St. Albert Transit
Operating Authority Permit Application

Revised: July 11, 2019

Passenger Risk Mitigation Strategy

The purpose of this report is to fulfill one of the requirements of the Operating Authority Certificate application process which calls for a strategy to mitigate the risk of injury to passengers.

This report will address the following issues that impact passenger safety as identified by Alberta Transportation in the Passenger Risk Mitigation Strategy Guidelines. These include:

- Standees;
- Objects brought onto the bus;
- Passenger accessibility
- Driver training;
- Passenger security
- High speed operation;
- Mechanical issues;
- Vehicle choice.

St. Albert Transit operates a local network of routes within the St. Albert City limits, and a number of "commuter" routes to key destinations in Edmonton such as the downtown core, the University of Alberta, and West Edmonton Mall. All of our drivers and our buses can be deployed for both types of service at any time.

Standees

City of St. Albert City Council Policy C-TS-01 revised 2017 (copy attached) limits passenger loads to a maximum of 120% of seated capacity on local and commuter (regional) trips. This translates to 7 standees on our regular 12-meter buses, and 13 on our 18-meter articulated buses. The figure of 120% was identified as a reasonable standard that maintains passenger comfort, accounts for occasional heavy passenger loads, and does not place an excessive burden on the transit provider to despatch additional buses to augment capacity for small numbers of standing passengers.

Straps, stanchions, and grab bars are available to the standee for support and stability. Because such features are commonplace on transit buses, and because drivers make many stops for drop off and pick up, passengers are not directly instructed on their use.

Standees on any transit bus regardless of agency stand in aisles or in vehicle doorways.

Policy wording does not specifically vary to address to weather conditions, or incidents of traffic disruption. In fact, it is possible that a bus could carry higher loads if circumstances dictate. If buses are delayed or rendered inoperative due to adverse weather, other buses on the road could be called upon to carry larger loads so that no passenger is left outside.

The policy is intended to address any particular trip that exceeds this standard on a consistent and sustained basis and states that such a trip is a candidate for service addition in terms of additional frequency or the addition of an "overload" bus.

Objects brought on bus

Passenger baggage, generally speaking, consists of everyday belongings that are carried at all times – back packs, purses, tote bags, etc. There are no plans to restrict this type of baggage. As specific items are too numerous to mention, our drivers are empowered to restrict any luggage that they deem creates a safety hazard for other passengers or for the operation of the vehicle. No baggage is permitted in the walking aisle, or placed in such a manner as to restrict access to the doors.

Existing policies do indentify a number of items as "strictly forbidden" due to the danger they present to passenger safety. These include explosives, gasoline, weapons and other items deemed as dangerous. Acceptance of other objects, including oversized luggage may be influenced by time of day, route, and passenger loads. We leave such decisions to the drivers who are in a better position to assess on a case by case basis.

At no time are our drivers required to lift bags, wheelchairs, or any other objects. Securement straps exist and are used only for wheelchairs or strollers, and not for items of luggage.

Passenger Accessibility

St. Albert has a 100% fully-accessible fleet. All buses are low-floor and have no stairs at the entrances. The vehicles are able to "kneel" which reduces the height of the first step from the curb. The front doorway is equipped with a retractable ramp to enable access for passengers in wheelchairs, scooters, or other mobility devices. Each bus has two areas for wheelchairs and scooters to be secured during travel. Operators are trained in how to deploy the wheelchair positions and how to secure the devices with the available strapping.

Driver Training

In fulfillment of their contractual obligations, Diversified Transportation Ltd (DTL) provides a full and complete program of driver training that encompasses all aspects required by the Motor Coach Passenger Council of Canada accreditation program including pre-trip inspection, vehicle operation, defensive driving, accessible service, crisis situations, emergency procedures, and use of communication devices. Performance checks are conducted on several occasions during an operator's first year, then annually after that. Additional training is scheduled on an as-needed basis or anytime that technological or awareness issues arise. A professional driver improvement course is provided on a bi-annual basis.

