

Calgary



Transit Public Safety
Emergency Management & Community Safety
2023 annual report

Introduction

Calgary Transit's primary function is to provide a safe, reliable, and welcoming transit system for destination riders. During the COVID-19 pandemic, restrictions resulted in a shift in usership between riders and vulnerable Calgarians. Due to the closure of many facilities, CTrain stations were used as gathering spaces by those experiencing vulnerabilities. As riders returned to their place of work, transit safety continued to be an issue. In early 2023, several CTrain stations had to be locked overnight to prevent large gatherings of people experiencing vulnerabilities. In early 2023, 81 per cent of Calgarians expressed concern for personal safety when deciding whether to take public transit.

Acknowledging these concerns, Transit Public Safety acted with strategic initiatives that would address the safety issues and concerns. Administration kept City Council and Calgarians informed through weekly reports or "safety snapshots".

The City of Calgary began 2023 with a mandate to improve safety and security on its transit system, and the impacts of efforts are starting to take form with reports of improved security measures and rider satisfaction. The November 2023 Perspectives on Calgary survey found that 72 per cent of respondents say they feel safe riding a CTrain during the day. That number is up from 67 per cent, when the survey was last conducted in May 2023. This report will summarize the trends that we are observing and provide an overview of strategic actions taken. We are committed to ensuring riders are provided with assurance of safety in reaching their destination. Additionally, we aim to connect vulnerable Calgarians to necessary supports.

This report is based on transit operational definitions and statistics that do not necessarily align with the Criminal Code and/or Calgary Police Services reporting.



A new approach to transit safety in 2023

In early 2023, the Transit Public Safety leadership team had already begun to evolve towards a new model of service delivery. Throughout the year, Transit Public Safety worked with Calgary Transit, Corporate Security, Calgary Police Service and community partners to deliver on its three key objectives:

1. Identify and execute operational improvements and actions that would address priority concerns and provide immediate results.
2. Develop a Public Transit Safety Strategy that would lay out a roadmap for improving safety and security on the transit system in the longer term.
3. Formalize an integrated model with Calgary Police Service that provides a collaborative response to safety concerns on and around the transit system.

2023 achievements

Identifying priority concerns

With the help of qualitative and quantitative data compiled from citizen and transit ridership surveys, calls to 311, concerns logged via the Transit Watch service and other sources of citizen feedback, four priority safety concerns were identified:

- overdoses and drug poisonings
- social disturbances
- use of transit for non-transit purposes (for example, open drug use)
- after-service gathering of vulnerable Calgarians at CTrain stations

Outcome: *By identifying priority concerns, it became possible to confidently assign resources to address issues that are having the greatest negative impact on transit riders' perception of safety.*

Increased visibility of uniformed officers

Funding was secured to recruit and train an additional 67 transit peace officers. This represents a 60 per cent growth in uniformed officers, an increase to 180 personnel.

Outcome: *As of September of 2023, officer presence on CTrain platforms had significantly increased, resulting in a drop in unwanted persons and occurrences of open-air drug use. (See figure 3 page 7)*

Establishment of integrated response model

Transit Public Safety collaborated with Calgary Police Service Corporate Security, Calgary Transit and Calgary Alpha House to establish an integrated response model.

Transit peace officers assisted with arrests and transportation to processing units. Recognizing some of the vulnerable persons using the CTrain stations suffer from addiction, the transit community outreach team helped with the operation, which involved providing outreach to this community.

- In March 2023, a drug trafficking operation resulted in 40 people facing 268 criminal charges. In total, there were 58 undercover drug purchases involving 40 alleged drug traffickers. Fentanyl, methamphetamine, cocaine, morphine and Xanax, were among the drugs seized. Weapons, including one handgun, 21 knives, two machetes and two hatchets were located during the arrests.

- In December 2023, a second undercover operation at CTrain stations resulted in 27 people facing 212 criminal charges and multiple weapons seized. The Drug Undercover Street Team, the District 4 Community Engagement and Response Team, and Calgary Transit peace officers were deployed.

