents who do not receive agency support.

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**2** Some challenges were noted with the application process. It was suggested an online application could help shorten line-ups and speed up processing time. Also, the application length was found to be a barrier with respect to readability. For more details on suggested changes to the application, refer to the Appendix: Application Form Design and Usability Assessment.

**Recommendation:** Strengthen the application process:

- Review and update the application form for readability, length and ease of use. Translate application form into the most common spoken languages in Edmonton.<sup>2</sup>
  - Have the application form available online as a fillable form that can be submitted electronically, in addition to the ability to print off and submit in person or by mail.
  - Have application support available at Edmonton Service Centre (staffing and space)
- 

**3** The Ride Transit Pilot is integrated with the City of Edmonton Leisure Access Program (LAP). The “one stop shop” was intended to simplify the application process by combining both LAP and Ride Transit, streamlining the application experience. Although the application process appears to work for most applicants, there were segments of the population who experienced challenges. For instance, some applicants were approved under LAP for access to community recreation centres however denied approval for Ride Transit, due to the difference in income eligibility. Having the two sets of requirements seems to make the application process more cumbersome than necessary.

**Recommendation:** Make the requirements for the Ride Transit program the same as the requirements for the Leisure Access Program to address the relationship and shared processes between the two.

<sup>2</sup>Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino); Punjabi ; Chinese, German, Spanish, Ukrainian, Cantonese, Arabic, Polish and Vietnamese. [http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/vc-rv/index.cfm?LANG=ENG&VIEW=d&TOPIC\\_ID=4&GEOCODE=835&CFORMAT=jpg](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/vc-rv/index.cfm?LANG=ENG&VIEW=d&TOPIC_ID=4&GEOCODE=835&CFORMAT=jpg)

# 4

A common topic that arose throughout the evaluation and across participants was the use of income verification or the notice of assessment requirement for approval. For instance, as the income requirement was for the previous year, some applicants whose circumstances had changed were not eligible for the pass as a result of their prior situation. This also posed challenges for refugees or newcomers without an assessment. Others noted concern about expectations around the upcoming re-application and renewal process.

**Recommendation:** Further review and develop the program's supporting processes from a customer and staff perspective.

- Consider a phased roll-out for re-application and a simpler renewal process.
- Explore a provisional pass, time limited (e.g. three to six months) which would allow individual applicants time to gather the appropriate documentation, under justified circumstances as assessed by the City of Edmonton or a service agency.
- Consider alternate ways to verify income and look for ways to integrate verification with other levels of government offering services to the same population.
- When circumstances warrant, allow agencies to provide a letter of support explaining an applicant's situation and requesting the requirements be waived. Examples may include youth without the necessary identification to obtain a notice of assessment, or adults whose situations have changed since the previous tax year.

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# 5

Technology issues and database compatibility challenges between stakeholders were noted as an implementation challenge.

**Recommendation:** Implement a consistent, shared technology and procedures to support the delivery of the program.

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# 6

Some participants would like to see additional locations to purchase Ride Transit passes. Suggestions include: at convenience stores, supermarkets or malls, expanding into more libraries and recreation centers, and additional downtown city locations. Establishing a connection with Alberta Works and Support Centres for promotion and pass pick up was also mentioned by participants as something to be explored.

**Recommendation:** Review use and feasibility of current pick up locations and consider additional pass pick up locations. Explore partnerships with groups or other levels of government for promotion, administration, and distribution.

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# 7

This evaluation offers a preliminary understanding of who is using the program. More research on vulnerable populations who are not connected with support agencies would be useful to expand the program's reach as would connecting with individuals who are not accessing the program to further ascertain the reasons why.

**Recommendation:** Undertake additional research to learn more from organizations serving the most vulnerable populations as well as individuals not approved for or not accessing the program. Additional exploration to further determine program impact on specific groups, for example on refugees, refugee claimants, and immigrants, groups with limited mobility (i.e those accessing the DATS program), Indigenous groups, LGBTQ youth, and those who are homeless or living in social housing, as well as those no longer accessing the program would help to further understand the degree to which the Ride Transit Program is helping to lift people out of poverty.

# 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The Ride Transit Program is designed to increase access to Edmonton Transit Service for Edmontonians with low income by reducing the cost of a monthly transit pass. By increasing access to transit, Edmontonians with low income will have greater access to education, employment, and recreation opportunities. This program involves collaboration with and support from Edmonton Public Library, City of Edmonton Community & Recreation Facilities, and the Government of Alberta.

## Ride Transit Program at a Glance

- The first phase was announced on May 19, 2017
- Eligible<sup>3</sup> Edmontonians receive a subsidized youth or adult transit pass at a rate of \$35/month
- The rate took effect August 15, 2017 and is exempt from fare increases until 2019
- The Ride Transit pilot is integrated with the City of Edmonton Leisure Access Program (LAP) application and registration process. Application information is captured, managed, maintained in, and extracted from the City's database
- There are approximately 60,000 LAP passholders who are eligible for the Ride Transit Program
- Passes are currently available at 12 locations throughout the city

The City of Edmonton entered into an agreement with AndersonDraper Consulting Inc., an independent evaluation company, in January 2018 to evaluate the Ride Transit Pilot. The evaluation was overseen by a Steering Committee and managed by the Manager, Service Design, Business Performance and Customer Experience.

The intent of the evaluation is to:

- Provide insight and research to better understand the impact and barriers of the Ride Transit Program
- Offer a preliminary understanding of who is using the program and where more research may be required
- Provide recommendations and understanding into the effectiveness of the Ride Transit Pilot and its implementation
- Deliver the necessary report and evaluation methodology to satisfy provincial and municipal program reporting requirements

Accessible and affordable transit is identified by EndPovertyEdmonton as one of the six game changers for poverty elimination.

The evaluation approach is participatory in nature, with emphasis on utilization. The Ride Transit Program Evaluation Advisory Committee is part of the Steering Committee, which includes representatives from the City of Edmonton and the Province of Alberta (see Acknowledgements at the end of the report for a list of Committee participants).

In April 2018, the Manager and Evaluator met with EndPovertyEdmonton to review the evaluation framework and ensure it aligns with EndPovertyEdmonton's overarching evaluation.

<sup>3</sup>Refer to the City of Edmonton's Leisure Access Program Application for more information on eligibility: <https://www.edmonton.ca/ets/subsidized-transit.aspx>



## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<b>AISH</b>	Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped
<b>CSS</b>	Catholic Social Services
<b>DATS</b>	Disabled Adult Transit Service
<b>ECS</b>	Edmonton Catholic Schools
<b>EPL</b>	Edmonton Public Library
<b>EPSB</b>	Edmonton Public School Board
<b>ETS</b>	Edmonton Transit Service
<b>GOA</b>	Government of Alberta
<b>IT</b>	Information Technologies
<b>LAP</b>	Leisure Access Program
<b>LICO</b>	Low Income Cut-Off
<b>LRT</b>	Light Rail Transit
<b>NOA</b>	Notice of Assessment (Canadian Revenue Agency)
<b>PATH</b>	Program to Assist the Homeless
<b>RTP</b>	Ride Transit Pass

# 1.1 RIDE TRANSIT PROGRAM

The Ride Transit Program is part of a suite of subsidized transit offerings, intended to complement existing programs offered by the City of Edmonton and Edmonton region school boards. Both programs are supported by Government of Alberta grants.

## Standard Transit Passes

		<b>FOR POST-SECONDARY STUDENTS</b>

## Subsidized Transit Passes

<b>MONTHLY PASSES FOR YOUTH</b>		<b>FOR ADULTS</b>

## Edmonton Transit Low Income Transit Pass

### 2016-2018 Operating Budget

The following visual represents the budgeted costs associated with the Ride Transit Program approved in the 2016 supplementary operating budget process. In 2017, operating expenses of \$900,000 supported an estimated 975,000 rides. To date, Edmonton Transit Service estimates year to date ridership has doubled with 1,980,000 rides as of June 2018. Program revenue for 2017 and 2018 year to date has fallen short of budget estimates as program uptake was less than expected, according to City of Edmonton staff.<sup>4</sup>

	2016	2017	2018	TOTAL
<b>Revenue</b>				
Pass Sales	-	1,400.00	8,400.00	9,800.00
Grant Revenue	-	2,213.00	4,000.00	6,213.00
<b>Total Revenue</b>		<b>3,613.00</b>	<b>12,400.00</b>	<b>16,013.00</b>
<b>Operating Expense</b>				
Discount	-	4,730.00	15,005.00	19,735.00
Program Expenses	443.00	900.00	1,625.00	2,968.00
One-time Transfer to Capital	(400.00)	-	-	(400.00)
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>43.00</b>	<b>5,630.00</b>	<b>16,630.00</b>	<b>22,303.00</b>
<b>NET POSITION</b>	<b>43.00</b>	<b>3,417.00</b>	<b>12,630.00</b>	<b>6,290.00</b>
<b>GRANT FUNDING</b>				
Discount on pass sales	-	4,730.00	15,005.00	19,735.00
Operating Expense	443.00	900.00	1,625.00	2,968.00
One-Time Transfer to Capital	(400)	-	-	(400)
<b>Total Operating Expense</b>	<b>43.00</b>	<b>900.00</b>	<b>1,625.00</b>	<b>2,568.00</b>
<b>Expenses Eligible for Provincial Grant</b>	<b>43.00</b>	<b>5,630.00</b>	<b>16,630.00</b>	<b>22,303.00</b>
<b>Provincial Grant Revenue</b>		<b>2,213.00</b>	<b>4,000.00</b>	<b>6,213.00</b>

<sup>4</sup>June 2018 Sale, Revenue, and Ridership Report, Edmonton Transit Service

## 1.2 TRANSPORTATION AND POVERTY: AN OVERVIEW

The following offers a summary of a scan of literature and review of relevant documents provided by the City of Edmonton showing links between transportation and poverty. This information helped inform the evaluation framework and final report.

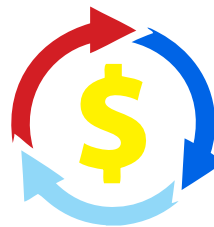
A defining feature of urban poverty is social exclusion as a result of an inability to access jobs and services (World Bank, 2002). In 2016, three-quarters (75.2%) of jobs in metro Edmonton were in the services and accommodation sector, and food services, with predominantly low wages. Low paying jobs often lack security, regular hours, and benefits (Edmonton Social Planning Council, 2017).

For people living below the poverty line, purchase or use of a vehicle can be a prohibitive expense. These individuals must rely on public transit to access employment, education, childcare, grocery stores and healthcare (Civitas Consulting, 2016). Using public transit can be expensive and challenging to fit into a tight household budget. Transit fees are generally between 8 and 16 percent of household expenditures for those below the poverty line (World Bank, 2002). For example, a minimum wage worker has to work approximately 10 hours to purchase a monthly transit pass (Poverty Reduction Coalition, 2006).

In addition, costs associated with public transit can lead to social isolation for those unable to pay. This affects people's ability to break the cycle of poverty (Poverty Reduction Coalition, 2006).

Given the relatively high cost of transportation, individuals may attempt to ride public transit without a valid pass. In Edmonton, riding transit without paying can result in a \$250 fine and will accrue when left unpaid (City of Edmonton, 2018). Individuals can face mounting ticket costs and possible prosecution for non-payment. The compounding factors of poverty through an inability to access affordable transportation can negatively impact individuals and their families.

Addressing poverty in a community includes examining accessibility to public transportation (e.g., EndPovertyEdmonton, 2018; Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, 2013; Poverty Reduction Coalition, 2006). To end the cycle of poverty, people require affordable transportation (EndPovertyEdmonton, 2018). Access to affordable transportation can have positive benefits such as increased school attendance, decreased contact with the justice system, reduced injuries, improved physical activity, more disposable family income, and greater freedom and mobility (Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, 2013).



### Potential Return on Investment

In 2016, the City of Edmonton calculated the social return on investment during a trial program that provided free youth transit passes, through the Providing Accessible Transit Here (PATH) Program. **For every \$1 invested, a return of at least \$1.92 was created in social value.** This included lower court costs, more positive interactions with transit authorities, increased ability to maintain employment and reduced risk of adverse events (PATH, 2017). After only six months, youth were using transit to achieve positive outcomes such as increased participation in activities. The transit pass offered them the opportunity to attend school, work or programs more consistently (Civitas Consulting, 2016). Youth also benefited by enriching their daily activities through recreation, socialization opportunities, expanding their geographic range and personal experiences (Civitas Consulting, 2016). The positive impacts of the program were used as a basis to inform the Ride Transit Program, expanding access to other vulnerable Edmontonians.

## 1.3 METHODOLOGY

A robust plan and outcomes measurement framework was developed to guide the evaluation. Evaluation involves gathering data and analyzing it to determine whether the program is effectively carrying out planned activities, and the extent to which outcomes and anticipated results are being achieved.

As part of the evaluation framework, AndersonDraper Consulting Inc., with input from the Steering Committee, developed a comprehensive logic model outlining inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.

A logic model is a visual illustration of a program's inputs (or resources), activities, outputs and expected outcomes. It is a tool used to describe relationships between various components. A theory of change is a foundational statement that provides an understanding of the pathway to change. It clarifies expectations amongst diverse stakeholders and highlights common understanding regarding intended outcomes of the proposed change.

### Theory of Change

**IF** Edmontonians with low income have affordable transit **THEN** barriers to access education, employment, and recreation opportunities will be reduced, increasing social connectedness.

# Logic Model

A logic model maps out how the theory of change will be achieved. The following logic model illustrates detailed program information including the evaluation questions. The questions were arrived at and refined through consultation with the Steering Committee.

Ride Transit Program Logic Model (March 5th, 2018)

INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	OUTCOMES	
Staff Partners Budget & Funding Contract between GOA and COE Communication & training materials Technology (database) Facilities Strategy & Policy	Collaboration with and support from partners, including Edmonton Public Library, City of Edmonton recreation facilities and the Alberta Government  Program Promotion  Process applications, manage records and registrations  Provide monthly passes to eligible recipients  User / customer support  Budgeting and reporting  Identification of barriers to accessing the Ride Transit Program	# of partners  Amount of support (funding and otherwise)  Program promotional materials, evidence of distribution  # of applications, registrations  # of monthly youth or adult transit pass at a subsidized rate and reasons for not granting  Reporting requirements are met  #barriers identified, evidence they are addressed	Collaboration among partners supports coordinated program implementation for better integration, resulting in a customer-centric approach	
			Individuals with low income have increased accessibility to public transportation	
			As a result of the Ride Transit Program, individuals with low income have increased access to education, employment, and recreation opportunities, and increased social connectedness	
			Changes to the Ride Transit Program are evidence-based and informed through a model of continuous improvement	
			EVALUATION QUESTIONS	INDICATORS
			Has the Ride Transit program made transportation more accessible (vs. more affordable) for the targeted populations?  If yes, how has that impacted the lives of people who can now afford public transportation? (new users who could not afford transit before)  Who currently accesses the program? (Intended reach)  Are there groups in poverty that cannot access the program? What are the gaps and how should they be considered?  Was the program implemented as intended and activities carried out as planned? What worked well? What were the barriers? What could be improved?	Evidence of collaboration among partners to support program implementation (self reports, interviews, observations)  # of individuals with low income who have accessed the program and obtained a monthly pass (City's database)  # of users asked as a part of the evaluation who report increased access to (a) education (b) employment (c) recreation opportunities and (d) increased social connectedness (self report, survey, focus groups)  # of barriers identified, evidence of a plan to address barriers (staff & user reports)  Assessment of application and ease of access (staff & user reports)



## Data Collection

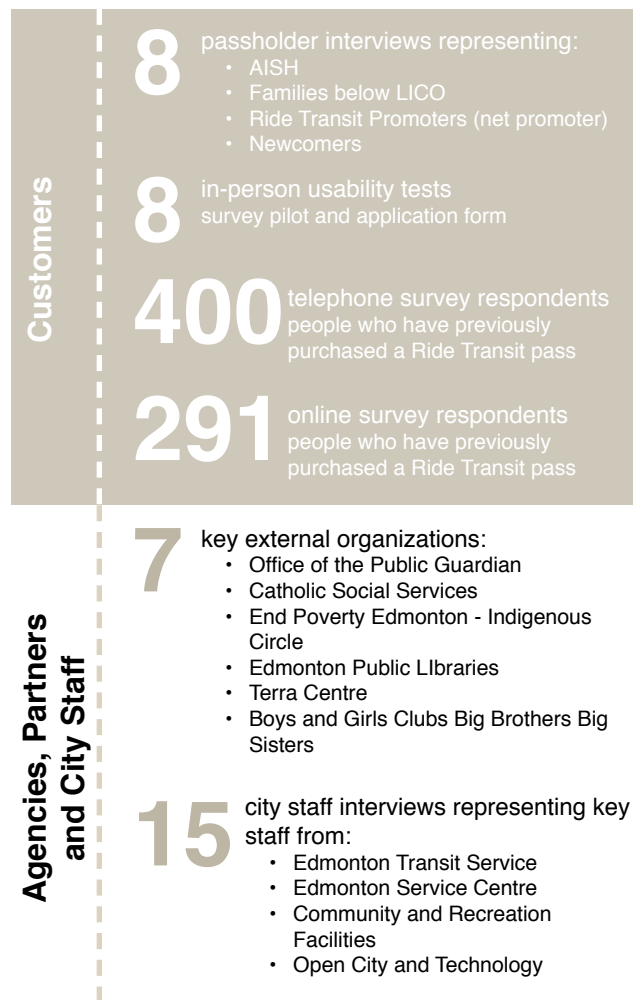
The evaluation used a multi-method approach, collecting both qualitative and quantitative data. Information was gathered through in-person interviews with City of Edmonton staff involved in the implementation, design and external areas of this program. Each group was asked a standardized set of questions to provide information about the implementation process, successes, challenges and their experience with the program. The individual or small group interviews took place at City of Edmonton spaces and lasted approximately an hour. Two representatives from Edmonton Public Library engaged in a facilitated conversation with the Evaluator over the phone.

