



File #: BIR-26-001, **Version:** 1

TAMRMS#: B05

BUDGET INFORMATION REQUEST (BIR) - Book-A-Bus

Requested by: Councillor Joly

Date of Request: February 3, 2025

Date Response Due: March 3, 2025

Confidential: No

QUESTION

I understand that it is not uncommon for the number of Book-A-Bus trip requests to exceed capacity and that Admin will be requesting additional funding for Book-A-Bus in upcoming budgetary cycles.

Questions:

How often does this happen and for how many hours was the service unavailable in 2024?

What is the funding required to reduce the number of hours that Book-A-Bus is unavailable?

If additional funding was provided, how soon could service levels be met?

Where (on our website?) is there information about riders running into this issue, or what to do when it happens?

For my reference, 2024 service levels for On-Demand Transit state that "Services are maintained as per details published on City Website" (Trips can be booked between 6:45 p.m. to 11:45 p.m M-S, and between 6:00 a.m. to 6:45 p.m on Sunday).

RESPONSE

Q - How often does this happen and for how many hours was the service unavailable in 2024?

A - It is common for trip requests to exceed the capacity of the program. Seats unavailable occur when the capacity of the bus deployment coupled with the scheduling algorithm used has been reached. In 2024, there were 52,731 trip requests and 7,130 cases of seat unavailable. In January 2025, the average seat unavailable percentage of trips requests by day of the week were as follows:

Sunday - 20%

Monday - 6%

Tuesday - 4%

Wednesday - 13%

Thursday - 19%

Friday - 17%

Saturday - 9%

The timing of the seat availability varies throughout the times that the service is provided. For example, on Sundays over the last 30 days, the average unaccommodated rates varied from 24% at 9:00am, 0% at 10:00 and 11:00 am, and 18% at noon. On Fridays over the same period, unaccommodated rates were 24% at 8:00pm, 20% at 9:00pm, and 0% at 10:00pm.

The City strives to maximize ridership for those requesting within the operating funding provided for the service. Adjustments to operating hours and technology improvements have been made including:

12/9/2022 - Additional hours on Friday (3.5), Saturdays (2.5) and Sundays (5)

2/15/2023 - Algorithm Adjusted to allow for more 'aggregation' (larger detour parameters to allow more people on the bus)

4/30/2023 - Additional hours on Monday - Thursday (3.5hr shift added from 18:30 to 22:00) and shift extension from 23:00 to 23:45 every weekday

7/22/2023 - Additional hours on Saturday (21:00 to 23:45)

12/20/2023 - ETA Adjusted from 30 min to 45 min to accommodate more rides.

4/28/2024 - Additional hours added on Sunday (17:00 to 19:00)

8/25/2024 - Additional hours added on weekdays (22:00 to 23:45)

The City also monitors account usage for abuse of the scheduling system and has established “no show” thresholds and implemented progressive warnings, to maximize proper usage of the system.

Q - What is the funding required to reduce the number of hours that Book-A-Bus is unavailable?

A - Further reduction of seats being unavailable due to capacity constraints requires the deployment of an additional bus within the service hours currently defined. Utilizing estimated unit rates for the expenses associated with bus operations, it is estimated that one additional bus within the on-demand service hours would have a total estimated expense of \$280,000.

Q - If additional funding was provided, how soon could service levels be met?

A - Almost immediately after funding is approved. Existing buses would be utilized as the service is predominantly outside of peak transit hours where fleet deployment is at maximum. Our service contracts for bus operations and scheduling are in place and would be extending at existing contract rates.

Q - Where (on our website?) is there information about riders running into this issue, or what to do when it happens?

A - Thank you for bringing this to our attention. We have added information on this issue to the StAT website under Book-a-Bus Frequently Asked Questions.

Author(s): Will Steblyk
Department: Public Operations - St. Albert Transit
Department Director: Tim Saunders
Managing Director: Dinu Alex
Chief Administrative Officer: Bill Fletcher