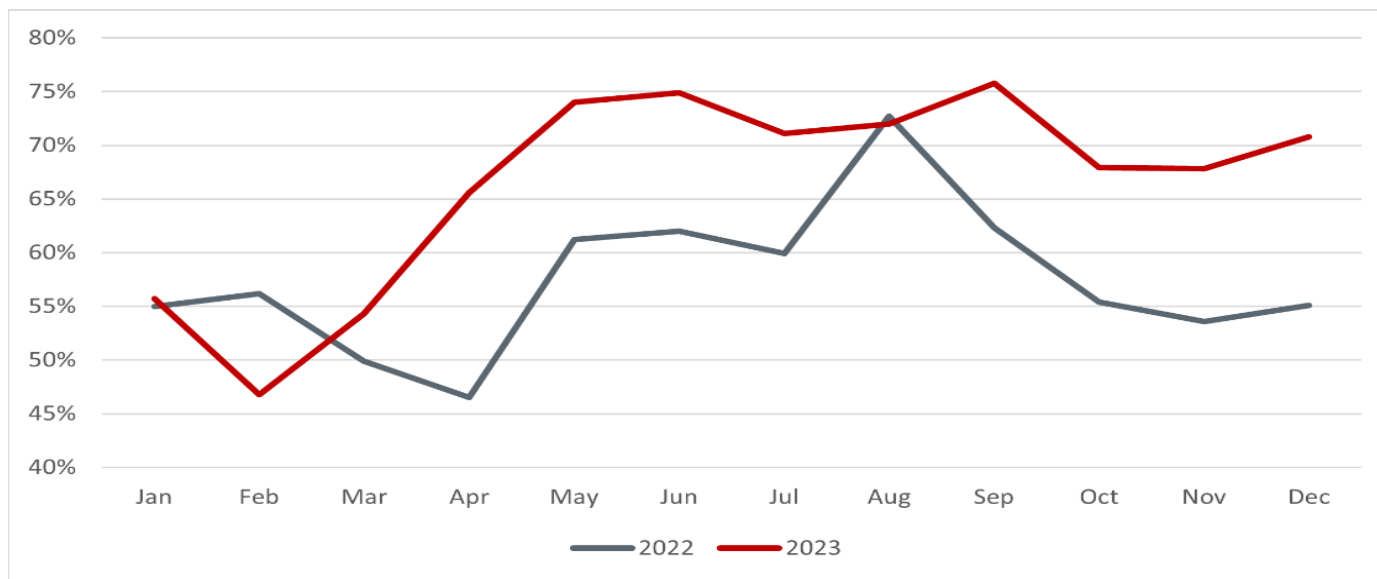
Outcome: These teams collaborated on undercover drug trafficking operations along the CTrain lines. The operations' purpose was to detect and disrupt drug trafficking by arresting drug traffickers and imposing release conditions that may deter the continuation of drug-related crimes.

Safety surveys of Calgarians and transit riders

Regular safety surveys of Calgarians and transit riders were conducted by the Corporate Research Team and Calgary Transit. The results provided insight into public perceptions of safety on the transit system. The corporate survey polled Calgarians on their perceptions of safety (transit riders and non-transit riders), while the Calgary Transit surveys questioned people who were using the system for travel.

Outcome: The November 2023 Perspectives on Calgary survey revealed that 72 per cent of Calgarians feel safe riding a CTrain during the day, up from 67 per cent in May 2023.

Calgary Transit's monthly tracker on perceptions of safety by riders revealed that public perceptions of safety at CTrain stations across the city improved in 2023.



Riders were asked 'how safe do you feel while waiting at a CTrain station'. (1- very unsafe 10 - very safe)

70 per cent of riders perceived safety by rating the survey with seven and above.

Figure 1 - Comparing 2022 and 2023 CTrain riders' perception of safety at transit stations.

Public Transit Safety Strategy development

The Public Transit Safety Strategy, which began implementation in late 2023 after approval by Council provides a road map for ensuring Calgary has a safe, reliable and welcoming transit system that people want to use.

Outcome: *The Public Transit Safety Strategy will lead the country in an integrated model that unifies both people and systems. Through advancement in dispatch and communication systems, integration will be achieved. This approach was recommended in the 2023 Canadian Urban Transit Association report.*

Measuring outcomes

To become a reliable source for identifying trends and informing decision-making, data must be gathered over an extended period. In addition, variables such as weather and special operations must be taken into consideration when evaluating the robustness of data.