Agency representatives and program customers participated in a focus group. Customers were offered \$100.00 for their participation. An online and telephone survey was conducted as part of the data collection. The survey tool was piloted in June 2018 at the Edmonton Service Centre with four individuals prior to full implementation. Following pilot testing, the literacy level of the tool was adjusted, and some questions were changed to enhance comprehension and flow. All participants were informed about the purpose of the data collection, the voluntary nature of participation, and what the information would be used for. Survey participants were able to enter a draw for one of six (three for telephone and three for online) gift cards of \$100.00 each. Names were randomly selected and gift cards were mailed to the winners.

### HOW DID WE COLLECT DATA?



### WHO DID WE TALK TO?



## 1.4 LIMITATIONS

Every evaluation has limitations. Throughout this evaluation, several measures have been taken to reduce limitations. For instance, the potential for researcher bias was limited as an independent external evaluation company was contracted to undertake this work. Different evaluators took part across the spectrum of evaluation activities. The project was managed internally by the City of Edmonton, by a manager outside of Edmonton Transit Service.

As the evaluation findings are based, in part, on the views of key informants and survey respondents with a vested interest in the Ride Transit Program, there is the potential for respondent bias. To reduce the effect of respondent bias, the Evaluator ensured respondents understood the confidentiality of their responses, and reassured them their feedback was important to understanding the impact of the program, and was potentially contributing to improvements. Non-program customers were not directly included as part of the evaluation. However, an attempt to inform the evaluation of their beliefs included “proxies.” Agency staff and current customers were asked to comment on why some qualifying individuals may not access the program.

The survey was potentially impacted by respondents’ willingness to participate. As one of the data collection methods was an online survey accessing those individuals for whom the City of Edmonton has an e-mail address, there was a risk of oversaturating the same population. Yet, response rates for both the online and phone surveys were higher than typically seen in surveys.

In short, this evaluation was conducted externally and several different groups participated including staff, partners, agencies and customers of the service which increases the rigour of and confidence in the results.





## 2.0 RIDE TRANSIT CUSTOMERS SNAPSHOT

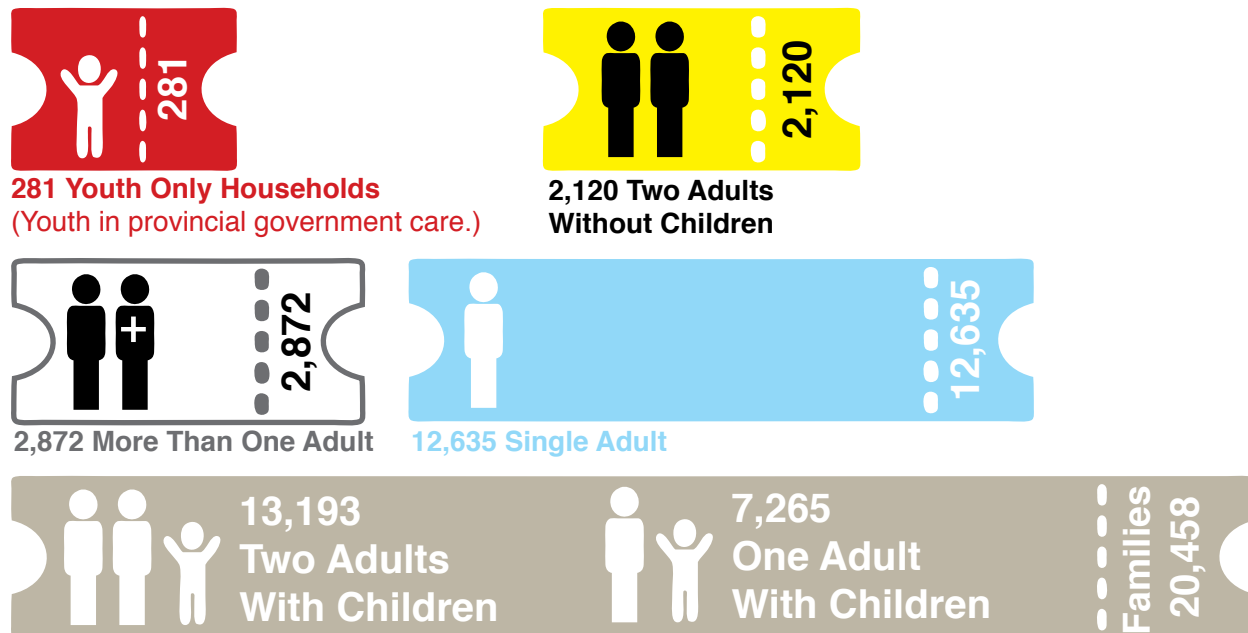
The following data, provided by the City of Edmonton, contextualizes the Ride Transit Program from June 2017 to April 2018. See Appendix: Ride Transit Customer Detail for more information.

**Note:** The Ride Transit Program is available to Edmonton residents aged 6 to 64 years. Edmonton Transit Service (ETS) offers customers 65 years or older a Senior Fare monthly transit pass for \$15.50. Therefore, senior citizens do not qualify for the Ride Transit Program and are not represented in this data.

**Figure 1. Current Enrolled Participants (cumulative as of April 2018)**

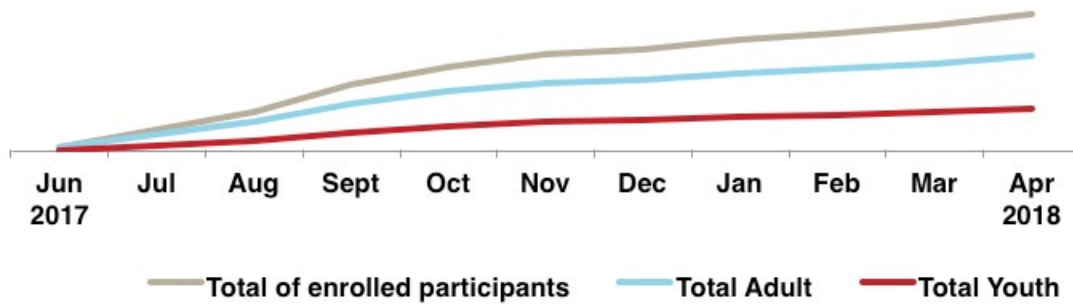


**Figure 2. Current Enrolled Participants Household Composition (As of April 2018)**



Note: Not all participants specified a household composition.

**Figure 3. Enrolled Participants Over Time (Total by Age Category)**



**Figure 4. Current Declined Applications and Reason (Total as of April 2018)**

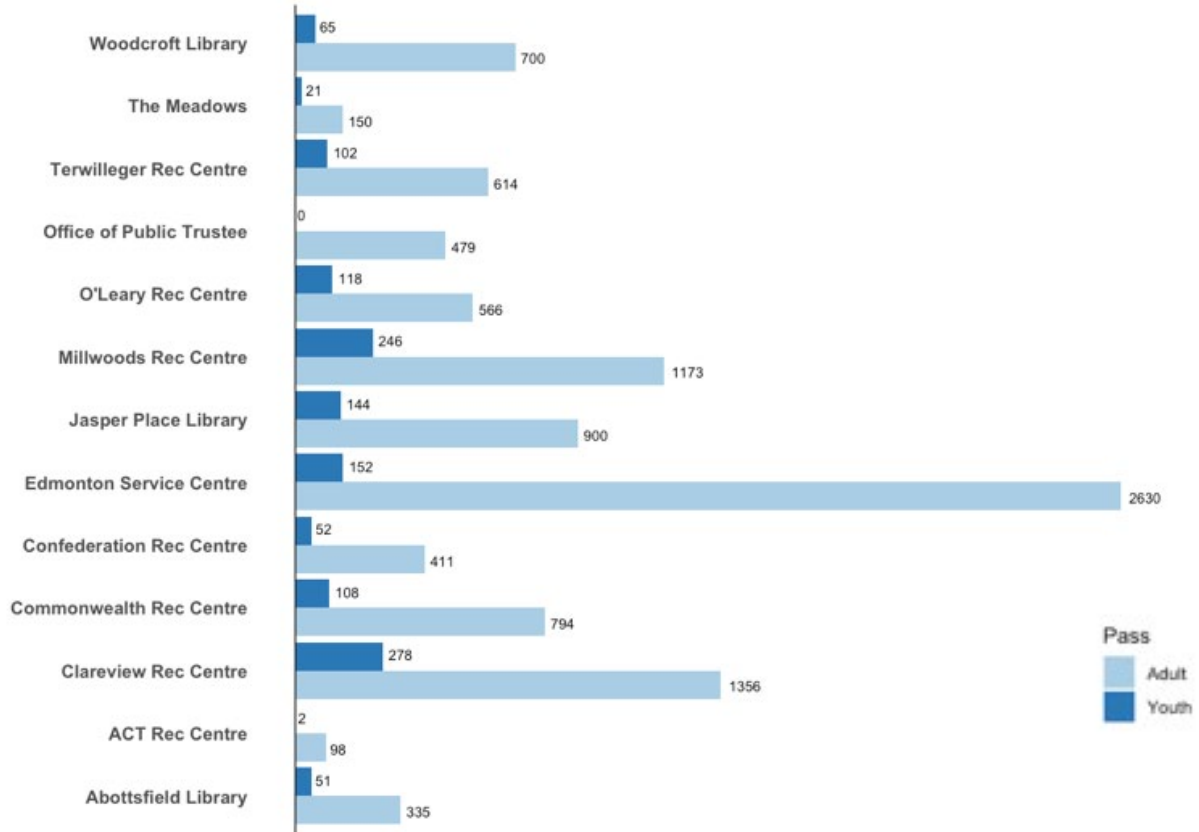


With 38,649 enrolled participants, the majority are families of two adults with children, followed by single adults, even though single adults purchase monthly passes most frequently. Both adult and youth enrollment has steadily increased since program inception.

Approximately seven percent of all Ride Transit applications submitted are declined. The primary reason for rejection is because applicants are above the low income cut-off. The number of customers declined before submitting an application is unknown. Through observations at the Service Centre completed by the City of Edmonton and reports from agencies, there may be applicants ready to submit applications for approval, but have been turned away because of incomplete documentation or ineligibility.

As of June 2018, the Ride Transit Program offered temporary passes for post-secondary students for summer months. Children under 12 now ride free with a fare-paying adult. The program may accept refugee status pending budget deliberations in November 2018.

**Figure 5. Purchase Location**



The most used pass pick-up location in April 2018 was the Edmonton Service Centre, followed by Mill Woods Recreation Centre, Jasper Place Library, Commonwealth and Clareview Recreation Centres.

# Customer Profiles

The following customer profiles, compiled by the City of Edmonton, offer an overview of customer demographics, experiences and stories shared during focus group sessions.

## Linda ; volunteer, AISH recipient



“The convenience and reassurance reduces stress.”

### BARRIERS

- Mobility challenges
- Cost associated with rent, groceries, etc.
- Limited job opportunities

### NEEDS

- Easier way to apply for and renew application
- Support with navigating the transit system

### DESTINATIONS

- Medical Appointments
- Community Events
- Grocery & Shopping

### POSITIVE IMPACT

Linda’s mobility challenges **won’t stop her** from **getting involved** in the community. Having an affordable transit pass means she can sign up for volunteer opportunities and visit the library. Despite her difficulty with walking, having **unlimited transportation strengthens her independence**.

### EXPERIENCE EXPECTATIONS

Having her **monthly pass mailed** to her saves Linda a lot of time, not to mention the physical effort. She found that the Ride Transit program **integrated smoothly** with AISH --for other riders it would be helpful if the program was synced with other government supports.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Employed Full-time	<b>Employed Part-time</b>	Unemployed
<b>Gets support from an agency</b>	Receives Income Support	Independant
<b>English is first language</b>	Has difficulty communicating	English is 2nd Language
<b>Cares for self</b>	Cares for one other	Cares for multiple others
<b>Person living with physical disability</b>	<b>Some physical challenges with getting around</b>	No physical health barriers

### BEHAVIOUR

<b>Navigates transit system independently</b>	<b>Relies on help from friends or family to go places</b>	Relies on ETS bus drivers to help navigate
<b>Informed via smartphone</b>	<b>Informed via word of mouth</b>	<b>Informed via ads</b>

## Ben ; new to Edmonton



“No tax forms? Next!’ It was **embarrassing**.”

### BARRIERS

- English not 1st language
- Difficulty understanding how to navigate the transit system
- New to Canada

### NEEDS

- Easier way to apply for and renew application
- Support with navigating the transit system
- Information in other languages or plain Engl.

### DESTINATIONS

- Employment
- Medical Appointments
- Community Events
- Grocery & Shopping

### POSITIVE IMPACT

Ben is saving up to buy a car, so in the meantime, **he relies on transit** to get to work and medical appointments. He went from spending \$40/week to \$35/month on transportation costs.

### EXPERIENCE EXPECTATIONS

As a newcomer, Ben had **difficulty proving his income level**, and his application was initially rejected. He had walked an hour to get to the service centre only to be **rejected**. It took **multiple visits** before finally being accepted. Ben would like **alternative ways to prove his eligibility** and due to the **language barrier**, he appreciates **patience** from service employees.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Employed Full-time	Employed Part-time	<b>Unemployed</b>
<b>Gets support from an agency</b>	Receives Income Support	Independant
English is first language	<b>Has difficulty communicating</b>	<b>English is 2nd Language</b>
<b>Cares for self</b>	Cares for one other	<b>Cares for multiple others</b>
Person living with physical disability	<b>Some physical challenges with getting around</b>	No physical health barriers

### BEHAVIOUR

Navigates transit system independently	Relies on help from friends or family to go places	<b>Relies on ETS bus drivers to help navigate</b>
Informed via smartphone	<b>Informed via word of mouth</b>	<b>Informed via ads</b>

## Sarah ; mother of two

“I can get everywhere for a good price and don’t have to struggle or worry about what is more important: food, rent, etc.”



### BARRIERS

- Cost associated with supporting a family
- The transit system can sometimes feel unsafe for family
- Feeling like other transit users see her family as an inconvenience

### NEEDS

- A program that can support not only the individual but their family as well

### DESTINATIONS

- Recreational & Family Activities
- Grocery and Shopping

### POSITIVE IMPACT

Having the Ride Transit Pass gives Sarah the peace-of-mind of knowing **she can afford a reliable way to go places**. It **encourages and motivates** her to sign up for classes and programs. Rather than waiting around for a ride, or spending money on a cab, she can go forth and have a productive day or spend quality time with her friends and family, which **improves her mental wellbeing**.

### EXPERIENCE EXPECTATIONS

Sarah **needs an efficient way to apply** her family members to the Ride Transit program, but the required **documents are often difficult to acquire**, depending on complicated family situations.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Employed Full-time	Employed Part-time	Unemployed
Gets support from an agency	Receives Income Support	Independent
English is first language	Has difficulty communicating	English is 2nd Language
Cares for self	Cares for one other	Cares for multiple others
Person living with physical disability	Some physical challenges with getting around (with stroller)	No physical health barriers

### BEHAVIOUR

Navigates transit system independently	Relies on help from friends or family to go places	Relies on ETS bus drivers to help navigate
Informed via smartphone	Informed via word of mouth	Informed via ads

## Josh ; young, well-rounded adult

“[Ride Transit] enables me to have better job opportunities rather than ones in my walking radius. I can more easily get to specialist appointments, [social events], leisure centres -- all of which has had a **huge beneficial impact on my mental and physical health**.”



### BARRIERS

- Distance
- Cost associated with rent, groceries, etc.

### NEEDS

- Access to better work of education opportunities
- Easier way to apply for and renew application

### DESTINATIONS

- Work
- Social circles
- Medical Appointments

### POSITIVE IMPACT

Josh makes an effort to live a **well balanced** life. Being able to **consistently afford transportation** makes it much **less stressful** to make budgeting choices, and giving him a **sense of freedom**.

### EXPERIENCE EXPECTATIONS

Josh is surprised that his transit pass **can't be renewed or purchased online**. The Edmonton Service Centre sometimes isn't open when he's available, and given his busy schedule, an online program presence could be much **more convenient** for him.

### DEMOGRAPHICS

Employed Full-time	Employed Part-time	Unemployed
Gets support from an agency	Receives Income Support	Independent
English is first language	Has difficulty communicating	English is 2nd Language
Cares for self	Cares for one other	Cares for multiple others
Person living with physical disability	Some physical challenges with getting around	No physical health barriers

### BEHAVIOUR

Navigates transit system independently	Relies on help from friends or family to go places	Relies on ETS bus drivers to help navigate
Informed via smartphone	Informed via word of mouth	Informed via ads



## 3.0 OUTCOME ANALYSIS

This section presents a summary of the information collected and describes the extent to which each outcome has been achieved. In addition, it outlines what has been learned about the program from data collected by answering the evaluation questions.

**Outcome: Collaboration among partners supports coordinated program implementation for better integration, resulting in a customer-centric approach**

**Key indicator:**

- Evidence of collaboration among partners to support the program implementation (self reports, interviews, observations)

There is evidence collaboration among partners supports a coordinated program implementation. Participants noted collaboration and engagement of a diverse set of stakeholders from the beginning and involved a range of internal<sup>5</sup> and external partners<sup>6</sup>. For instance, staff from the City of Edmonton noted the partnership with the Government of Alberta for funding has been successful. Coordinating internal and external partners on differing IT systems posed significant challenges.

