CITY OF ST. ALBERT

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BUDGET INFORMATION REQUEST (BIR) – Transit Option Recommendations
Requested by: Councillor Korotash
Date of Request: November 4, 2026
Date Response Due: November 10, 2026
Confidential: No

QUESTION

Could Administration please provide some clarity around recommended transit options?

There was some confusion the other day about meeting our current policies vs a new 'on demand' service in new areas and which buses were or were not required. It seemed like there was some overlap or duplication. If for example the transit optimization plan goes ahead, do we still need the $400,000 for new service in the new neighbourhoods? And if TOP goes ahead, do we still have the same buses that are identified in the budget or do we just need smaller ones?

RESPONSE

There is a total of three transit-related funding requests before Council for the 2027 budget approval process. These three funding requests represent different aspects of transit service that this budget information request response serves to help clarify.

TRAN-004 – Transit Growth Buses. This Capital growth charter represents the funding request for four (4) new, additional buses to support growth of the transit service within the City of St. Albert. The charter is based on existing transit service policies and programs, and the funding includes the purchase of two (2) Paratransit buses (often referred to as “Cutaway” style) for growing Handibus program service requirements, as well as the purchase of two (2) conventional buses (12m/40’) to support transit service into new areas.

Operating Business Case (OBC) – Transit Service Level Operating Funding for New Neighborhoods. This Operating business case represents the operational funding that is required to operate and maintain the buses that will be used for transit service into new neighborhoods. The business case is based on existing transit service policies and programs and represents operational funding in order to serve expansion into new neighborhoods and growing paratransit transit as the City grows.

TRAN-031 – Transit Optimization Plan. This is the new addition (2026) to the 10-year Growth Capital plan and the charter request for funding in 2027 resourcing for

Administration to investigate, analyze and develop implementation plans for a number of opportunities to improve transit service delivery within St. Albert. These opportunities may include service optimization, network redesign, customer experience improvements, technology enhancements, service delivery efficiencies, initiatives to support growth areas and the expanded use of On-Demand transit services.

How are they linked and how are they not?

Both the **TRAN-004 Transit Growth Buses** and the **Operating Business Case (OBC) - Transit Service Level Operating Funding for New Neighbourhoods** are required to support transit growth under the City's current transit policies, service standards and delivery model.

Under existing policies, Administration will continue to implement transit growth which includes the planned expansion of service to new neighbourhoods, such as Cherot, Nouveau and Erin Ridge North, and the continued growth of Handibus services. As such these funding requests remain necessary regardless of whether **TRAN-031 Transit Optimization Plan** is funded by Council.

However, funding the **TRAN-031 Transit Optimization Plan** would provide Administration with the resources required to investigate, analyze and develop implementation plans for several opportunities to improve transit service delivery within St. Albert. These opportunities may include service optimization, network redesign, customer experience improvements, technology enhancements, service delivery efficiencies, initiatives to support growth areas and the expanded use of On-Demand transit services. Initiatives include items presented to Standing Committee of the Whole on October 13, 2026, in conjunction with AR-26-404. During the presentation Administration presented the overall intent of the Transit Optimization Plan and shared four examples of how the transit services could be completed differently.

1. Initiation of transit service into new neighborhoods by using On-Demand service as initial introduction of service versus current policy (C-TS-01) prescribed method of fixed route peak service.
2. Coordination of On-Demand Service (existing and expanded) and Paratransit (Handibus) Services to optimize fleet and service activities.
3. New Transit Opportunities, include revenue generating, utilizing existing transit fleet.
4. Detailed transit master planning to strengthen data-driven decision making such as transit modelling for local route improvements, development of a North/South transit corridor and investment decisions in NAKI expansion and/or North Park and Ride.

One of the opportunities identified through **TRAN-031 Transit Optimization Plan** is the potential introduction of On-Demand Transit service in developing neighbourhoods ahead of fixed-route service. Administration believes there is sufficient evidence from urban transportation research and municipal implementation experience to suggest that On-Demand Transit can serve as an effective initial service model by gathering real-

world ridership data, reducing financial risk and providing an earlier transit option to residents. BIR-27-028 provides additional information regarding the potential use of On-Demand Transit service in new neighbourhoods.

Furthermore, Administration believes an opportunity exists to optimize transit service delivery in 2027 should TRAN-031 Transit Optimization Plan be funded. As part of this optimization, Administration submits that a revision to TRAN-004 may be appropriate to better align fleet requirements with an On-Demand service model. The revision would retain the two (2) paratransit buses while replacing the two (2) conventional transit buses with two (2) smaller buses ("cutaway" style) intended to support service in developing neighbourhoods. Such a revision would reduce the overall capital funding requirement for TRAN-004. In addition, the funding provided through TRAN-031 would allow Administration to investigate fleet optimization opportunities whereby Handibus and On-Demand Transit services could utilize the same vehicle type, improving asset utilization and operational flexibility.

Specific to **Operating Business Case (OBC) - Transit Service Level Operating Funding for New Neighborhoods**, Administration recommends that the value of this funding request is unchanged in either scenario. This is attributed to multiple new neighborhoods being served by On-Demand, such as Cherot, Nouveau and Erin Ridge North concurrently as opposed to one of the neighborhoods receiving fixed route service under the existing policies and programs.

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