



Regina Transit Master Plan

Date	April 27, 2022
To	Executive Committee
From	Citizen Services
Service Area	Transit & Fleet
Item No.	EX22-50

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive Committee recommends that City Council:

1. Approve the Regina Transit Master Plan (RTMP) contained in Appendix A - Regina Transit Master Plan Final Report.
2. Direct Administration to provide an annual report on the implementation of the Regina Transit Master Plan to Executive Committee.
3. Approve these recommendations at its meeting on May 4, 2022.

ISSUE

City Council directed Administration to develop the Regina Transit Master Plan on July 29, 2020 (CR20-70). This is the first Transit Master Plan that the City of Regina has had. This report introduces the 25-year Regina Transit Master Plan (RTMP) for Council's approval based on the founding principals of accessibility, sustainability, and age friendliness.

IMPACTS

Accessibility Impact

Accessibility is one of the founding principles of the RTMP, with the goal of ensuring public

transportation is easy to use for all citizens and visitors to the City of Regina (City). Increasing accessibility includes taking affirmative action to improve the eligibility and reassessment process for paratransit customers. Implementation of an integrated trip model will see some paratransit customers able to use conventional transit, within their abilities, providing access to high frequency direct routes with accessible stops, while reducing ride time. Building on the success of the On Demand service, a unified Demand Responsive service will be provided allowing for the sharing of resources to operate both services and increased efficiency within Transit for paratransit and conventional riders.

Almost all transit riders use path and sidewalk networks to access bus stops at both ends of their trip. The connectivity and quality of these networks is important to the success of any transit service, as passengers are more likely to walk or wheel to bus stops when it is safe and comfortable to do so. In both existing and new neighborhoods, path connectivity and quality will be a priority in all stages of planning and development.

The RTMP is also recommending increased frequency on all routes and increased hours of operation so Regina residents and visitors can rely on public transit as their primary means of transportation.

Financial Impact

The RTMP identifies recommendations which involve financial implications spanning 25 years. However, approval of the RTMP does not constitute approval of future costs. Wherever possible, the goals of the RTMP will be met through the reallocation of existing budget and resources. When additional budget or resources are required, separate budget requests would be brought to City Council for consideration as part of the overall budget process. Appendix A – Regina Transit Master Plan Final Report - Table 13, p.49, outlines possible budget requirements for the short, mid and long term, if actions within the Plan are initiated. These numbers will vary depending on the finances of the City and available funding from other sources.

Policy/Strategic Impact

The RTMP will help guide change and growth for Regina Transit over the next 25 years. To do so effectively, a policy framework that clearly outlines where the organization wants to go and how to get there is required. A new policy framework has been developed with defined components including the role, vision, mission, goals and service guidelines. Based on the RTMP policy framework, community engagement, system analysis, existing contexts, recommended role, and the updated vision and mission statements, the following three strategic priorities are recommended for Regina Transit: 1. Customer Experience 2. Equity 3. Sustainability.

The RTMP was also developed to align with other transformative City documents starting with the Official Community Plan (OCP). The RTMP aligns with the OCP transportation goals specifically;

Goal 1 - Providing Sustainable Transportation Choices and Goal 2 - Elevating the Role of Public Transit. Having an accessible, easy to use transit system will ensure Regina is competitive with other larger cities who may have more robust transportation systems. Creating better, more active ways to get around will help achieve our growth plans of 300,000 residents. The key goal from the OCP is to enhance transit service in existing neighbourhoods to support continued residential and employment growth. The RTMP has several actions to enhance transit service by increasing frequency, expanding hours, and use new innovative service types like on-demand service.

The City's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) provides direction on all transportation modes in the City, including Transit. The TMP Direction 3 is to Elevate the Role of Transit and outlines the broad foundations to achieve that goal. Specifically, the TMP aims to make transit reliable and easy to use. New users should find the experience of using transit accessible which is a key foundation of the plan. The RTMP aims to meet that goal by focusing on service frequency and customer facing technology.

In addition, the RTMP was developed to achieve alignment with the goals and objectives of other plans including the Winter City Strategy, neighbourhood plans including the downtown and warehouse districts, and Age-Friendly Regina. The Age-Friendly Regina project objectives tie closely with Transit to ensure services are accessible to all. This includes frequent bus service, expanding evening and weekend service, paratransit resources for those with low mobility, available accessible seating in conventional buses, and affordable fare options.

City Council set a community goal for the City to achieve net zero emissions and to source net zero renewable energy by 2050. The approval of the Energy & Sustainability Framework (ESF) by Council is a roadmap to meet that goal. The recommended actions in the RTMP align with the ESF and support the following key areas of the ESF, known as the "seven Big Moves" for action that are necessary to achieve Regina's energy and greenhouse gas emissions reductions goals:

- Big Move Five – Low Emissions Vehicles, Action 5.4 – Electrify transit: One Hundred per cent of new City transit buses are electric.
- Big Move Six – Increase Active Transportation and Transit Use, Action 6.1 – Expand transit services: Offer expanded services to encourage a 25% transit mode share by 2025.