Agencies found that City of Edmonton staff were helpful and positive to work with throughout implementation. Agencies noted the City of Edmonton staff have been mostly responsive to issues as they arose – with the program adapting to address mail-out issues to AISH recipients, support letters for refugees and expanding to include post-secondary students.

There is evidence program implementation is customer-centric. For instance, the “one stop shop” simplified the application process by combining both LAP and Ride Transit, streamlining the application experience. Although the application process appeared to work for most applicants, there were segments of the population who experienced challenges. Most notably, those who were unable to produce a notice of assessment or those whose situation changed mid-year and their current assessment did not reflect their change in income.

**Outcome: Individuals with low income have increased accessibility to public transportation**

**Key indicators:**

- % of individuals with low income who accessed the program and obtained a monthly pass that previously did not buy a monthly pass
- Assessment of application and ease of access (staff and customer reports). See Appendix: Application Form Design and Usability Assessment

<sup>5</sup>City Operations, Citizen Services, Finance and Corporate Services, Communications and Engagement

<sup>6</sup>External collaboration with Edmonton Public Library, EndPovertyEdmonton, Government of Alberta services (e.g. Alberta Trustee and Guardianship Office), support agencies (e.g. Boyle Street Community Services) and newcomer agencies (e.g. Catholic Social Services).

## Has the Ride Transit Program made transportation more accessible for the targeted populations?

All participants agreed the program makes public transportation more accessible for eligible Edmontonians with low income who are accessing the program. According to the survey, 30 percent of current program customers are new monthly passholders as a result of the program pilot, and the majority of respondents (60%) strongly agree the unsubsidized cost of a monthly pass was too expensive for them.

The application process included the following limitations:

- Collecting the necessary documentation, specifically the notice of assessment, was noted as a challenge
- The income requirement was for the previous year, so some people were not eligible for the pass as a result of their prior situation (this also posed challenges for refugees or newcomers without an assessment)
- Online applications could help to provide correct information, shorten line-ups, speed up processing and lessen stress on staff at libraries and recreation centres
- Application length can be a barrier with respect to readability and language level

We also know that over 60% of people who live in poverty (or those below the LIM or low income after tax measure) are full-time workers earning minimum wage and many of them can be found in retail and food service outlets and custodial services. These are the ones who are not likely to be connected to social service agencies because they are working full-time or two part-time jobs. Yet, they may be the ones who need a low-income bus pass.  
~City of Edmonton staff

## Who currently accesses the program?

The total number of enrolled customers has steadily increased since June 2017. As of April 2018, there were 38,649 enrolled customers, of which, the majority were adults and 11,917 were youth.

Those who currently access the program include individuals who are:

- Below low income cut off
- AISH recipients
- Income support recipients
- DATS customers
- Newcomers
- Youth under government care

## Are there existing groups in poverty who are not or can not access the program?

The following groups living in poverty were identified as either ineligible for the program or eligible but facing significant barriers:

- Those who do not meet program criteria (over LICO, living outside City of Edmonton boundaries)
- Seniors (who already qualify for a less expensive pass)
- Post-secondary students during non-school months (declined until June 2018)
- Immigrants and refugees<sup>7</sup> who are challenged with supplying documentation required to access the program
- Youth (aged 13-17) who do not have income verification
- Those whose current income has changed because income requirement considers previous year
- Those transitioning between AISH being received and the time to wait for the Ride Transit application to be processed
- People without a permanent residence (i.e. those who are couch surfing and not connected to an agency)

There were also some potential qualified applicants who completed the survey and noted they chose not to apply due to preferring alternative transportation (e.g. have access to a vehicle, bicycle, or choose to walk). During focus group discussions a few participants noted being aware of people who preferred alternate forms of transportation due to perceived safety concerns or not knowing how to navigate public transit. There may also be individuals who are not accessing support agencies or who have not yet heard of the program.

## What are the gaps and how should they be considered?

A gap exists for those individuals who lack supporting documentation but are in immediate need and could qualify based on a reasonable assessment of their circumstance. For instance, those whose income situation has changed since the previous tax assessment and those waiting for the necessary documentation (AISH, NOA, sponsorship agreements). To address this gap, a provisional pass (for a set time period) would allow specific applicants time to gather the appropriate documentation, under justified circumstances as assessed by the City of Edmonton or a service agency.

Another identified gap is youth (under the age of 18) who are not attending school, have not completed a tax assessment, do not have a permanent address or do not have documentation to prove income for application requirements. Youth serving agencies (i.e., Terra Centre for Pregnant and Parenting Teens, iHuman, Boys and Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters, Youth Empowerment Support Services, and Child and Family Services Support Workers) could be asked to provide a letter of support explaining the youth's situation and requesting required documentation be waived.



It is possible that not all potentially eligible customers are aware the program exists, or how to access it. Additional advertising through targeted channels could increase awareness. Suggestions provided through data collection include using the 311 “hold message” to advertise, placing posters on transit property, distribute information to families through schools, having staff present at festivals, and involving service agencies and Alberta Works to promote the program and help distribute passes.

<sup>7</sup>Includes Group of Five - five or more Canadian citizens or permanent residents who have arranged to sponsor a refugee living abroad to come to Canada - and community sponsored refugees with no sponsorship agreements.



Outcome: As a result of the Ride Transit Program, individuals with low income have increased access to education, employment, and recreation opportunities and increased social connection

Key Indicator:

- Customers who report increased access to a) education b) employment c) recreation opportunities d) increased social connection (self report, survey, discussion groups)

## How has the program impacted the lives of people who can now afford public transportation?

Access to public transportation has positively impacted the lives of people who use it. Data collected from staff, agencies, and customers indicated an increase in independence, reduction in stress, greater access to employment, education, health care, community events, and less social isolation. Many participants noted they use transit more and for a wider range of activities, because of the pass. Participants shared as a result of the pass they are able to seek employment within a greater geographical area, do volunteer work, attend appointments, go to school, and take part in more recreation opportunities. Most survey respondents reported passes were too expensive for them prior to the program. Participants also spoke of deciding to spend their limited funds on transportation over other needs, or having to ration bus tickets (which often ran out before the end of the month) prior to this program as they could not afford a pass.

Outcome: Changes to the Ride Transit Program are evidence-based and informed through a model of continuous improvement

Key Indicator:

- number of barriers identified and evidence of a plan to address barriers

## Was the program implemented as intended and activities carried out as planned? What worked well? What were the barriers?

Although implementation timelines were short, the program launched as intended. There was a large influx of applicants at the start causing some processing delays. A phased roll-out of the Ride Transit Program may have alleviated this bottleneck and could be considered for the renewal process. Cross-platform compatibility between information management systems caused challenges. The program did work to continuously improve and deliver a more customer centric service. For more information on the implementation, see Appendix: Implementation Assessment.

# CASE STUDY

## Barriers for Families and Youth population

In July 2018, the City of Edmonton talked with representatives from youth support agencies including Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters (BGCBigs), as well as the Terra Centre for teen parents, to uncover some of the unique challenges that family and youth experience with the Ride Transit program.

### INTAKE BARRIERS

#### Eligibility Documents

Youth aged 13-17 experience difficulties acquiring the required documents for the Ride Transit Application. Some have difficult family relationships or live outside of their foster or kinship agreements, and therefore are unable to acquire even basic documentation such as IDs, SINs, or birth certificates. Because the Ride Transit program does not see youth as independants, many youth are unable to enter the program in order to support themselves, their children, or siblings in their care.

- **Tax Documents:** while many youth have never filed their taxes before, some are afraid that doing so would result in owing money
- **Proof of Edmonton residency:** many participants accessing support agencies are couching, homeless, or do not have bills addressed to them
- **Alternate documentation:** support agency staff have suggested alternative documentation for youth in need to qualify for Ride Transit, such as the Health Benefits card, or perhaps a form or letter that could be signed by agency staff to validate the need for Ride Transit.

#### Eligibility

Many families that demonstrate the need for support are close to, but do not fall under the low-income threshold. Parents sometimes take on multiple jobs to support their families, making just enough money to not be qualified for Ride Transit, but struggle to afford transportation for their children.

#### Lack of awareness

Part of the youth population is unaware of support programs including Ride Transit. Some assume that that they do not qualify for support, because they are not always homeless or because they are underage.



### BARRIERS TO CONTINUED USE

#### Cost

Many families are unable to afford transit passes for all members of the family, causing them to have to share transit passes, or miss school and other opportunities when it is not their turn to use the pass. Agency staff have suggested "Family passes" in order to support all families, whether big or small.

#### Convenience

Some youth are unable to purchase the Ride Transit pass because the available hours of operation often conflict with school hours.

#### Safety Concern

Some youth, especially those with previous street gang involvement, don't feel that transit is a safe option.

#### Negative Experience

Some families try to avoid using transit because of previous negative experiences. Agency staff have shared stories where clients were excluded by drivers because they were travelling with children, strollers and were given the feeling that parents travelling with children are an inconvenience.

## 4.0 CUSTOMER RESEARCH

### 4.1 CUSTOMER INSIGHTS

Two facilitated discussions were held in June 2018 at the Clareview Recreation Centre to evaluate the Ride Transit Program. Two groups of three people participated in discussions facilitated by the Evaluator and the Manager, Service Design.

Another discussion was facilitated by City of Edmonton staff in July with the Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB)<sup>8</sup>. MCHB is made up of community leaders who represent different ethnic communities in Edmonton, and help newcomers integrate into the community. Two participants of the group were Ride Transit customers. Summary of the discussion was provided to the Evaluator by City of Edmonton staff and incorporated below.

#### Main Themes

Themes are presented that emerged through the discussion in summary form.

#### Concerns with the application process, its limitations and obtaining the pass

Participants commented on the limitations and challenges they experienced with the application process. When asked how long they waited for their application to go through, participants noted an average wait time of two months. They indicated it was challenging to have questions answered about the program and obtaining the pass could require a long wait in line at the Edmonton Service Centre. Participants recommended applications be available online. They noted it would be helpful to provide temporary passes while waiting for approval to be able to access transit in the meantime. In addition, participants felt it would be helpful to move away from using a notice of assessment to a request for proof of current income.

Newcomers noted difficulty in understanding the application and requirements due to language barriers. Many participants have English as their second language and some are guided through the process by their children who may have an understanding of English but not necessarily government processes. Documentation can also be challenging. Permanent Resident cards and Refugee Claimant documentation can be delayed and notice of assessments may not be available right away. Government issued documents may not specify dependents leaving children not qualified for the subsidy. Proof of residency may also be a barrier as bills may be listed in either the landlord or husband's name. There were suggestions to explore alternative ways the province verifies income, such as through the Child Subsidy Program or to partner with Alberta Works. Instant, temporary approval during the application process was suggested as a way to make it easier for applicants who have brought the right documentation.



<sup>8</sup>More information about the Multicultural Health Brokers can be found at: <http://mchb.org/>

## **Program awareness**

Participants primarily heard about the program from an agency or word of mouth but suggested alternative ways to promote the program be considered. For example, some of the newcomer population may not be associated with an agency. As such, it was suggested schools, language classes, healthcare providers, and/or cultural publications may be an effective way to promote awareness.

## **Value and support of the program**

Participants in the program noted they take transit almost every day and the low cost bus pass has made a huge difference by reducing cost and providing access to places they were previously unable to go. All participants noted they use transit more often because of the pass, that it provides good value for money, and is affordable. As a result, they can do volunteer work, attend medical appointments, go to summer school and participate in more recreation opportunities. Participants commented on the increased level of independence the pass helps provide for them.

## 4.2 CUSTOMER SURVEY

The following is a summary of responses from online and telephone interviews. The survey was offered in English and completion by proxy was available for those who required additional assistance. The responses have been combined as there were almost no differences found between the two modes. If a difference was found, the responses are broken out by grouping variables. An [analytics dashboard](#) with the complete survey results broken down across several grouping variables (age range, gender, number of children in the household, AISH and Income Support recipient status, employment status and newcomers) is available online.<sup>9</sup>

### Number of Valid Survey/Telephone Interviews

The City of Edmonton has contact information for individuals who consented to being contacted for survey purposes (n=3,974). Through a random sample, 2,500 were selected for the phone survey and 1,474 were selected to receive the online version.

An invitation to complete the online survey was sent by e-mail, followed up with two reminder messages. There were 740 total responses (online and phone). The phone survey, undertaken by Banister Research Ltd, had 400 responses, from a possible list of 1,000 names and phone numbers. The survey was closed once the target of 400 valid responses was met. The data from both online and phone was merged and cleaned and has been summarized below.



### Section 1: Screening

**Question 1 & 2: Is this the first time in 2018 that you are taking this survey about the Ride Transit Program? Have you bought a Ride Transit pass (for travel on Edmonton Transit including buses and LRT) in the past six months?**

Data was collected from 740 responses. Thirty-three respondents were excluded because they indicated this was not their first time taking the survey and a further 16 respondents were excluded because they had not purchased a Ride Transit pass in the last six months, for a total sample size of 691 respondents (400 phone interviews and 291 online survey respondents). Note, not all respondents chose to answer each question, and as such total responses for each question are provided, and may not equal the total number of respondents.

**Question 3: Do you have a Ride Transit pass this month?**

Figure 6:



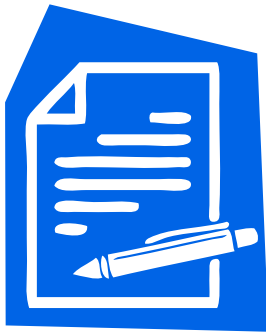
The majority of respondents (558 of the 619) indicated they had purchased a Ride Transit pass this month. The 131 respondents who did not buy a Ride Transit pass this month were asked to state why they did not buy a Ride Transit pass.

<sup>9</sup>[https://andersondraper.shinyapps.io/RideTransit\\_Survey/](https://andersondraper.shinyapps.io/RideTransit_Survey/)

#### Question 4: Why didn't you buy a Ride Transit pass this month? (n=126)

For the most part, respondents indicated a Ride Transit pass was no longer necessary because respondents have their own car, have a license or more consistent access to a vehicle. Others noted their use of transit was seasonal. Some mentioned during the summer their children were out of school and therefore they no longer require a pass, or they make the effort to walk or bike during the summer.

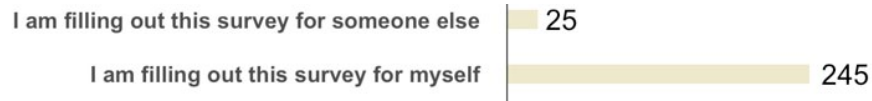
Approximately a quarter of respondents stated they no longer needed to access a Ride Transit pass however they did not provide any follow up information as to why.



## Section 2: About your application experience

#### Question 5: Who is filling out this survey?

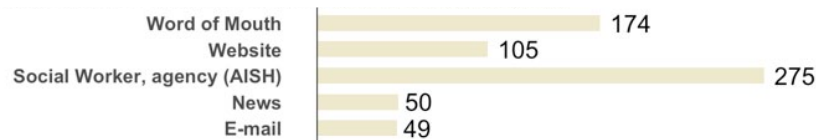
Figure 7.



The online survey asked respondents to indicate who was filling out the survey. Of the 291 online survey respondents, 245 filled out the survey themselves, and 25 completed it on behalf of someone else. Of those 25 people for whom the survey was filled out, the majority (n=22) were recipients of AISH. Twenty-five telephone interviews were also conducted by a proxy.

#### Question 6: How did you hear about the Ride Transit Program? (check all that apply)

Figure 8.

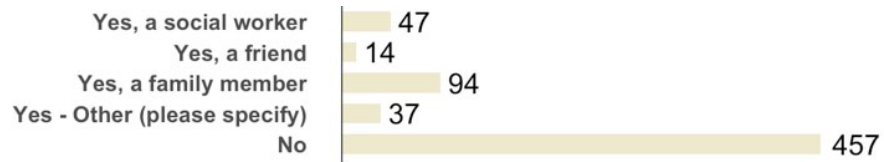


Social Worker and agency (AISH) was the most frequently identified means of hearing about the Ride Transit Program (n=275), followed by Word of Mouth (n=174) and Website (n=105). Being told about the Ride Transit Program (by a social worker or friend) seemed to be more of a driver of program enrolment than looking for information on one's own (website) or more traditional marketing of the program (news, email).

Respondents were given the option to enter "other" ways they heard about the program (n=121 responses were given). The largest group of participants heard about it from a city facility (n=30). This was followed by information provided through City mailouts (n=24) and the Leisure Access Program (n=15). There were three minor groups of participants who heard about the program through friends/family (n=10), social media (n=7) and schools (n=6), with a few additional individual responses.

## Question 7: Did someone help you complete and submit the application?

Figure 9.



The majority of respondents (n=457) completed and submitted the application without help. Of those that did require assistance, family members (n=94) were the most common source of help followed by social workers (n=47). Of those needing help to complete the application, recipients of AISH, and those who indicated they were unemployed were the most likely to require assistance.

