

## On-Demand Transit Pilot Update

<b>Date</b>	February 17, 2021
<b>To</b>	Operations and Community Services Committee
<b>From</b>	Citizen Services
<b>Service Area</b>	Transit & Fleet
<b>Item No.</b>	OCS21-7

### RECOMMENDATION

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That Operations and Community Services Committee receive and file this report.

### ISSUE

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Administration has been running a pilot on-demand bus service to gauge how this service may be used in Regina. The pilot was originally set to start on April 26, 2020, but as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it started August 31, 2020. The one-year pilot will end in August 2021. This report is an informational report on the pilot results so far.

### IMPACTS

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#### Accessibility Impact

All of Transit's 121 buses are fully accessible and being used for this pilot.

#### Financial Impact

The initial pilot cost was \$35,000, of which \$25,000 was funded from the Strategic Initiatives Fund to the service provider, Pantonium, for use of their software. There was an additional requirement of \$10,000 for communications, signage, tablets and dispatch staffing which is funded within the existing Transit & Fleet operating budget. There was no need to purchase additional buses or hire bus operators for this pilot. There are no additional costs to continue to run the service until August of 2021. Continuing the pilot until August 2021 will save the City approximately \$60,000 in operational costs in fuel and labour.

### **Environmental Impact**

Greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) will be reduced with one less bus on the road. The pilot will reduce travel by 34,230 km, which translates to almost 15,000 litres in diesel fuel savings, which is equal to 150,000 kWh of energy. This will give an overall reduction of about 40 tonnes of GHG over the length of the trial.

### **Policy/Strategic Impact**

The Transit & Fleet department has service standards in place that speak to on-demand transit service. On-demand transit service is to be used when ridership service standards cannot be maintained on a fixed route. The Route 10 RCMP/Normanview proposed for this pilot does not meet ridership service standards after 7 p.m., therefore was a good candidate for the trial. The Transportation Master Plan also supports on-demand transit service through the following policies:

*3.2 – Design the transit system and its routes to provide direct and time competitive service.*

*3.31 – Continue to improve and increase accessibility of customer service and trip planning tools.*

This pilot project also supports the Underutilized Land Improvement Strategy Goal 3.13, to invest in innovative transit.

### **OTHER OPTIONS**

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Not required.

### **COMMUNICATIONS**

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Extensive communication to those customers in the service zone was done at the outset of the pilot. This included a targeted mailout to the addresses in the service zone, decals on the impacted bus stops and signage on transit buses. A survey was also provided to those who were registered with On Demand to provide feedback of the service so far. There are no additional communications required at this time, but regular social media updates and additional communications will be provided, as required.

### **DISCUSSION**

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A background of how the pilot came to be and information for how the on-demand service works can be found in Appendix A.

Administration has provided statistics in the attached appendices on the performance of the pilot as of December 2020. The initial metrics that were going to be used to gauge the success of the pilot were no longer usable as COVID had changed ridership in the transit system. Overall Transit ridership has dropped as much as 60 to 70 per cent based on regular weekday ridership. These original metrics can be found in Appendix B.

The revised set of metrics can be found in Appendix C, along with the actual results. The following points can be made from the data:

- Anticipated ridership is lower than expected, however, the passengers per bus hour is higher with slightly less service hours on the road.
- Overall ridership has increased on the on-demand service since inception but has plateaued. This trend is similar to the regular system where ridership increased until mid-October, then started to decline due to the increasing amount of COVID cases in the community. A week-by-week ridership graph can be seen in Appendix D. This compares 2019's regular ridership during the same weeks of the pilot in 2020.
- The coverage area is significantly larger with on-demand and can provide more service than the fixed route service.
- The kilometres travelled each day is significantly less than the regular fixed route. This results in fuel savings and less kilometers on the fleet of buses.
- Wait times for the bus is 15 minutes or less, 90 per cent of the time. This is a significant reduction of time waiting for a bus in the evening when bus frequencies are once every 60 minutes.
- Financially, as ridership is lower, revenues are lower as well. Taking into consideration the cost of the software and the lower revenue, the return on investment is in the negative.
- Transit currently runs two buses for this service, but the software has shown that one bus would be sufficient to provide the same level of service. If one bus is used, costs will essentially reduce in half, resulting in favourable financial analysis.

In addition to the results Administration collected, a survey was issued to registered users to collect their feedback on the service. There were over 220 accounts that registered for the service and 41 of them responded to the survey. Eighty per cent of those that took the survey indicated that they would continue to use the service. In an open question on what would help improve the service, there were a variety of answers. The most popular included expanding the service area, expanding the time it runs, and having a better customer interface on the app. The survey also asked customers who have not yet tried the service why they haven't done so. The most popular answer was that the service did not cover the area they wanted to travel.

The results above prompted the Transit & Fleet department to enter phase 2 of the pilot by reducing one bus and run until the end of August 2021. This decision was made as it will allow a better financial analysis of the new service and allow time to further investigate ridership trends. The removal of the bus will not impact customer wait time. If there is a large increase in ridership, the bus can be added back in at any time. The extension of the pilot will not cost any additional budget as the contract goes until August 2021. This phase of the pilot is projected to save the City up to \$60,000 in operational savings.

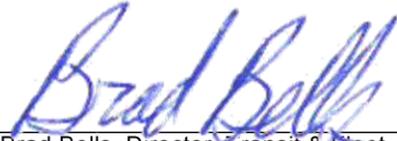
The data collected during the pilot will be shared with the Regina Transit Master Plan consultant to help determine a future course for on-demand services in Regina. If it is determined that on-demand service should proceed, a formal business case will be completed for consideration through the budget process. If approved, a public request for proposals will be done to select a vendor that has the best qualifications and customer service interface.

**DECISION HISTORY**

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Approval of the on-demand pilot was approved by the Community and Protective Services Committee on January 8, 2020.

Respectfully submitted,



Brad Bells, Director, Transit & Fleet

1/26/2021

Respectfully submitted,



Kim Conra, Executive Director, Citizen Services

2/11/2021

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**ATTACHMENTS**

- Appendix A - Background
- Appendix A-1 - Service Area
- Appendix B - Pilot Measurements
- Appendix C - Revised Measurements
- Appendix D - Ridership by Week