The RTMP is a 25-year document. Future demand trends, changes in technology and shifts in the diversity of our community will require that the plan be reviewed every five years and revisions to this document will be made as necessary.

Environmental Impact

The RTMP is timely as Council looks to advance sustainability in Regina. The ESF team worked closely with the RTMP team to ensure alignment in the two plans. Making transit attractive by

increasing frequency and increasing the ease of access will make it a viable, more sustainable transportation option. The private automobile landscape is changing as more battery electric vehicles are available to purchase but in today's market, electric vehicles remain a costly upfront option for the consumer. Gas and diesel prices for traditional vehicles continue to increase. Having a reliable, convenient transit system will help residents not only with their transportation needs but assist in lowering transportation costs overall while moving the goals from the ESF forward.

The recommendations from the RTMP contribute to the reduction of energy use and greenhouse gas emissions in various ways, including:

- Encouraging transit use and creating a path towards an inclusive and less vehicle-reliant community.
- Maintaining low congestion levels as the population increases.
- Promoting the use of viable alternatives to fossil-fueled vehicles through the adoption of electric City transit buses, which are more energy efficient and reduce emissions.
- Complementing urban intensification and mixed-use developments while decreasing emissions.

OTHER OPTIONS

City Council does have the option of not approving the RTMP in its current form. This option is not recommended as it will delay immediate projects planned for transit, including mobile ticketing, securing a full time on-demand provider, future route changes, and the change to battery electric technology.

COMMUNICATIONS

If the RTMP is approved, future Transit service changes would be communicated as needed on a project-by-project basis, with additional public engagement where appropriate.

DISCUSSION

Currently, the City does not have a Transit Master Plan. The Transportation Master Plan (TMP) (2017) provides guidance for the City's transportation network as a whole and articulates high-level goals and objectives for transit service in Regina. Regina Transit has made changes to advance the goals of the TMP, by adding service to new areas, investing in larger articulating buses, investing in accessibility improvements and piloting new on-demand technology. Transit has seen ridership increase steadily in Regina as it adapted with the changing environment to meet current demand.

The RTMP is a 25-year transformative and innovative document that elevates the role of transit in

the City. It prepares the City for a future that will help prioritize investments in transit and paratransit. A Transit Master Plan will ensure that transit activities are aligned and contain specific action plans and investments to make transit a transportation mode of choice for residents in Regina. The plan is designed around the founding principals of accessibility, sustainability and age-friendliness.

The City used a consultant to help complete the RTMP. Dillon Consulting Ltd. (Dillon) was selected through a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Dillon is a well-respected consultant in the transit industry having completed similar work in Windsor, London, Strathcona County and Brampton. Dillon has also completed transportation master plans in cities like Winnipeg and Guelph. The report completed by Dillon is contained in Appendix A – Regina Transit Master Plan Final Report.

Large plans such as this should be reflective of the community. The RTMP had two periods of community engagement In February and September of 2021. The response rate and involvement from the community exceeded expectations during both rounds. The details, methodology, and tactics can be found in Appendix B – Supplement 1 - Engagement Report.

An important part of the RTMP was defining the role of Transit in Regina in the policy framework which can be found in Appendix A - Regina Transit Master Plan Final Report - p.13. The role, vision and mission describe how transit will integrate with the community to aid the work already done in the OCP and TMP focusing on the strategic priorities of customer experience, equity and sustainability. These priorities align with the goals and objectives laid out in the RTMP.

The City has identified sustainability and environmental protection in the OCP, the TMP, and the ESF as key principles for how the City should grow and develop moving forward. Public transit plays an important role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions by providing alternative mobility options that reduce reliance on single occupancy vehicles. In addition, alternative energy for transit vehicles will contribute to overall sustainability.

Contained in Appendix H is the Bus Alternative Technology Assessment, which is an analysis for alternative fuel technology in the bus fleet. This information was evaluated as part of the ESF project that was recently approved by Council. In alignment with the recommended approach of the ESF, the plan recommends that transit proceed with the replacement of conventional fleet with battery electric buses (BEBs). As the City will need to ready the Transit garage to support BEBs, the replacement process would start in 2024 with all bus purchases going forward. This process is the most efficient way to convert the bus fleet, as it maximizes the life span of the current fleet. Based on this replacement schedule, the City would have an entire alternative energy bus fleet by 2039. The replacement timeline is outlined in Appendix A - Figure 17, p. 36.

The ESF recommended that Transit also focuses on increasing Transit service hours to encourage increased ridership, which could result in a reduction of private vehicles on the road. The proposed

service hour increases in the RTMP are shown in Appendix A – Regina Transit Master Plan Final Report, Figure 15, p. 31.