Figure 9(b). Question 7 by AISH Recipients

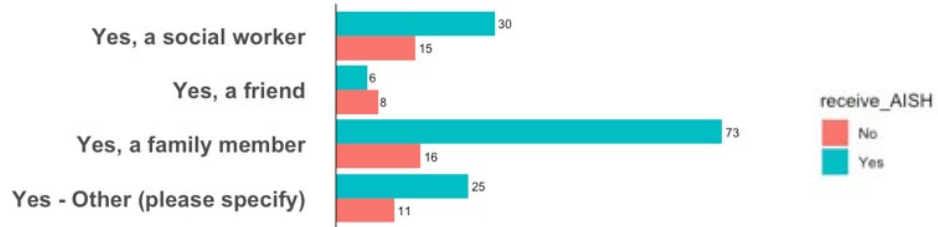
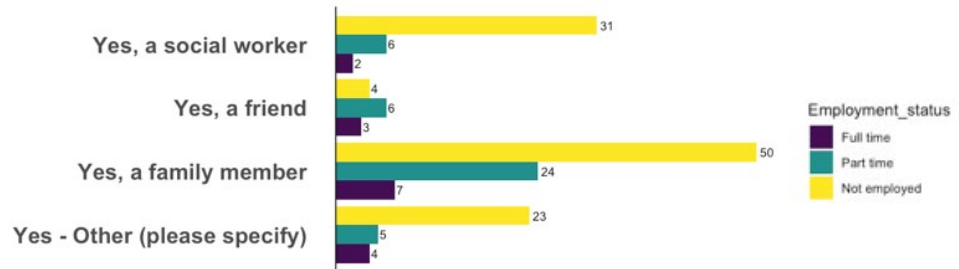


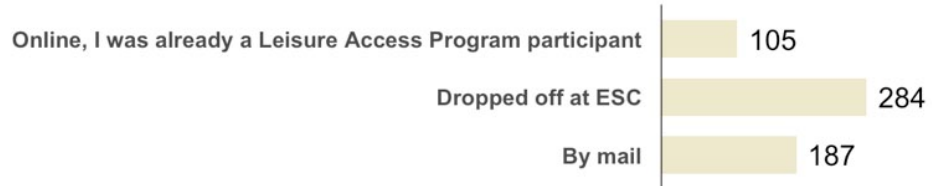
Figure 9(c). Question 7 by Employment Status



Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=37 responses were given). The majority of participants stated that they received help from City of Edmonton staff (n=20). The second largest group indicated they received help from their group home (n=5) and the third group of respondents received help from family (n=4), with a few individual responses.

### Question 8: How did you submit your application?

Figure 10.

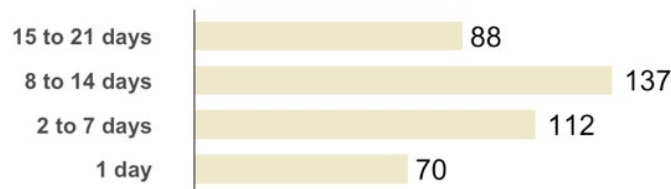


Almost half of the respondents dropped off applications at Edmonton Service Centre (n=284).

Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=45 responses were given). The largest group of respondents dropped off applications at Recreation Centres (n=21). City facilities other than Recreation Centers (n=5) tied as the second largest group with AISH Coordinators (n=5), followed by online or through email (n=3) and through physical mail (n=3), with a few individual responses.

### Question 9: How long did it take to get approved?

Figure 11.

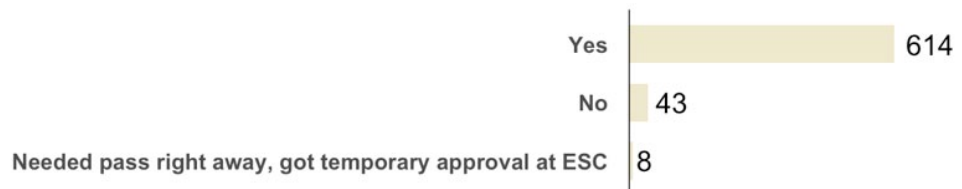


Responses to the question “How long did it take to get approved” were normally distributed with the majority of respondents indicating between 2 to 14 (n=112 & n=137) days and a smaller group indicating either more wait time (n=88) or less wait time (n=70).

Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=65 responses were given). The largest group of participants indicated it took four to six weeks to get their application approved (n=33). The second largest group indicated it took roughly two months (n=10). This was followed by two to three weeks (n=6), still unsure if they are approved (n=5), and same day approval (n=5), with a few individual responses unable to be grouped.

### Question 10: Was your application accepted the first time?

Figure 12.

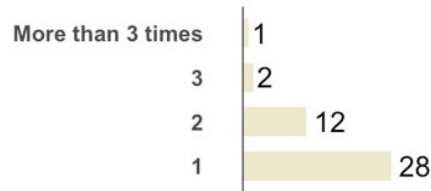


Almost all respondents (n=614) reported their application was accepted the first time; however, some (n=43) were not accepted the first time. Those 43 respondents were asked a follow-up question regarding the number of times they had to re-apply.



### Question 11: How many times did you re-apply?

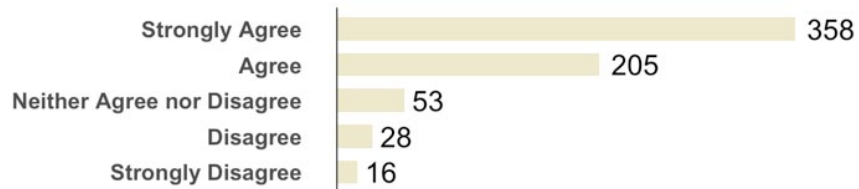
Figure 13.



Two-thirds of respondents who did not have their application accepted the first time had it accepted when they re-applied. A small number (n=12) had further issues with the application process and had to re-submit again. The number of applicants who had issues and had to re-submit multiple times (n=14) represents 2% of the total sample (n=691).

### Question 12(a): It was easy for me to apply for the Ride Transit pass (Rating Scale)

Figure 14.

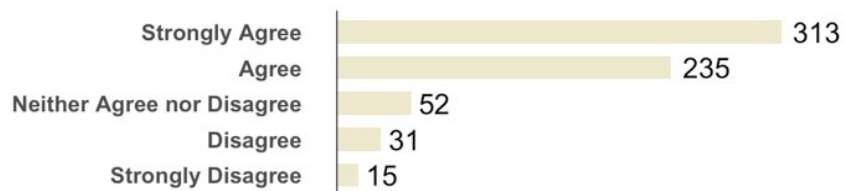


Over 80% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “It was easy for me to apply for the Ride Transit pass.” while less than 7% disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Note: The survey does not include responses from people who applied but were not approved for the program, as such their perspective is not included in these findings.

### Question 12(b): The supporting documents were easy to find and submit (Rating Scale)

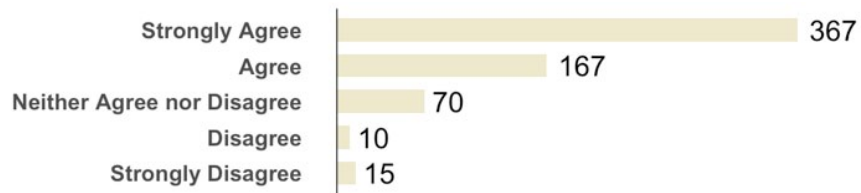
Figure 15.



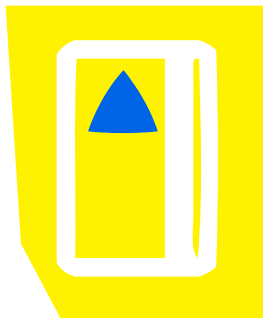
Eighty percent (80%) of respondents (n=548) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The supporting documents were easy to find and submit” while 7% (n=46) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

### Question 12(c): City staff were helpful when I applied for the Ride Transit pass for the first time (Rating Scale)

Figure 16.



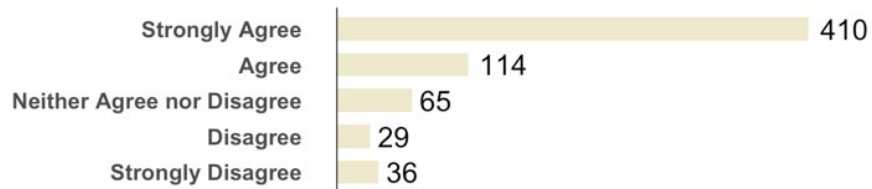
The majority of respondents (77%, n=534) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “City staff were helpful when I applied for the Ride Transit pass for the first time” while only 4% (n=25) disagreed or strongly disagreed.



## Section 3: About your purchasing experience

### Question 13(a): Before the Ride Transit Program, it was too expensive for me to buy a pass (Rating Scale)

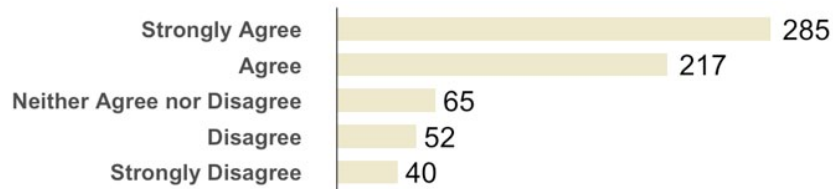
Figure 17.



The majority of respondents (75%) agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “Before the Ride Transit Program, it was too expensive for me to buy a pass” with 60% (n=410) strongly agreeing with the statement. Less than 10% of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

### Question 13(b): The places I can get my Ride Transit pass are easy to get to (Rating Scale)

Figure 18.



Over 70% of respondents (n=502) agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “The places I can get my Ride Transit pass are easy to get to.” while 13.3% (n=92) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

The following figures examine the breakdown of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the previous statement by whether or not they receive AISH and by reported age range.

Figure 18(b). Question 13(b) by AISH Recipient

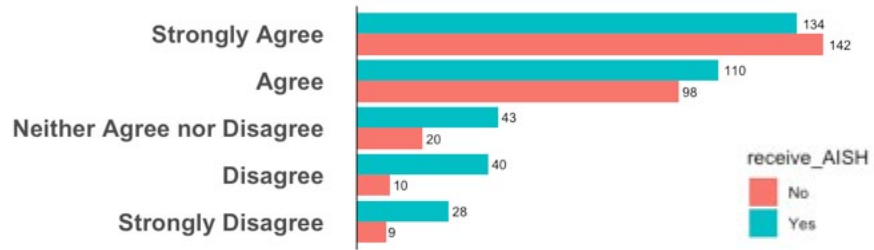
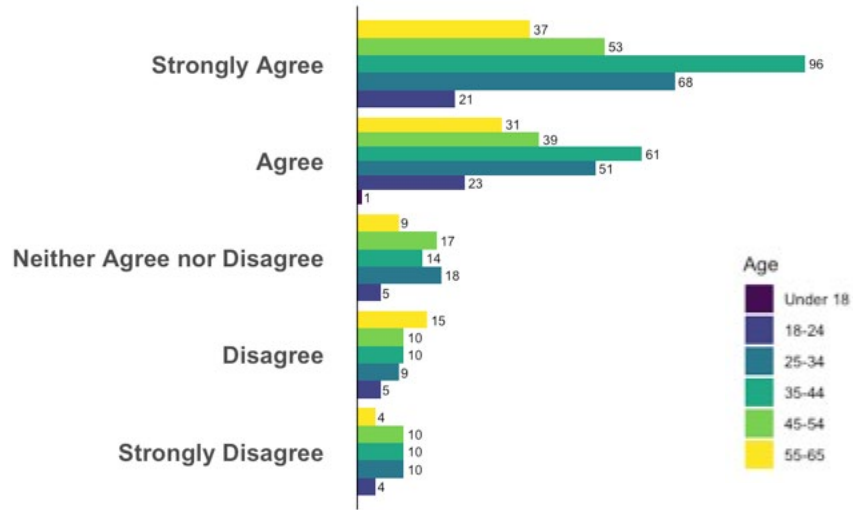


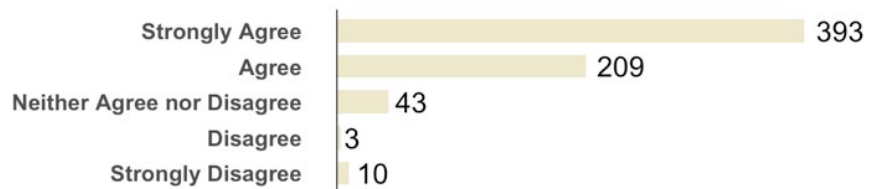
Figure 18(c). Question 13(b) by Age Range



While 70% of respondents agreed it is easy to access the locations where Ride Transit passes are available, those segments of the survey population with the potential mobility impairments (AISH recipients and respondents over 55 years of age) made up a more substantial portion of respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting a segment of the population has difficulty getting to the places Ride Transit passes are available.

**Question 13(c): When I buy my Ride Transit pass, city staff are helpful.**

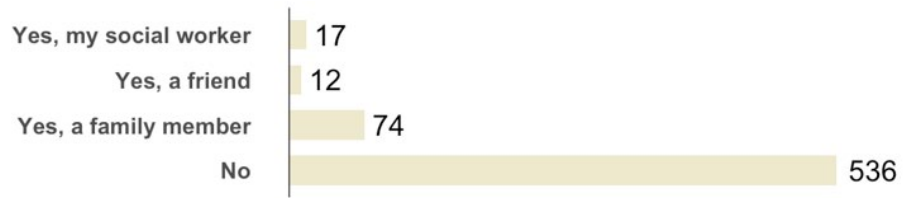
Figure 19.



Almost 90% of respondents (n=602) agreed or strongly agreed to the statement “When I buy my Ride Transit pass, city staff are helpful” and less than 2% (n=13) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

**Question 14: Is there someone helping you buy your pass (other than a City of Edmonton staff person)?**

Figure 20.



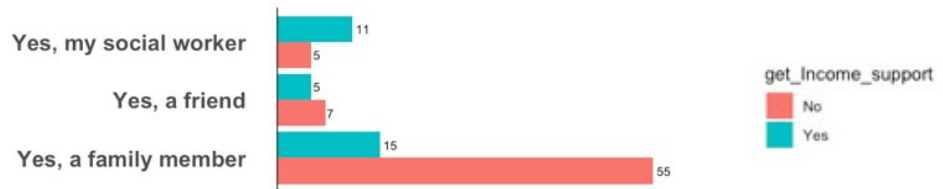
Almost 80% of respondents (n=536) did not have someone help them purchase their pass. 71% of Respondents who needed help received it from a family member (n=74).

Figure 20(b). Question 14 by AISH Recipients



AISH recipients who needed help purchasing a Ride Transit pass were more likely to turn to a family member than respondents who did not receive AISH; however, the opposite was seen for respondents who indicated they received Income Support.

Figure 20(c). Question 14 by Income Support Recipients

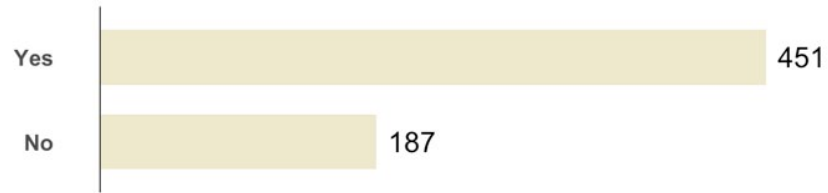


Income Support recipients who needed help purchasing a Ride Transit pass were less likely to turn to a family member than respondents who did not receive Income Support.

Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=22 responses were given). The largest group of respondents stated they received help from their caregiver (n=8), followed by City of Edmonton Staff (n=4) and family members (n=4). Respondents also stated they received help from AISH workers (n=2) and not-for-profit workers (n=2). A respondent mentioned receiving help from Alberta Works while another indicated their help varies from month to month.

**Question 15: Did you buy a transit pass before the \$35 Ride Transit pass was offered, in September 2017?**

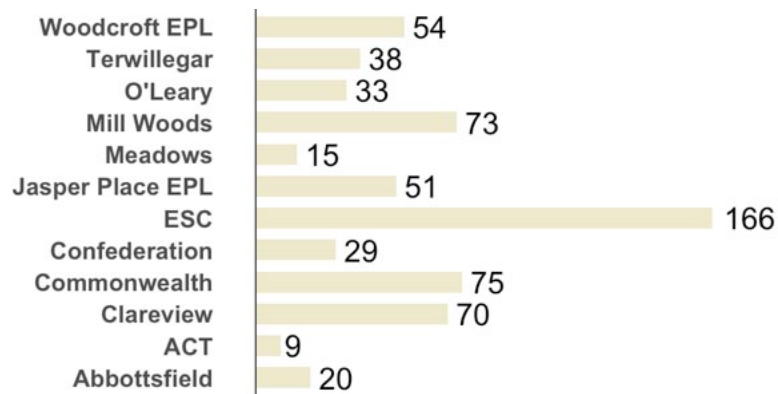
Figure 21.



Seventy percent (70%) of respondents (n=451) indicated they had purchased a transit pass before the \$35 Ride Transit pass was offered, while 30% (n=187) were new transit pass customers.

**Question 16: Where do you buy your Ride Transit pass most often?**

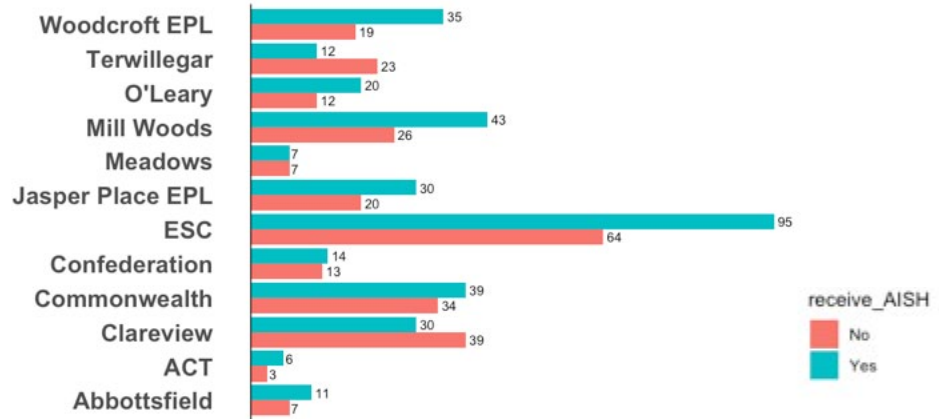
Figure 22.