Operator training addresses not only the operation of the vehicle, but training in such aspects as how to handle situations involving difficult or threatening passengers, medical and other emergencies, collisions, driver fitness to operate, and other incidents.

There are mechanisms in place – including customer feedback and inspector surveillance - to ensure that operators are following proper practices of defensive driving, regulation adherence, and customer service.

Passenger Security

Through appropriate driver training, available communication equipment on the bus, and round-the-clock contact with dispatch and inspector personnel, St. Albert Transit is well positioned to address issues of passenger safety. Drivers are well trained to address on-road emergency events and disruptive passengers. The training instructs operators on appropriate measures for dealing with on-board medical emergencies, road emergencies, on-board fire, rowdy or threatening passengers, and emotionally disturbed persons. The training illustrates the necessary initial steps that should take place to address immediate concerns, and the manner of radio communication that can most effectively notify the key authorities. Further to this, operators, dispatchers, and inspectors are taught a radio communication code in the event that an operator, while on the road, becomes concerned that the behaviour of a passenger could escalate into a serious situation that can potentially affect the safety of other passengers.

High Speed Operation

At present, St. Albert Transit commuter routes only operate on roadways with a maximum speed limit of 70km/h, including Yellowhead Trail. Our drivers are strictly instructed to adhere to posted speed limits and other roadway regulations. They are also highly trained to adjust their driving for the prevailing roadway conditions – and to slow down if weather conditions dictate.

No bus stops have been established on roadways with speed limits exceeding 80 km/h or higher.

The lines of travel selected for each route were not chosen because of the speed limits but instead for their directness to destination. It just so happens that these chosen routings are on roadways that do not exceed 70 km/h. Our buses can, however, operate appropriately on roadways with speed limits of up to 100 km/h.

The interchange design at Yellowhead Trail and St. Albert Trail allows sufficient access and distance to bring the vehicles up to speed. Other than on-going construction, our routes have been in place for many years and do not present any undue issue in terms of safety or operation.

Mechanical Issues

All buses are equipped with two-way radios and emergency alert switches allowing operators continual access to on-road support personnel in the event of a breakdown or other incident requiring immediate attention. In accordance with the operating agreement, DTL provides a complete program of certified driver training, including pre-trip vehicle inspections and vehicle breakdown procedures (part of which address vehicle identification using cones or triangles, and passenger unloading and control). Passengers are directed by the trained drivers to a safe and appropriate location to await the arrival of the next bus that comes along – which could be the next bus of the same route, a different route operating on the same road, or a replacement. Sometimes that safe (and warm) location is the bus itself depending on the circumstances.

All buses are GPS-equipped to provide real time vehicle location information.

St. Albert Transit maintains a number of road-ready spare buses to replace those units that experience an on-road breakdown or are otherwise unavailable due to servicing.

The fleet is subject to a full program of inspections and regular maintenance by a team of highly-trained mechanical staff. Repairs that cannot be performed by our staff are assigned to any one of a number of private business partners who are certified to complete more-specialized repairs.

Vehicle Choice

All of St. Albert Transit's 12m regular and 18m articulated low floor buses are built by New Flyer Industries. StAT's 10m low floor electric buses are built by BYD Corp. All of our buses used on inter-municipal routes are of urban transit bus design and have the maximum number of seats possible for the bus design. None has high-backed seats. The vehicles are outfitted with tires that are rated for 100km/h.

All of our buses have side-facing seats in addition to front facing. Side facing-seats are not intended to allow for more standees but are specifically placed by the manufacturer in such a manner to allow for safer, more convenient movement in the front of the bus by persons with disabilities who require wheelchairs, scooters or walkers. Side facing seats in the centre are purposefully positioned to better accommodate movements at the rear doors. Side-facing seats in the back are the result of the bus structure and do not increase or decrease the number of seats to allow for more standees. St. Albert Transit has no plans to modify the seat configurations on its buses.