Updating the route network, service standards, amenities, and other aspects of the customer experience encourages a modal shift towards public transit. The RTMP provides a roadmap to strategically guide both short-, mid- and long-term changes that will continuously improve the level of service and therefore attractiveness of utilizing public transit in Regina.

The recommended actions in the RTMP are grouped into five categories with 45 recommended actions. These actions can be found in Appendix A – Regina Transit Master Plan Final Report, p. 23-42. These actions reflect the foundational pillars at the outset of the plan of accessibility, sustainability and age-friendliness. The recommendations are transformative in the way we see mass transportation in Regina today and are focused in meeting the goals laid out in the ESF to have a 25% transit mode share by 2025. Using a combination of community feedback, city wide travel data, and innovative solutions from other municipalities, actions were developed to start that transformation. The actions position Regina to help meet growth in the City as the plan is laid out in short-, mid-, and long-term recommendations.

Some highlights of the plan include:

- 1) Transit Routes and Services** - The proposed system design was based on feedback from the community that service needed to be frequent, short, reliable, and connecting Regina. The suggested route changes consider these factors with the recommended actions:
 - a. Increase frequency on all routes.
 - b. Expand hours of operations on Sundays and holidays.
 - c. Expand routes running on weekends
 - d. Ensure routes are direct to key destinations for short trips.
 - e. Expand and enhance the use of On-Demand transit for lower ridership areas in the periphery of the City.

- 2) Long-Term Network** – As the RTMP is a 25-year plan, there are considerations for Transit in the mid to long term to continue to enhance and encourage the use of Transit. These include:
 - a. Implementing transit priority to build main routes into a future bus rapid transit system (BRT).
 - b. Explore partnerships with neighbouring municipalities for regional connections.

- 3) Paratransit** – Paratransit service is essential for those who may not be able to take conventional bus service. Some of the recommendations include:
 - a. Taking steps to provide an integrated trip model by using other transit services such as conventional, on-demand and taxis to complete trips where appropriate.

- b. Expanding the already successful customer travel training program will allow more Paratransit clients to learn to how to use other transit services.

4) Customer Experiences – Customer experience is pivotal for retaining customers long term by making trips enjoyable. Some recommendations include:

- a. Switching the fleet to battery electric buses beginning in 2024. This is not only a sustainable goal, but electric buses are much quieter lending to a pleasant commute for both passengers and neighbourhood residents.
- b. Transit hubs should be established in communities to help connect all service types like conventional transit, paratransit and on demand services. These could also act as potential regional connectors or a park and ride option.

5) Fares and Trip Planning – Developing different fare and trip planning options can improve the rider experience and help with first impressions for new transit users.

- a. Implementing a new mobile fare payment system will allow customers to pay by using their phone, credit or debit card. Installing self serve ticket systems at popular bus stops is also a priority. Investigate an integrated app that allows for payment, trip planning and on demand services in one app to provide a seamless transit experience.
- b. Removing fares for children up to and including 12 years old will help encourage new riders but will also make transit attractive to families travelling together.

The recommended actions are of benefit for all residents. These changes will not only provide an excellent, affordable mass transportation system, but will help lessen congestion on roadways, reduce emissions into the environment, and promote active transportation within our community. These recommended actions will increase annual ridership from four million trips today to over 25 million during the life of the plan. They support the ESF goals and targets of greenhouse gas reductions and increase transit mode share in the city.

Next Steps

If the RTMP is approved, Administration will start work on initiatives in 2022 that do not need budget, including adjustments to routes or adjustments to youth fares. Larger projects that require capital or operating funding would be discussed, as part of the overall future City budget discussions. In Appendix A – Regina Transit Master Plan Final Report - Table 8, p.44, shows activities that would be considered in the short-, mid-, or long-term. Costs are also entered here where possible. Exact timing and costs would be dependent on the current economic environment and City finances available to support the initiatives. Any changes to the transit route system would include engagement with communities before any route changes are recommended to Council.

DECISION HISTORY

On July 29, 2020, City Council approved the creation of the Regina Transit Master Plan (RTMP), with an approved operating budget totaling \$440,000 (CR20-70).

Respectfully submitted,

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Brad Bells, Director, Transit & Fleet

3/15/2022



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4/11/2022

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A - Regina Transit Master Plan Final Report
- Appendix B - Supplement 1 - Engagement Report
- Appendix C - Supplement 2 - Policy Framework
- Appendix D - Supplement 3 - Peer Review Report
- Appendix E - Supplement 4 - Paratransit and Demand Responsive Recommendations
- Appendix F - Supplement 5 - Brand Recommendations
- Appendix G - Supplement 6 - Organizational Review
- Appendix H - Supplement 7 - Bus Alternative Technology Assessment