Just over 25% of respondents (n=166) purchased their Ride Transit pass most often from the Edmonton Service Centre (ESC). Mill Woods Recreation Centre (11.5%, n=73), Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre (11.8%, n=75) and Clareview Recreation Centre (11%, n=70) were the places next most frequently purchased from.

These responses are consistent with the data provided by ETS (presented earlier in this report).

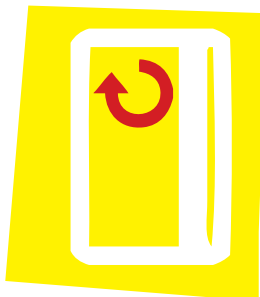
Figure 22(b). Question 16 by AISH Recipients



Woodcroft and Jasper Place (EPL), Mill Woods Recreation Centre, O'Leary Fitness and Leisure Centre and the Edmonton Service Centre were the purchase locations AISH recipients were represented more than non-recipients.

**Question 17: Is there another place you would like to be able to buy your Ride Transit pass from?**

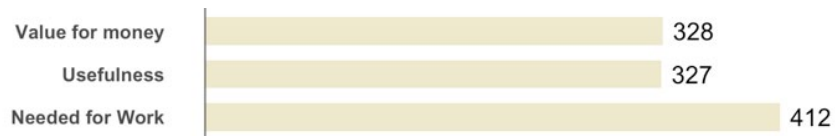
Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=588 responses were given). A large number of the respondents noted there is no other place they would go to (n=195). The most popular choice for participants who wanted different locations was to purchase Ride Transit passes at convenience stores or supermarkets (n=91). Expanding into more libraries (n=71) Recreation Centres (n=57) were the next most popular responses. Respondents also noted they would like to have the pass mailed (n=28), have the pass available at all downtown city locations (n=17), have the pass at every location you can buy regular bus passes (n=15) or have it available at malls (n=11), with a few individual responses unable to be grouped.



**Section 4: What made you continue purchasing?**

**Question 18: What makes you keep buying a pass? (check all that apply)**

Figure 23.



Respondents were evenly split in the reason they keep purchasing a Ride Transit pass. 40% (n=412) were needed for work, while 30% were either value for money (n=328) or usefulness of having a transit pass (n=327).

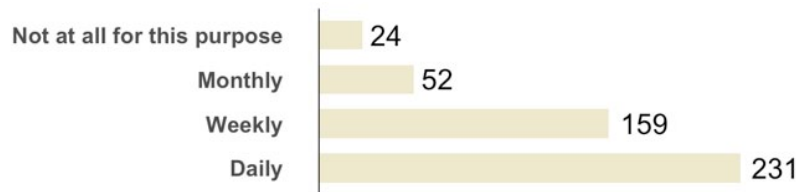
Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=103). Most respondents indicated they keep buying the Ride Transit pass as it is their primary mode of transportation (n=65). Respondents mentioned they use the Ride Transit pass as a matter of preference over other modes of transportation (n=17). Other respondents indicated using the pass specifically due to the (low) price (n=14). The last major group used the pass for reasons related to their family (n=11).



## Section 5: About the impact of Ride Transit in your life

### Question 19(a): How often do you use your Ride Transit pass for Personal Business?

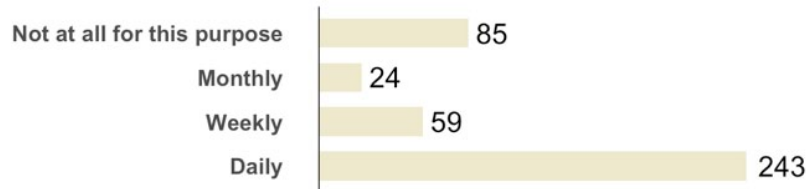
Figure 24.



Over 56% of respondents (n=390) used their Ride Transit for personal business either daily or weekly.

### Question 19(b): How often do you use your Ride Transit pass for Work?

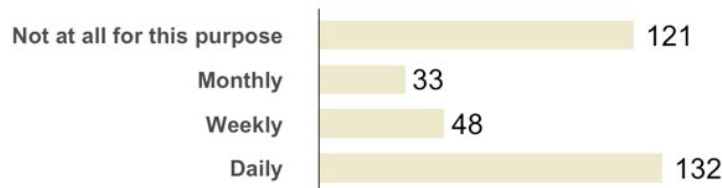
Figure 25.



Thirty-five percent of respondents (n=243) indicated they used their Ride Transit pass for work on a daily basis.

### Question 19(c): How often do you use your Ride Transit pass for School?

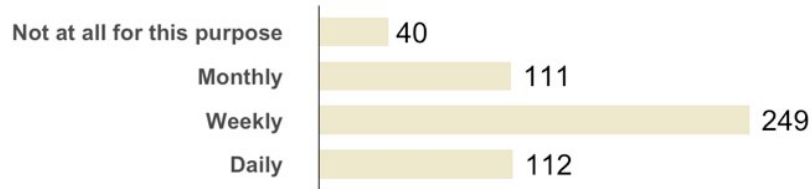
Figure 26.



Just under 20% of respondents (n=132) indicated they used their Ride Transit pass for school or education on a daily basis.

**Question 19(d): How often do you use your Ride Transit pass for Recreation Centres or Activities?**

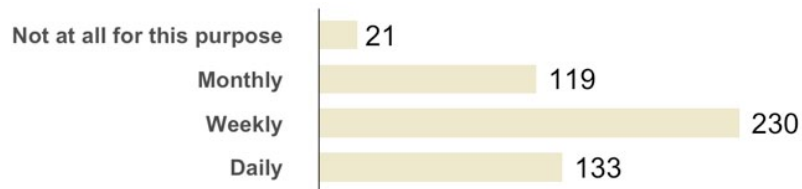
Figure 27.



Just over 35% of respondents (n=249) indicated they used their Ride Transit pass for recreation centres or activities on a weekly basis, and a further 16% (n=112) used it daily. Just over 50% of respondents indicated they used their Ride Transit pass at least weekly or more to access recreation centres or activities.

**Question 19(e): How often do you use your Ride Transit pass for Family, Friends or Social?**

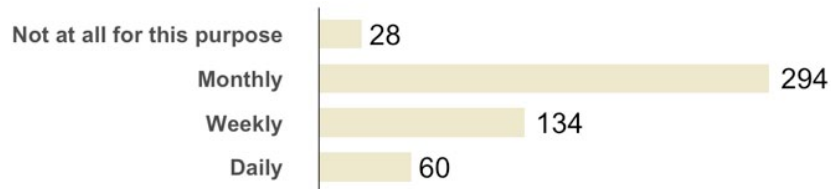
Figure 28.



Over 50% of respondents (n=363) indicated they used their Ride Transit pass for family, friends or social on at least a weekly basis (weekly n=230 & daily n=133).

**Question 19(f): How often do you use your Ride Transit pass for Health Care?**

Figure 29.

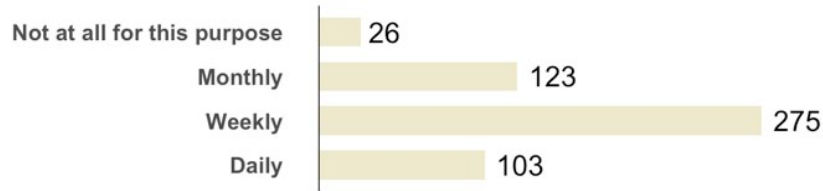


Over 40% of respondents (n=294) indicated they used their Ride Transit pass for health care on a monthly basis, while just under 20% used it weekly for health care.



### Question 19(g) How often do you use your Ride Transit pass for Shopping?

Figure 30.

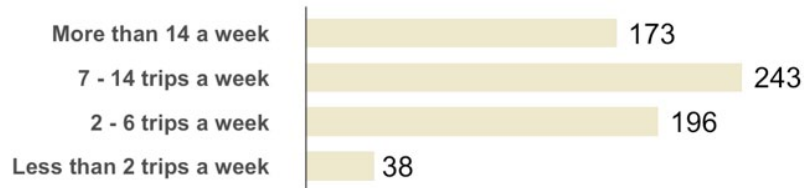


Just under 40% of respondents (n=275) indicated they used their Ride Transit pass for shopping on a weekly basis, with 15% (n=103) using it for shopping on a daily basis.

Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=58 responses were given). The largest group of respondents indicated they use their Ride Transit pass as their mode of transportation (n=25). Respondents mentioned using the pass for entertainment (n=11), or to attend health related activities (n=10). A few respondents used the pass specifically for city events (n=4), and work related reasons (n=4).

### Question 20: In an average week, how many trips do you take using Edmonton Transit?

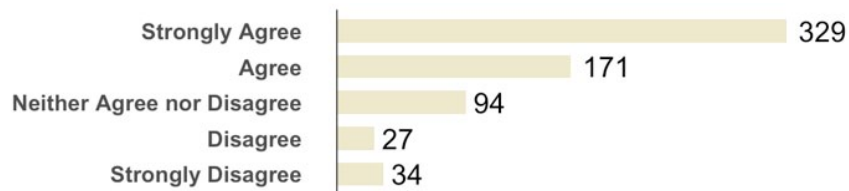
Figure 31.



Some respondents (n=38) took public transit as little as two trips per week. Most took between 7 and 14 trips per week (n=243).

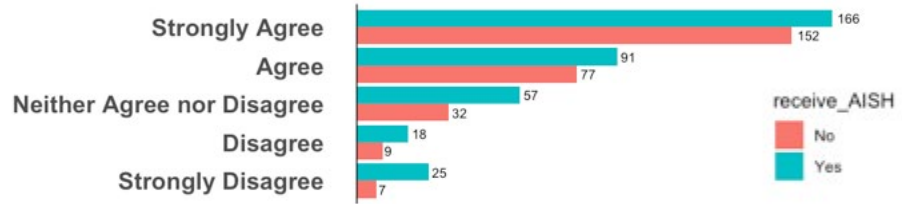
### Question 21(a): I now use public transit more often because of my Ride Transit pass.

Figure 32.



Over 70% of respondents (n=500) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I now use public transit more often because of my Ride Transit pass.”

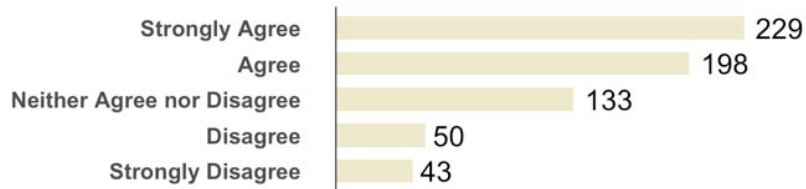
Figure 32(b). Question 21 by AISH Recipients



Although the number of people who expressed disagreement with the above statement was relatively small (n=61) more AISH recipients disagreed or strongly disagreed (n=43) to the above statement than non-AISH recipients (n=16).

**Question 21(b): I now go to more events or get-togethers within my community, because of my Ride Transit pass.**

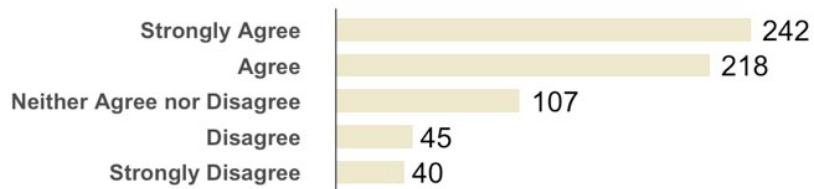
Figure 33.



Over 60% of respondents (n=427) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I now go to more events or get-togethers within my community, because of my Ride Transit pass.”

**Question 21(c): I now go to different places in the city than I did before because of my Ride Transit pass (e.g., sports facilities, parks, shopping centres). (Rating Scale)**

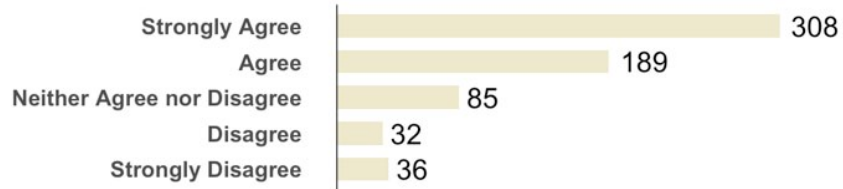
Figure 34.



Over 66% of respondents (n=460) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I now go to different places in the city than I did before because of my Ride Transit pass (e.g., sports facilities, parks, shopping centres).”

**Question 21(d): It is easier to get to my appointments (e.g., medical) because of my Ride Transit pass.**

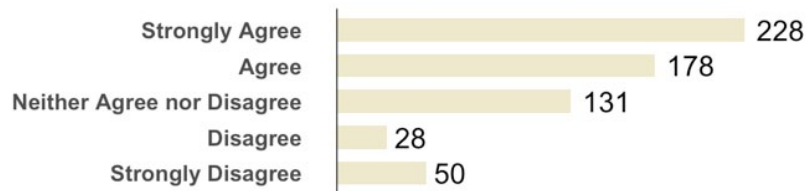
Figure 35.



Almost 72% of respondents (n=497) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “It is easier to get to my appointments (e.g., medical) because of my Ride Transit pass.”

**Question 22(a): I am better able to access work opportunities.**

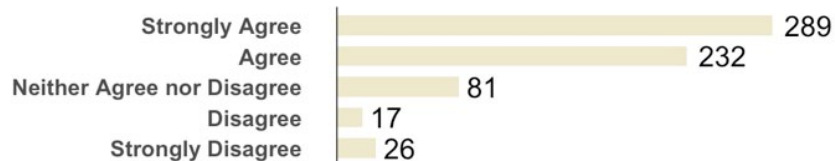
Figure 36.



Over 65% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am better able to access work opportunities.”

**Question 22(b): I am better able to access recreation opportunities.**

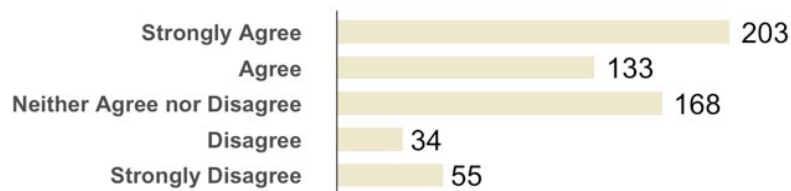
Figure 37.



Over 75% of respondents (n=521) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am better able to access recreation opportunities.”

**Question 22(c): I am better able to access school opportunities.**

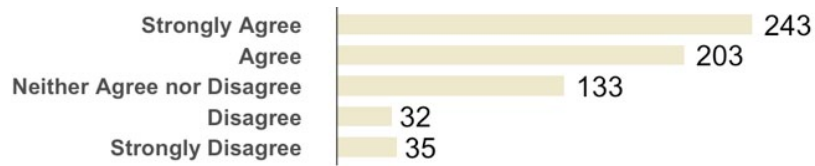
Figure 38.



Just under 50% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am better able to access school opportunities.”

### Question 22(d): I feel more connected to my community.

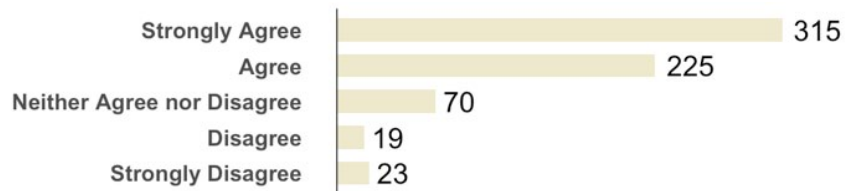
Figure 39.



Almost 65% of respondents (n=446) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I feel more connected to my community.”

### Question 22(e): I am better able to access locations and services I need to.

Figure 40.



Almost 80% of respondents (n=540) indicated they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am better able to access locations and services I need to.”



## Section 6: Your opinion of the Ride Transit Program

### Question 23: What do you like best about the Ride Transit pass? What is working well? (n=629)

The majority of respondents replied their favourite part of the Ride Transit Pass was the price (n=300) followed by the convenience of the pass (n=195). Many participants stated the pass gave them a significant increase in independence and allowed them to be more self-sufficient (n=70).

### Question 24: What would make the experience using Ride Transit better? (n=604)

Most respondents said they had nothing they would like to change about the Ride Transit Program (n=235). Suggestions offered were mainly around transit experience itself (n=200). For example, some suggested adding more bus routes, increasing programming, modernizing equipment, or enforcing safety and etiquette on the bus. Other participants mentioned they would like more areas where they can purchase the Ride Transit pass (n=60).

There was a group of respondents who are receiving AISH who were either grateful for the reinstatement of the mail outs or who were still under the impression that the mail outs are not available (n=29).

### Question 25: Do you have anything else you would like to share about the Ride Transit Program? (n=214)

The largest group of respondents expressed gratitude for the program (n=138). A group of participants (n=34) called for improvements to be made to ETS in a variety of ways. A few respondents either expressed gratitude about the return to pass mail-outs or were asking for a return to mail outs (n=13). Other would like to see expanded access to the program (n=8). Some indicated the program gave them an increased sense of independence (n=7).

### Question 26 & 27: Overall value and Likely to recommend

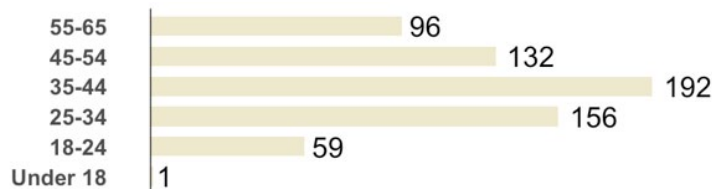
The average rating of the value of the monthly transit pass was 9.26 (on a scale from 1 to 10) and the average rating of how likely they are to recommend the Ride Transit pass to a friend was 9.30 (on a scale from 1 to 10).



## Section 7: About you

### Question 28: What is your age range?

Figure 41.



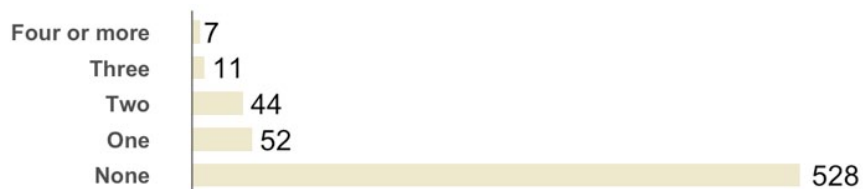
### Question 29: What gender do you most identify with?

Figure 42.



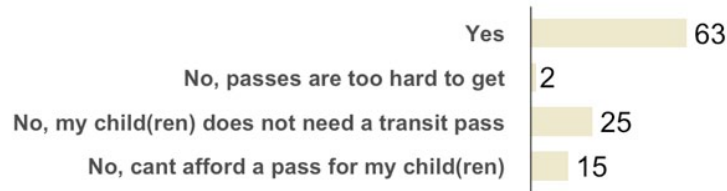
### Question 30: How many children are in your household over 12 and under 18 years of age?

Figure 43.



**Question 31: Do you buy a Ride Transit pass for your child(ren)?**

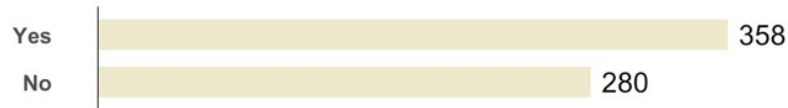
Figure 44.



Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=10 responses were given). A group of respondents clarified they do not personally have children (n=3). Two respondents indicated they sometimes buy a Ride Transit pass for their children, two respondents indicated they have alternative transportation for their kids, and two respondents indicated their children were young enough to ride transit free (n=2). One respondent was unsure if their child qualified.

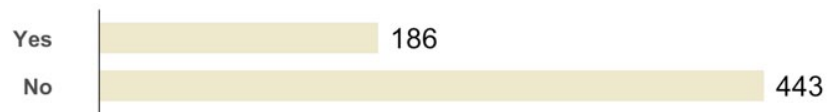
**Question 32: Do you receive AISH (Assured Income for the Severely Handicapped)?**

Figure 45.



**Question 33: Do you get Income support?**

Figure 46.



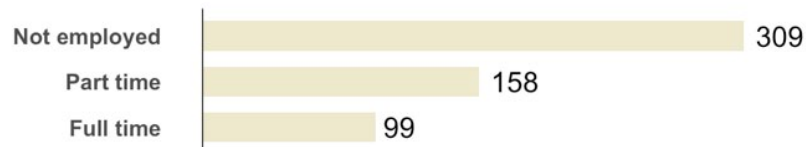
**Question 34: Did you move to Canada within the last year (are you a newcomer)?**

Figure 47.



### Question 35: What is your employment status?

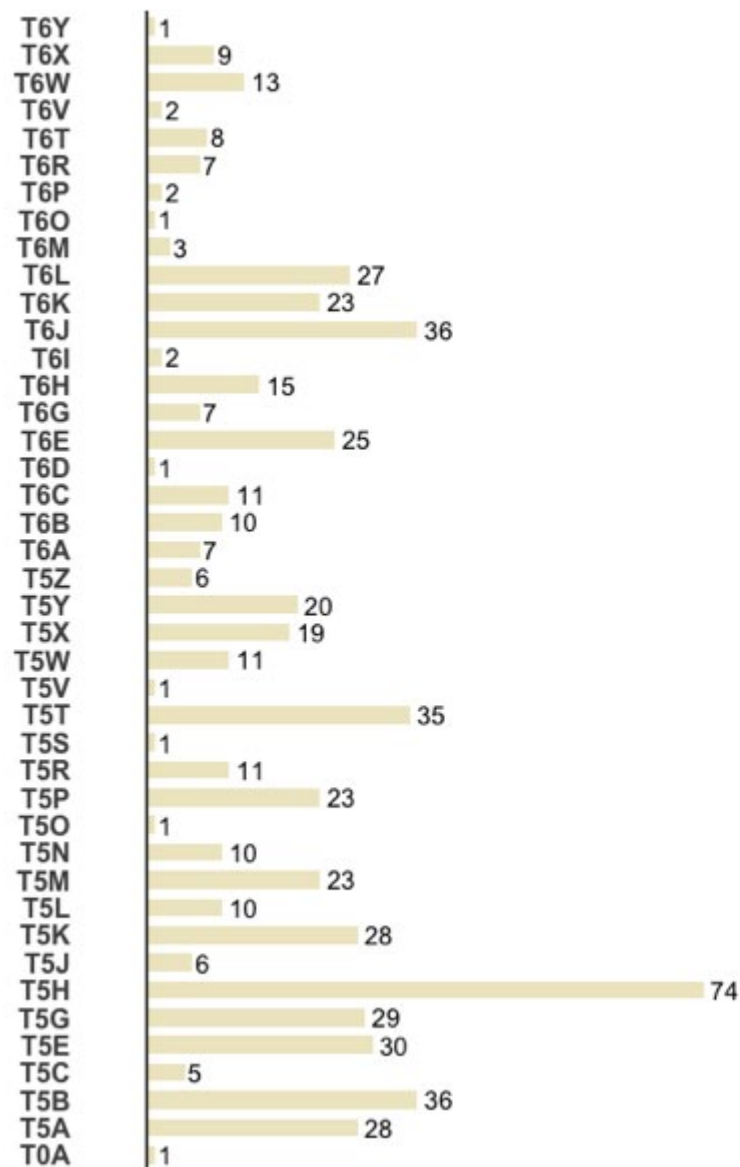
Figure 48.



Respondents were given the option of entering an “other” response to the above question (n=73 responses were given). Some respondents indicated they were disabled and unable to work (n=35). Other respondents were self-employed (n=12), retired (n=7), or people who primarily volunteer (n=7) with a few individual responses unable to be grouped.

### Question 36: What are the first 3 digits of your postal code?

Figure 49.





## 5.0 AGENCY, PARTNER, AND CITY STAFF DISCUSSIONS

### 5.1 AGENCY REPRESENTATIVES DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

A facilitated discussion was held in May 2018 at Commonwealth Community Recreation Centre. Five individuals representing two agencies and an advocate from the EndPovertyEdmonton Indigenous Circle participated in a discussion facilitated by the Evaluator and the Manager, Service Design. Another discussion was facilitated by City of Edmonton staff in July with four people from the Multicultural Health Brokers.

#### **The application process and its requirements**

Respondents commented on the limitations of the application process. In particular, they commented the form is completed manually which is time consuming and could be done electronically. Other respondents noted accessing the Internet to obtain program information and the appropriate application forms can be a challenge for applicants. Respondents also noted mobility can be an issue for applicants who may have trouble writing and completing the forms. Respondents suggested having application support offered at the Edmonton Service Centre to address this issue. Another application process issue raised by respondents centred around participants being approved for LAP but not the Ride Transit Program. In these instances, participants would not be able to access recreation services without the Ride Transit Program. Streamlining requirements was recommended. A frequent comment by participants was about the challenges associated with income verification or the notice of assessment requirement. Respondents noted participants' lives can change month-to-month and this is not reflected on a notice of assessment. Respondents felt people should have continued opportunity to access the program based on their current life circumstances.



## Access to, value and support of the program

Respondents commented on the program's value of providing transit to help those who otherwise would not have access. Respondents indicated they see participants accessing the program who are on AISH, low income, and refugees. Respondents agreed the program was meeting the needs of the relevant populations. However, they did note there are some gaps. Participants being missed include refugees with no sponsorship agreement, people with health conditions, or people without permanent home address. The benefits respondents noted for participants were centred on the ability of participants to get to appointments and reduce stress. Previously, participants would be provided with or have to purchase bus tickets which would often run out before the end of the month. This program alleviates that challenge. In addition, respondents noted as a result of spending less on a bus pass, they could afford other life necessities. According to respondents, the program is achieving program outcomes including access to employment, health care and education and decreased sense of social isolation.

## Minor concerns with collaboration

Respondents shared some concerns with collaboration. Respondents noted originally having one individual staff member as a point of contact with the City of Edmonton was helpful to assist with access and issues around the program. Now, there is a general inbox (email address) rather than one individual to call when requiring assistance, which may have a slightly longer response time. They noted the Edmonton Service Centre often does not have all the program information available and a single point of contact for applicants and agencies would be helpful. They commented on a lack of awareness of the program among support homes and group home staff that could be improved with enhanced communication.



## 5.2 CITY OF EDMONTON STAFF DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS

The following summarizes participant comments and themes identified through the discussions with City of Edmonton staff.



### Appreciation for the program

The program provides value to those who cannot afford transit. Affordable transit allows customers to complete their daily activities and access recreation, childcare, and employment services. There was reasonably good uptake and overall positive customer experience of the program and, for the most part, partners seem aware of the program and can promote it.



### Short implementation timelines

Many participants commented on the short timelines of the project. Some felt it was rushed, while others were proud of their ability to implement quickly.

- The motion was approved and accepted in August 2016
- Work group tasked in September with two employees initially
- Request was made in late October for January 2017 implementation
- Training for the Edmonton Service Centre happened somewhat early and it was noted staff may have forgotten their training by implementation date



### Technology challenges

Technology challenges were mentioned:

- Database issues and compatibility challenges between stakeholders
- Limitations of software capabilities
- Possibility of multiple passes issued because of unreliable verification process
- Lack of consistency between programs, areas, and agencies
- Participants voiced a need for a new specific system for this project
- Created a full-time position for data entry due to software limitations



### Privacy concerns and data collection

It can be challenging to ensure adherence to Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy while collecting enough information to administer the program, verify applicants and collect reporting as well as evaluation data. Technology issues created an environment where data was not as strong as it could be.



### Application process limitations

The application process included the following limitations:

- Challenges with income verification or the notice of assessment requirement
- The income requirement was for the previous year, so some people were not eligible for the pass as a result of their prior situation (this also posed challenges for refugees or newcomers without an assessment)
- Online applications could help: provide correct information, shorten line-ups, speed up processing and lessen stress on staff at libraries and recreation centres
- Application length can be a barrier with respect to readability and language level



### Logistical issues

Pass distribution could lead to large influxes of people at certain times causing challenges. Participants mentioned staggered roll-out and renewal as a possible solution.

## **5.3 EDMONTON PUBLIC LIBRARY PARTNER DISCUSSION HIGHLIGHTS**

In September 2017, Edmonton Public Library (EPL) began piloting the Ride Transit Program at three locations (Abbottsfeld, Jasper Place, and Woodcroft) at the request of the City of Edmonton. EPL agreed to the pilot based on alignment with library values and the opportunity to eliminate barriers to accessing public transportation. EPL noted they have faced challenges since undertaking this pilot. A telephone discussion facilitated by the Evaluator was held in May 2018 with two representatives of the EPL. Both participants, employed by EPL, one as a Director and the other as a Branch Manager. Both had been involved since the beginning of program implementation. Below are some of the highlighted responses reflecting the experiences of all three branches.

### **Program Implementation and Collaboration**

EPL shared the City of Edmonton staff have been responsive to feedback and receptive to work with. The initial training provided by ETS was good and EPL worked in partnership to provide staff training regarding sales. Three branches currently sell passes. Staff from finance, purchasing, IT and marketing are also involved as program support and EPL noted there has been an increase in workload. ETS provided funding to EPL to sell the passes.

### **Selling Passes**

Initial expectations were positive; however, EPL felt the process of selling and reconciling passes was more complex and time consuming than expected. Had EPL understood the complexity and amount of time required, it was felt by respondents they may have given more thought to entering into the agreement. In retrospect, EPL felt it would have been better for ETS staff to work out of library space rather than have their own staff sell the passes. EPL shared peak sales periods were longer than expected and during those times staff had less time to dedicate to EPL customers, impacting the quality of EPL's core library service delivery.

### **Challenges**

EPL highlighted Ride Transit customer interactions can be complex and time consuming. EPL staff reported customers became frustrated when EPL staff were unable to approve an application or resolve an issue with a Ride Transit registration. Staff were said to experience abuse and negative feedback from people angry about the process. Long line-ups, difficult access to libraries for some, small service desks, and having to refer to ETS for problem solving were among some of the challenges noted by EPL.

### **Reflections**

Respondents felt EPL exercised due diligence by regularly providing feedback to and working closely with ETS, communicating challenges, and seeking creative solutions. All three branches have made efforts to support the pilot program by experimenting with new and additional equipment, software scheduling modifications, and training models. While EPL supports the program in principle, they feel they have not been able to implement the Ride Transit Program without negatively impacting provision of core library services.



## 6.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on findings from the evaluation, the following rationale and recommendations are offered for consideration.

**1** The total number of enrolled Ride Transit users has been steadily increasing since June of 2017. However, some evaluation participants believe there is the potential a segment of the population exists who may be unaware of the program and are not accessing it or other support services. Additional promotion and sharing of information could support the continued uptake of the program.

**Recommendation:** Enhance the awareness of the Ride Transit Program by using different communication channels to target different customer groups such as newcomers, youth not currently enrolled in school, and low-income residents who do not receive agency support.

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**2** Some challenges were noted with the application process. It was suggested an online application could help shorten line-ups and speed up processing time. Also, the application length was found to be a barrier with respect to readability. For more details on suggested changes to the application, refer to the Appendix: Application Form Design and Usability Assessment.

**Recommendation:** Strengthen the application process:

- Review and update the application form for readability, length and ease of use. Translate application form into the most common spoken languages in Edmonton.<sup>2</sup>
- Have the application form available online as a fillable form that can be submitted electronically, in addition to the ability to print off and submit in person or by mail.
- Have application support available at Edmonton Service Centre (staffing and space)

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**3** The Ride Transit Pilot is integrated with the City of Edmonton Leisure Access Program (LAP). The “one stop shop” was intended to simplify the application process by combining both LAP and Ride Transit, streamlining the application experience. Although the application process appears to work for most applicants, there were segments of the population who experienced challenges. For instance, some applicants were approved under LAP for access to community recreation centres however denied approval for Ride Transit, due to the difference in income eligibility. Having the two sets of requirements seems to make the application process more cumbersome than necessary.

**Recommendation:** Make the requirements for the Ride Transit program the same as the requirements for the Leisure Access Program to address the relationship and shared processes between the two.

<sup>2</sup>Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino); Punjabi ; Chinese, German, Spanish, Ukrainian, Cantonese, Arabic, Polish and Vietnamese. [http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/vc-rv/index.cfm?LANG=ENG&VIEW=d&TOPIC\\_ID=4&GEOCODE=835&CFORMAT=jpg](http://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2011/dp-pd/vc-rv/index.cfm?LANG=ENG&VIEW=d&TOPIC_ID=4&GEOCODE=835&CFORMAT=jpg)

# 4

A common topic that arose throughout the evaluation and across participants was the use of income verification or the notice of assessment requirement for approval. For instance, as the income requirement was for the previous year, some applicants whose circumstances had changed were not eligible for the pass as a result of their prior situation. This also posed challenges for refugees or newcomers without an assessment. Others noted concern about expectations around the upcoming re-application and renewal process.

**Recommendation:** Further review and develop the program's supporting processes from a customer and staff perspective.

- Consider a phased roll-out for re-application and a simpler renewal process.
- Explore a provisional pass, time limited (e.g. three to six months) which would allow individual applicants time to gather the appropriate documentation, under justified circumstances as assessed by the City of Edmonton or a service agency.
- Consider alternate ways to verify income and look for ways to integrate verification with other levels of government offering services to the same population.
- When circumstances warrant, allow agencies to provide a letter of support explaining an applicant's situation and requesting the requirements be waived. Examples may include youth without the necessary identification to obtain a notice of assessment, or adults whose situations have changed since the previous tax year.

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# 5

Technology issues and database compatibility challenges between stakeholders were noted as an implementation challenge.

**Recommendation:** Implement a consistent, shared technology and procedures to support the delivery of the program.

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# 6

Some participants would like to see additional locations to purchase Ride Transit passes. Suggestions include: at convenience stores, supermarkets or malls, expanding into more libraries and recreation centers, and additional downtown city locations. Establishing a connection with Alberta Works and Support Centres for promotion and pass pick up was also mentioned by participants as something to be explored.

**Recommendation:** Review use and feasibility of current pick up locations and consider additional pass pick up locations. Explore partnerships with groups or other levels of government for promotion, administration, and distribution.

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# 7

This evaluation offers a preliminary understanding of who is using the program. More research on vulnerable populations who are not connected with support agencies would be useful to expand the program's reach as would connecting with individuals who are not accessing the program to further ascertain the reasons why.

**Recommendation:** Undertake additional research to learn more from organizations serving the most vulnerable populations as well as individuals not approved for or not accessing the program. Additional exploration to further determine program impact on specific groups, for example on refugees, refugee claimants, and immigrants, groups with limited mobility (i.e those accessing the DATS program), Indigenous groups, LGBTQ youth, and those who are homeless or living in social housing, as well as those no longer accessing the program would help to further understand the degree to which the Ride Transit Program is helping to lift people out of poverty.



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## Executive Sponsors

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- Agency staff: Multicultural Health Brokers
- Terra Centre
- Catholic Social Services
- Office of the Public Guardian & Trustee
- EndPovertyEdmonton Indigenous Circle
- Boys & Girls Clubs Big Brothers Big Sisters (BGCBigS)
- Ride Transit Program customers

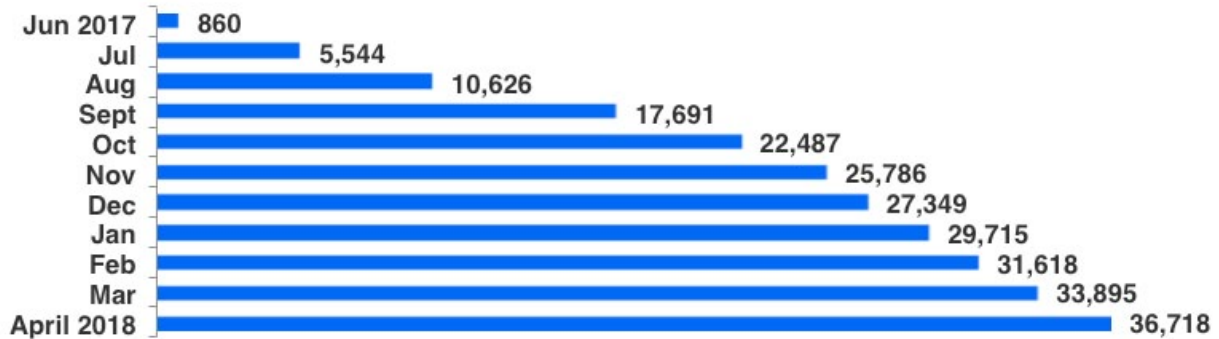
# APPENDIX: RIDE TRANSIT PILOT PROGRAM

## CUSTOMER DETAIL

The following offers additional details on the enrollment and users of the program. This data was provided by the City of Edmonton.

Note: City of Edmonton staff identified a discrepancy in the original spreadsheet containing this data. As such, the cumulative total varies slightly from the final total number of program participants as presented earlier on in this report.

Figure 1. Total enrolled customers (cumulative)



The total number of enrolled has been steadily increasing since June of 2017.

Figure 2. Total Enrolled customers by Age Category (Cumulative)

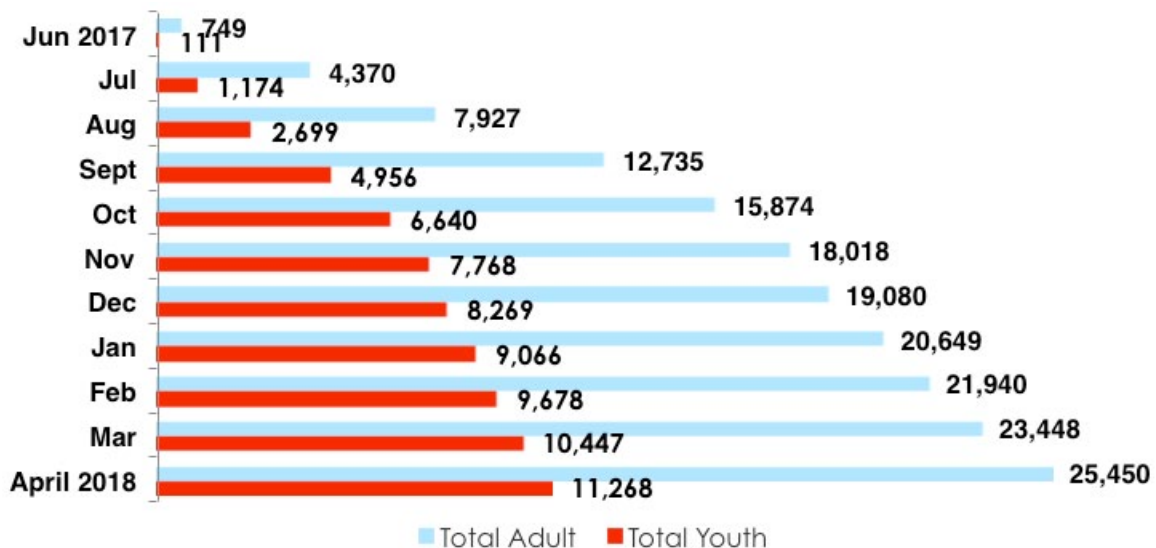
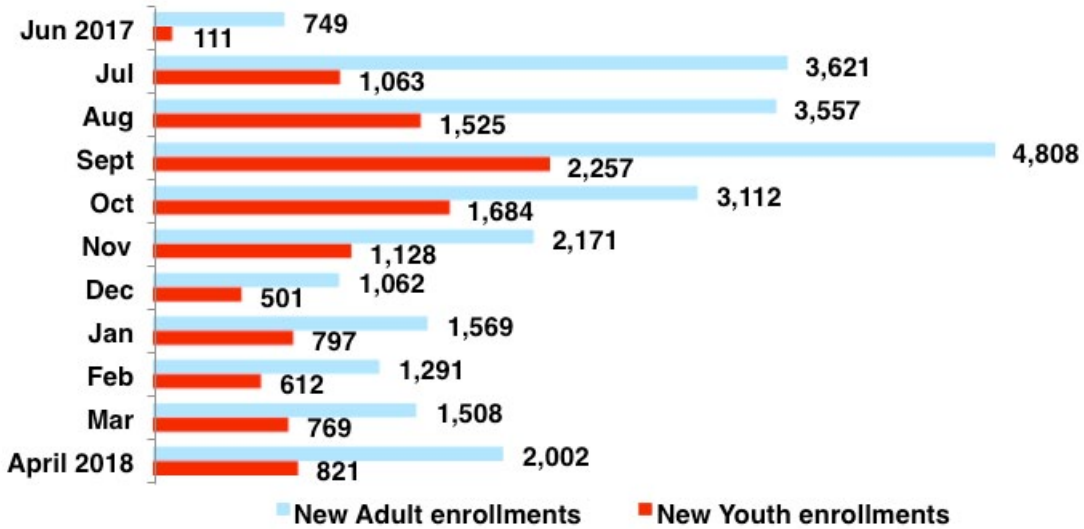


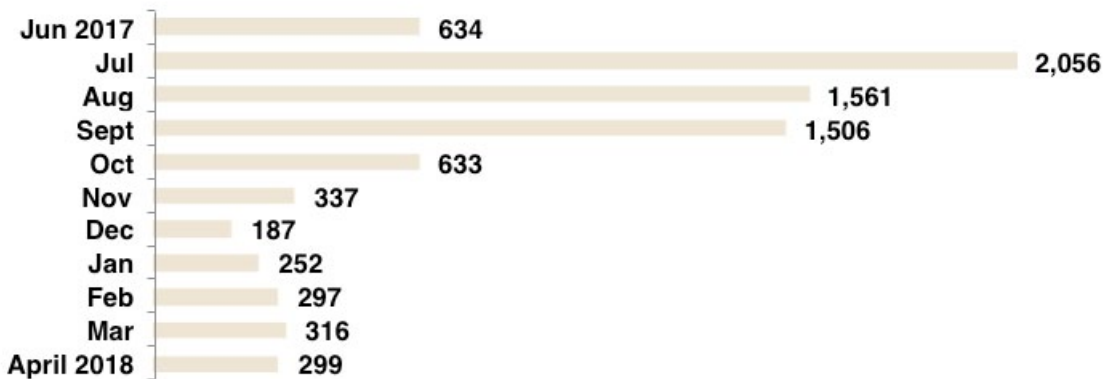


Figure 4. Total Number of New Enrollments, by Age Category, Per Month



The months with the most new enrollments were September 2017, July 2017, and August 2017. New enrollments have slowed since that peak but were starting to increase again as of April 2018.

Figure 5. Total Number of AISH Participants per Month



When new enrollments were examined per month for AISH participants, the months with the most new enrollments were July, August and September 2017; similar to overall new enrollments. New AISH enrollments slowed since that peak but were starting to increase again as of April 2018.

# APPENDIX: APPLICATION FORM DESIGN AND USABILITY ASSESSMENT

In order to assess the application form's ease of use and effectiveness, a review of the application and observation study was conducted by the City of Edmonton to identify opportunities for design improvement. The following information was provided by the City of Edmonton for inclusion in the evaluation report.

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The review looked at design of interfaces which make forms easy to understand, helpful and informative, concise and effective, have reduced risk of error, have consistent execution, and have flexible usage. Behavioural observation was also done to further understand the user's experience during the overall application process.

## Unexpected Rejection

**Finding:** Applicants initiate the submission process in person, but unexpectedly are rejected from the program as a result of misunderstanding eligibility guidelines outlined in the application package. The number of customer touchpoints that represent application failure is not captured but was observed at the service desk.

- The content can be structured to allow the user to consume only information that pertains to them, rather than exposing them to irrelevant content and information overload. For example, if the "Income Qualifications" section separated "Newly Landed Refugee or Immigrant Income Qualifiers", then non-refugee and non-immigrant applicants can ignore that information.
- Stronger visual hierarchy can be employed in the visual design of the form to make it easier for applicants to navigate through information specifically for them, and to differentiate/categorize separate types of information (Ride Transit pass sales locations vs. application locations)

## High Reading and Literacy Levels

**Finding:** The application package is written for a high reading level, which may create difficulties for some applicants.

- The written content for program information should be reviewed and revised using plain language for diverse audiences.
- For example, the heading: "12 Participating Ride Transit Program Sale Locations" can be revised to "Where to buy your Ride Transit Pass".

## Managing Expectations about Progression

**Finding:** there are a number of steps as part of the application that are ambiguous, which may cause frustration or the need to seek clarity. For example, there is a turnaround time of 2-3 weeks stated on the form, but no indication of how the user will be notified, what would happen next or whether the application is successful or rejected.

- Give the applicant more feedback on the system's status to manage their expectations. For example, give the applicant information about:
  - what would be the best/most efficient way to apply?
  - when an application has been received
  - when an application is pending and how long they should be expected to wait
  - what will happen if approved or rejected, and how the applicant will be notified

Furthermore, the delivery of this information can be automated if implemented online.

## Error Prevention

**Finding:** there is the opportunity to design for error prevention, or recovery from error. For example, the "Income and Address Verification" section of the form expects the applicant to identify the document type that they submit, rather than asking the applicant to identify from a list of qualifying documents.

INCOME AND ADDRESS VERIFICATION	
Please list below the documents you are providing (see pages 2 - 3 to ensure correct documents are being included):	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Income Verification:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Address Verification:
<input type="checkbox"/>	Eligible Dependents Verification:

INCOME AND ADDRESS VERIFICATION	
<b>INCOME VERIFICATION</b>	<b>Please indicate which document type you are submitting with your application. (You must include at least one)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li><input type="checkbox"/> Canada Revenue Agency Notice of Assessment</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> AISH Health Benefits Card</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Current copy of Delegation of Powers</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> A copy of Confirmation of Permanent Residence</li><li><input type="checkbox"/> Refugee Protection Claimant documents</li></ul>

SAMPLE

The application could be more informative when asking the applicant for input.

- An online form would open the door to more options to enhance usability, such as the inclusion of "tooltips" (helpful hints in context), progressive disclosure (disclosing only information that pertains to a specific user type), and error-prevention features (e.g. not allowing submission until required inputs are included).

## Self-Service Kiosk

### Finding: Edmonton Service Centre - Self-Service Kiosk

When approaching the Edmonton Service Centre, every customer is cued for customer service through an interaction with a Graphical User Interface (GUI) displayed on a touch-screen (shown below). The GUI currently does not make any clear reference to the Ride Transit Program, indicating only the Leisure Access Program and a general inquiry for Subsidized Transit Passes through an “ETS Purchases” category.

- Having a clearer entry point about the Ride Transit Program for a user to access information about the program can significantly enhance their overall experience at the front desk.



Many Ride Transit users rely on external help to gain the understanding and knowledge of the program in order to apply, whether it is a phone call to 311, a visit to a Service Desk (Rec Centre, Library, ESC) or agency support. Knowledge of the program and how it works may sometimes be acquired through word of mouth, as opposed to independently seeking information online or on the form.

For users to access the program more independently, and decrease the likelihood of rejection from the program, there is an opportunity to redesign some aspects of the application process and the application form itself.

# APPENDIX: IMPLEMENTATION ASSESSMENT

After approval from Council and a funding partnership with the Government of Alberta, implementation was achieved within a short timeframe. Many participants commented on the short timelines of the project. Some felt as though it was rushed, while others were proud of their ability to implement quickly.

- The motion was approved and accepted in August 2016
- Work group tasked in September with two people working initially
- Request was made in late October for January 2017 implementation
- Implementation started in May 2017 with existing LAP passholders
- Sales to qualified individuals in the general public opened August 2017
- Training for the Edmonton Service Centre happened somewhat early and staff may have forgotten their training by implementation time

## What went well

- A working program was quickly implemented
- The pass provided to Edmontonians with low income looks the same as any other transit pass, which was noted several times as a positive feature
- Agencies noted collaboration with the City of Edmonton staff has been, for the most part, positive and responsive – with the program adapting to address mail-out issues to AISH recipients, support letters for refugees and expanding to include post-secondary students
- Program customers generally agreed the application process was easy but was not the case for all applicants
- Across the board, the value of the \$35 pass was recognized by all participants
- The program continuously improved. The AISH mail-out system was a challenge for implementation and the resulting process made the program difficult to access for AISH customers. As a result of customer concern, AISH recipients now have the option of pick up or have delivery by mail with auto-debit payments. Another post-implementation change to the program was the inclusion of post-secondary students during summer months who were previously ineligible and the future inclusion of refugee status newcomers

## What could have gone better

- The program was intended to be integrated however no governance model or terms of reference or service level agreements was established between business areas involved in the operations
- Challenges arose with selling passes from EPL sites. Cash-based transactions (and the reconciling process) are not a part of EPL's core business. EPL staff experienced challenges resolving issues or complaints arising from the complex needs of Ride Transit applicants due to the lack of access to full ETS information systems
- Some agencies noted having one specific point of contact for agency questions on the program would be preferred to the general inbox
- Considering the extended service hours of recreation centres and libraries, inquiries and ability to resolve issues outside of regular business hours presented a challenge
- The application has issues with respect to its availability in different languages, length and readability
- The Ride Transit Program is tied to the Leisure Access Program; however, the clientele can be different. Experiences were shared where applicants were denied a Ride Transit pass yet was approved for LAP

# APPENDIX: DISCUSSION GROUP DETAILED FINDINGS

## Customer Discussion Groups

### Demographics

Prior to beginning the focus group discussion, all six participants were asked to complete a short survey to capture demographics. Two participants were aged between 45 and 65 years, two between 25 and 44, and two between 18 and 24. One participant had children at home over the age of 12 but under 18. Three participants are on AISH while three indicated they were not. Three receive Income Support and three indicated they do not. None of the participants noted being newcomers to Canada. One participant works full time while the rest noted they are not currently working, however, two mentioned they are doing volunteer work.

### How did you learn about the Ride Transit Program?

Participants learned about the program in a variety of ways including the Internet (Google) and the City of Edmonton's website. Participants noted they found the application and criteria online.

One participant shared they could not get clarification about income information necessary at the Service Centre. Initially the participant did not have a notice of assessment and had to get one from an accountant. "I brought all the paperwork possible but no tax information. They did not approve my application. It was embarrassing and rude, people behind me heard." Another shared they could not apply online and walked an hour to get to the Service Centre. The participant shared being able to email the application would be better.

### How long did you wait for your application to go through?

The answer varied by participant as follows:

- 6-8 weeks (applied for LAP and then received approval for Ride Transit)
- Notice of denial received in 6 weeks; no information received during the wait period
- 3 month wait for AISH approval prior to the application
- Could not recall exactly, but said it "felt long, maybe a month or 2."
- Two and a half months to purchase the first pass at a discounted rate
- Able to pick up pass the same day they applied

### Where do you purchase your pass from? How easy is it to purchase?

Most participants purchased their pass at the Edmonton Service Centre. One would prefer the convenience of mailing and has had to wait up to 30 minutes in line. One noted it can be challenging to make it to the Service Centre before it closes at 4:30 p.m. A participant noted Kinsmen Sports Centre or the Strathcona Library would be easier for purchasing, and Kinsmen could deal with confidentiality better.

An example was shared about the Service Centre running out of passes, and participants were told to go to Jasper Place Library, on the other side of town. When they arrived, they were able to purchase their passes, but were told by the staff that the library only had two passes left.

### **What happens if you lose a pass?**

Participants replied there is no replacement at a reduced cost. If they lost their pass, participants noted they could go on Kijiji or Facebook and purchase one at a lower cost or borrow a bus pass from someone else.

### **How often do you take transit? To where? Has your Ride Transit pass increased your use of public transit?**

Participants noted for the most part they take transit every day, or most days of the week. One participant noted they went from spending \$40 per week on bus tickets to \$35 per month. Everyone agreed they use transit more because of the pass.

### **Is the pass “affordable”, does it provide value for money?**

All participants agreed that yes, the pass is affordable and offers value for money, when compared to the full price. Some participants shared prior to the Ride Transit Program they previously bought tickets as they could not afford a pass. One shared regular price bus tickets were the other affordable option, but you have to ration them.

### **What is different in your life as a result of the Ride Transit pass?**

Participants shared as a result of the pass they are able to do volunteer work, attend physiotherapy and medical appointments, go to summer school and take part in more recreation opportunities. Some shared they have used the pass to help find a job and others said it gives them independence.

### **Do you experience any challenges with the Ride Transit Program?**

Participants mainly spoke of issues related to transportation in general.

#### **Issues**

- Buses are crowded
- It can be loud and there are rude people
- Drivers do not consistently enforce rules and people who are intoxicated are allowed on and they should not be
- Some drivers are really nice with a good sense of humour but others seem like they are in a hurry
- Challenge getting to regional cities, Sherwood Park is good, but Fort Saskatchewan and Leduc are more expensive

### **Do you know anyone who could use a pass from this program but can't get one?**

One participant mentioned a sibling who is on low income and could use a pass but is not comfortable using the transit system with her children. Another shared she has a friend who uses a walker but is not on Income Support who could benefit. It was also mentioned those whose tax situation differs from year to year, may be currently in a low-income situation yet last year's taxes do not reflect that position.

### **What are some other support programs you access?**

Participants shared they access mental health supports, Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society, Hope Mission, Bissell Centre, Boyle Street, Health for 2, and their doctor for support.

## How would you like to get updates on the Ride Transit Program?

Participants noted several ways they would like to receive updates on the program:

- Mail and email
- Support workers/Agencies
- Have information mailed with AISH
- 311 advertisements while on hold
- Information through Alberta Works

## Do you have recommendations or anything else you would like to share?

- Online application for completion and electronic submission
- Approvals:
  - Have different options for approval and offer temporary approvals (ie: temporary month approvals for individuals who do not have NOA)
  - Allow a doctors' letter or other letters of recommendation to qualify for the program
  - Make it less of a hassle, no notice of assessment (taxes) as the basis for approval
  - Take current income into account
- More training for staff on the program
- Have sales at all city recreation centres and convenience stores
- Transportation:
  - Advise drivers they should wait until everyone is sitting before leaving. Operators should wait to let people sit down/especially those with disabilities or strollers
  - Make sure drivers are paying attention to the road and not talking to passengers
  - Have more time built into routes so drivers are not rushing all the time
  - Buses are full sometimes, have more buses at peak hours
- Increase awareness of program: marketing in bus locations, trains, recreation centres as well as posters that guide people to the Service Centre to apply.

## Agency Discussion Group

### What is your role with the Ride Transit Program?

- Two individuals represented the Office of the Public Guardian who support vulnerable Albertans. There are 450 to 500 clients that benefit from the program (court appointed). The staff complete the application and process payments. The majority of passes are mailed to clients.
- Two individuals represented Catholic Social Services (CSS) who support privately sponsored refugees. The staff provide the income support letter to assist with the application.
- There was one representative from EndPovertyEdmonton's Indigenous Circle who advocates for and represents many individuals navigating the systems to obtain supports.



### **Tell us about collaboration among partners with the Ride Transit Program.**

A participant noted the previous City of Edmonton staff contact was helpful, you could email them directly and they had a positive experience. However, things have become a bit more challenging since that person left the organization.

Another noted challenges with the application form. The form must be completed manually and it was suggested to make the form digital. It was noted by another that some people still need access to paper copies.

Privately sponsored refugees originally did not have access to the program. CSS shared they felt they “accidentally” found the information, as they did not know about the application process and stumbled upon it. Since having learned about the program, the process has been smooth. The staff send an email to the shared inbox and send the income verification letters. They noted not all refugees get employed in their first year and visits to Alberta Works do not provide support on the program. Some questions arose for the CSS participants: Can refugees that have been sponsored by a Group of Five have access to the program? Will families that need 2 years of sponsorship still have access to the program?

### **Thinking back, tell me about implementation and roll-out. We are interested in capturing lessons learned.**

Participants noted the original point of contact was helpful. There was a discussion about using the notice of assessment. Using the NOA as a marker of low income generally is fine however some people’s lives change month-to-month. Participants mentioned there should be some accountability to ensure people have the opportunity to access the program outside of the NOA.

Others noted mobility can be an issue and some people have trouble writing. People who do not know how to fill out a form properly need assistance and support. It was suggested having application support at Edmonton Service Centre could be helpful.

An example was provided of two clients being approved for LAP but not the Ride Transit Program. The question was raised as to why they would want access to recreation if they cannot get there. Another story was shared about a client who got LAP without knowing they qualified after being enrolled in the Ride Transit Program. The client called from the recreation centre and left a message for the staff saying thank you and how they were surprised that their membership was at no cost.

### **Who do you see accessing the program?**

Participants answered those accessing the program include individuals on AISH, individuals with low income who have a trustee, refugees, and privately sponsored refugees. Participants noted refugees love the recreation pass; it gives them activities to do with their families.

### **Is the program meeting the needs of the intended population?**

The group agreed that yes, the program is meeting the needs of the intended population, for those who know about it. The decrease from \$97 to \$35 is huge for individuals with low incomes.

### **Tell me about the application/intake process, the requirements to apply and the time it takes.**

A participant discussed how access to the Internet can be challenging and some may not know how to use it. Another stated the need for a fillable e-form and paper form to serve all populations. One participant noted mailing out renewals would be helpful.

### **Do you know anyone who could use a pass from this program but can't get one?**

When asked about people who could use a pass but could not obtain one, participants noted those waiting for their AISH application to be processed would benefit from a temporary pass. Others noted the Group of Five and community sponsored refugees with no sponsorship agreement cannot access the program. Those who are transitioning from work to no work, who have health conditions or people without a permanent residence were also noted as groups who could not access the program.

### **What is the awareness level of this program among agencies and potential customers?**

Participants noted a low awareness among support homes and group home staff. It was felt there needed to be better communication about the program overall.

### **What differences have you noticed in the lives of people who are accessing the Ride Transit Program?**

Participants noted people feel more at ease to get to appointments and it reduces stress. Prior to the Ride Transit Program people would buy tickets, which would often run out before the end of the month, and now they buy the pass, which increases independence.

### **What is the value of the program? How is it beneficial to agencies? What difference has it made?**

Participants noted a less expensive bus pass allows clients to have more money for other things. Having access to public transportation reduces sponsor responsibilities for driving refugees to language assessments and medical appointments. Participants agreed outcomes are being achieved in terms of greater access to employment, education, health care and a decrease in social isolation.

### **What could be improved about the Ride Transit Program?**

When asked about improvements or what gaps exist, some participants responded that Edmonton Service Centre does not have all the program information and may not be providing the information at the client's emotional level. As such, some additional staff training may be valuable. Others noted one point of contact for agency staff inquiring on behalf of clients would be preferred. Contact information for questions should be clarified and a phone number provided for agency staff inquiries. Group email could be slow to reply at times.

### **Moving forward, what are some suggestions for any future implementation of this type of program?**

Agency representatives provided the following suggestions for future implementation:

- Institute an appeal process to consider applications case by case
- Consider another way to verify income, for example unemployment insurance
- Offer a 2-year term for refugees
- Explore qualifications based on their immigration category (stated on their immigration card)
- Mail bus passes to those who request that service
- Use clear and simple language, translate forms or have translation services such as Edmonton Service Centre staff, translators or software to support issues of low literacy or English Language Learners
- Disseminate program information through AISH and Alberta Works offices

When asked if they had anything else to share, participants noted being happy overall with the program and were pleased changes to enhance it were being reviewed.

# Newcomer Discussion Group

City of Edmonton staff facilitated a discussion with the Multicultural Health Brokers (MCHB). The group is made up of community leaders who represent different ethnic communities in Edmonton, and help newcomers integrate into the community. The discussion group was comprised of people who use Ride Transit and support those who want access to the program.

## Information and Awareness

### How did you hear about the Ride Transit Program?

Participants heard about it from newcomer centre and when it was added to the Leisure Access Program. Most of the families who work with the MCHB are part of LAP.

### How does MCHB help community members get onto the Ride Transit Program?

Participants noted they worked with clients 1:1 to assess their basic needs and if the client does not drive, which happens most of the time, then applying for the Ride Transit Program is suggested. MCHB as well as other settlement centres try to supply tickets to fill the gap until clients are accepted to the program.

### How do newcomer families get connected to MCHB?

The main source of referral is word of mouth by health care providers or other families who are familiar with the agency. According to MCHB, almost 80 percent of people who newly arrive come as immigrants. When they arrive, they become a permanent resident. Up to 20% come through the humanitarian compassionate ground of refugees. Not counted in this are temporary foreign workers and people with illegal or no status.

### What are some channels of communication where newcomers can be reached?

Discussion participants outlined a number of alternative channels:

- Settlement agencies or immigrant serving agencies
- Information at ethnic grocery stores
- If this program could be promoted in schools so children can bring information home. Language barrier exists here too. Having a child to bring home a document can work but if the parents do not understand, then it gets overlooked
- Public Library
- Connect through English language classes, grocery stores
- Some of the larger communities have their own online communities
- Lots of people have smartphones. Group messages: contacting phone companies to inform customers
- Promote it at different festivals like Cari-west
- Host sessions to inform community about new changes and raise awareness
- Telus is providing 1-year free Internet access to newcomer families. Telus also partners with landlords/housing and could be approached

## Adoption

### How can we make it easier to use or learn how to use the transit system?

MCHB representatives shared that during winter it is hard. People may not know how to use ETS and they have fear of asking questions. As well multiple transfers becomes confusing. They also shared it would be ideal to orient clients to the Ride Transit Program in their first language.

## **Newcomer Applications**

### **What kinds of paperwork do newcomers come with? (What kinds of documentation could potentially be added for eligibility to the program?)**

Participants outlined the process and paperwork newcomers have.

- Landing Paper
- Permanent Resident card
- Temporary Foreign Workers would have their work permit
- Refugee Claimants, depending on the process of their claim
  - Letter of Responses from the government. The “Letter of Response” is what they have while they wait for a response a letter to say they are in process
  - Asylum Seekers: could have arrived as a visitor or student, once they are here, they apply for Asylum
- Privately sponsored refugees: they also have landing papers the moment they arrive
- Lots of people do not have documentation

They also suggested some alternative options:

- Government of Alberta Child Care Subsidy uses documents outside of notice of assessment
- Letter signed by social worker
- Could do a calculation of bills/wages

### **How does MCHB help newcomers with this program and what are the barriers?**

Participants noted MCHB helps to mail and pre-screen the application and supporting documents for errors. They shared the documentation is not always available to prove children are the dependents of the parents. This presents a gap where the parent can be approved and the child may be declined. As well, for some clients, proof of residency is difficult when the majority of bills are under either the landlord’s name or a husband, sometimes estranged. Participants reiterated the notice of assessment provides information from a year previous which may not reflect today’s financial situation.

## **Cost and Pass Purchase**

### **What are some opportunities for the Ride Transit Program for newcomer families?**

Participants stressed that the City should consider family passes. As well, they suggested targeting older, bilingual children in plain language sessions to facilitate uptake of parents and other family members. They shared the cost of the monthly pass makes a big difference and for the first year, being new to our country is costly. Calgary’s sliding scale price structure was mentioned to accommodate different family situations. Participants noted only a few places are selling the \$35 bus pass and purchasing online or at a convenience store would be easier.

### **Moving forward, what are some suggestions for any future implementation of this type of program? How can we design the program to better address the unique needs of newcomers?**

Participants noted a temporary approval process would make things easier. They also talked about aligning the program with employers who hire a large number of newcomers and to consider extending the subsidy to temporary foreign workers.

# City of Edmonton Staff Discussions and Interviews

The following is a summary of responses to questions asked of staff involved in program implementation.

## What is your role with the Ride Transit Program?

Participants indicated a range of roles, noting their involvement in the following categories:

- Implementation support to the program
- Application intakes
- Addressing questions from the public
- IT implementation role
- Project management of the program
- Manager of customer engagement
- Team lead
- Manager of operations

## Tell me about the collaboration among partners with the Ride Transit Program. (What is working well, what could be improved?)

Participants noted the program engaged a diverse set of stakeholders from the beginning and involved a range of internal and external partners. External partners noted who were not localized to internal finance, IT, or other Ride Transit Programmatic support included:

- Edmonton Public Library
- Recreation Centres
- Citizen Services
- AISH
- FARE Parody
- Refugee Agencies
- Alberta Trustee and Guardianship Office
- Government of Alberta
- Good Samaritan Society
- Catholic Social Services

## **Participants identified the following elements of collaboration that were working well:**

The partnership with the GOA for funding has been successful and collaborative.

Participants noted the following elements of collaboration could be improved amongst partners:

- It has been challenging to coordinate work and accommodate the needs of the program with the Edmonton Public Library
- Coordinating many partners within the City of Edmonton on differing IT systems posed challenges. Specifically, the libraries do not have the same network of IT infrastructure so there have been collaboration issues trying to rectify the situation
- There was a lack of comprehensive IT support to manage the demands of the program amongst stakeholders and partners
- Getting data or information from the GOA can be difficult because of privacy legislation
- Program customers who were on AISH and used DATS were not eligible for the benefit
- Working with the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee has been a learning curve as they had purchased passes online without names. Coordinating information sharing has been a challenge
- Ensuring proper documentation is received for refugees is challenging as it requires notices of assessment or letters from sponsorship websites
- If someone is a student, their application was denied as post secondary students were not eligible for the program (this changed as of June 2018)

## **Thinking back, tell me about implementation and roll-out. What are some lessons learned?**

Overall, participants found the implementation was successful but not without challenges. A primary comment was on changes to the AISH mail-out system that posed implementation challenges. Participants noted they were not adequately prepared for the amount of applications received. Participants also commented staff were passionate about the project and worked hard to ensure success of the program.

It was noted a phased roll-out approach would have been helpful and a phased renewal process could help remove some of the burden.

## **Who do you see accessing the program?**

Participants noted the following categories of customers:

- AISH program customers
- PATH program customers
- Individuals below low-income cut-off
- DATS program customers
- Refugees

### **Is the program meeting the needs of the intended population?**

Generally speaking, participants agreed the program was meeting the needs of the intended population in terms of providing additional access to transit; but there were still some barriers.

Those participants who did not agree noted it was not meeting the needs of immigrants or refugees because of the income verification requirement. Youth who are not living at home cannot access their notices of assessment and cannot meet application requirements for the program. There was discussion that youth aged between 13 and 15 are potentially missing out on reduced transit. The following comments were provided:

- The income verification process can be an onerous step, turning people away as a result and missing populations of immigrants/refugees and youth who do not reside at home
- Income verification uses previous year income and does not accommodate current situation
- Improvement is needed to make the documentation process more flexible

### **Tell me about the application/intake process, the requirements to apply and the time it takes.**

Participants agreed the process included:

- Visit a partner location
- Receive paper application and complete the six-page form
- A notice of assessment is required to verify income and address is also verified
- Once information is verified, program administrators provide a conditional pass and enter details into the CLASS system
- Permanent passes can be picked up at some recreation centres and libraries

Participants noted the application process was simpler for AISH program customers: they fill out an application form (with support, if needed) and present their AISH card. Once information is verified they are provided with a conditional pass. The application process can take about five minutes if they have their documentation and 15-20 minutes on average.

### **What is the awareness level of this program among agencies and potential customers?**

Generally, participants noted partners were aware of the program but the extent to which frontline staff at the libraries and recreation centres were able to talk about the program, varied. Participants noted the process could be onerous on frontline staff of recreation centres and libraries to manage the demands of the program, especially with long lines at the end of the month. They also noted the process was a large cultural change for the staff administering the program. Participants also discussed issues that potential partners may not be aware of and noted that there is some misinformation being provided by partners about the program.

When they discussed the awareness of potential customers, participants noted people are finding out about the program through the website, advertisements and through community agencies like PATH, Boyle Street, and E4C. They did note they were missing potential customers who did not use partner agencies but would meet the requirements.

Other comments included the pass not currently being available to agencies, the process not being very customer friendly and that the program should be separate from LAP as they are different clients.

### **What differences have you noticed in the lives of people who are accessing the Ride Transit Program?**

Some participants indicated they have noticed customers are happy, some crying or expressing gratitude about being able to get where they need to go. They also noted customers were pleased the pass looked the same and did not identify them as a low-income individual who might be treated differently. One customer commented to a participant that he was now able to go get groceries. Another customer noted they were able to take their children to school and obtain employment.

Some participants noted they used to ask for comments as part of the AISH application, but that was not possible anymore so feedback from customers was not available.

Agencies told staff the \$35 pass was helpful because the reduced rate was beneficial for their clients.

### **What is the value of the program? How is it beneficial to agencies? What difference has it made?**

Participants generally discussed the program is important for access to transit, especially for those who are low income or DATS and otherwise would not be able to access.

Participants discussed value in the context of being able to measure and comment reliably on value. In particular, participants noted there was nothing systematic in place to help identify the value of the program for their clients.

### **What do you like best about the Ride Transit pass? What is working well with the Ride Transit Program?**

Participants commented they liked that the program existed to provide transit access to those who might not have been able to afford it. In addition, they noted customers receive the same service as full-paying customers without being identified so there was no stigma. They did comment, however, that it would be hard to take the program away once it has been implemented if the pilot was not successful.

### **What could be improved about the Ride Transit Program? (What gaps exist?)**

Participants commented on the IT challenges of various systems attempting to capture information for the program. They also noted solutions had been time and labour intensive to implement and were not very successful. Participants also noted clearer definitions for customers of the program need to be identified.

Specific comments included the following improvement suggestions:

- Explore separation between the LAP and Ride Transit Program applications or make requirements the same
- LAP and CLASS IT systems are causing issues that need to be rectified
- The processing and approval process for applications needs to be improved
- Work needs to be done on the requalification process for the annual pass
- EPL struggles with administering the program and being unable to access essential IT
- There needs to be
- a longer-term solution
- clearance for information
- a clearer definition for intended customers
- a standard system across the city for administration of the program



## **Moving forward, what are some suggestions for any future implementation of this type of program?**

Participants primarily commented on the importance of planning and ensuring there is infrastructure and support for a program such as this. They felt sensitivity to the needs of the target population and reducing the challenges of finding locations to apply for and pick up passes should be addressed. Improving the application process to make it customer-friendly would also be helpful.

Specific recommendations by participants included the following:

- Infrastructure for delivering verification and purchasing services consistently across the City
- Administering the program online
- Improve and ensure applications are easy to read and easy to complete
- Streamline application process and ensure multiple easy-to-access pick-up locations
- Train city employees on the program