The following graphs and data sets are a visual representation of safety indicator results captured over the past 12 months. These indicators align with priority safety concerns:

- overdoses and drug poisonings
- social disturbances
- use of transit for non-transit purposes (for example, open drug use)
- after-service gathering of vulnerable Calgarians at CTrain stations

Data for 2022 is also provided for comparison. Accompanying the analysis are highlighted actions that were taken to address priority concerns and their outcomes.



Safety indicator: overdoses and drug poisonings

Actions taken:

- Hired an additional 30 security guards to patrol stations, providing quicker response times to calls related to overdoses where Naloxone can be administered.
- Expanded the Community Outreach teams from three to four, providing vulnerable Calgarians with connections to supportive resources.

Calgary Transit counts the number of known opioid poisonings on the transit system by the number of administrations of the narcotic antagonist Naloxone to persons suffering from symptoms of opioid poisoning. An exact number of administered Naloxone doses cannot be tracked as it can be administered by an outreach worker, a companion, or a bystander and therefore goes unreported.

There have been almost 850 drug poisonings on transit this year, reported by Corporate Security and Calgary Transit peace officers. Of those reported incidents, 99 per cent of the individuals experiencing drug poisonings on transit were successfully revived. In collaboration with Calgary Police Service, we have been able to execute overt and covert operations focused on individuals involved in drug trafficking near transit locations.

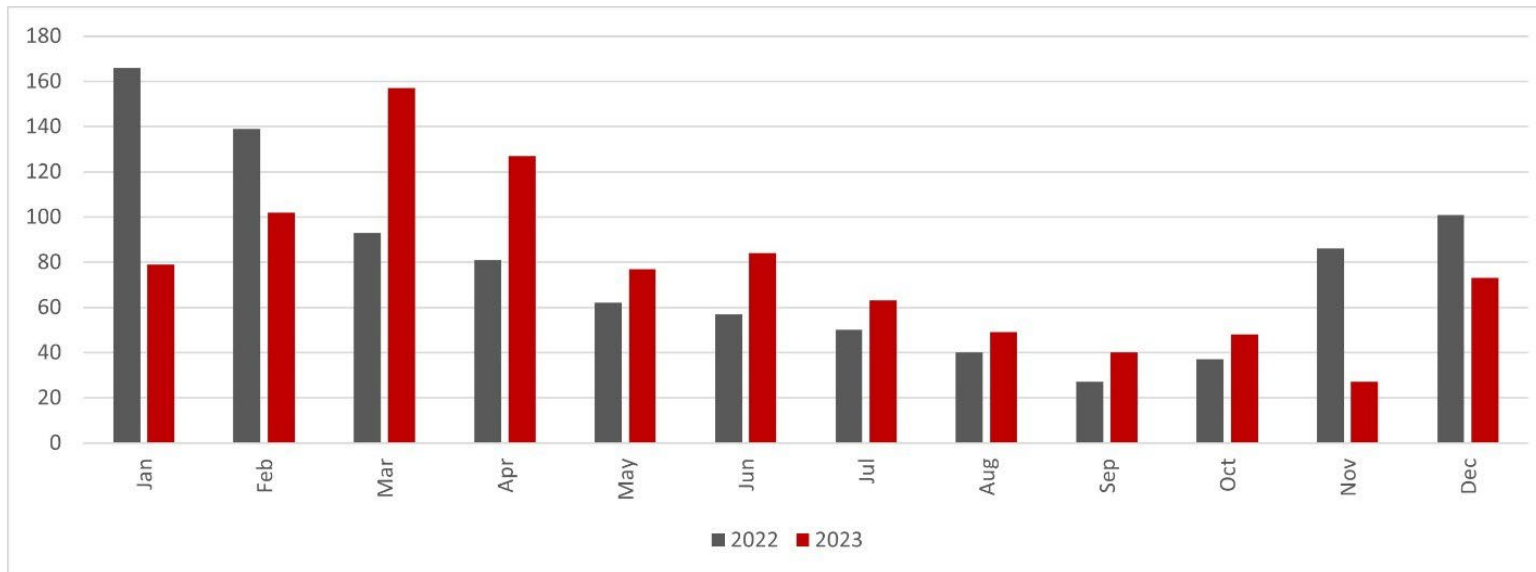


Figure 2 - Comparing 2022 and 2023 monthly totals for known overdoses on transit.

Safety indicator: social disturbances

Actions taken:

- Established an integrated response model that connects and coordinates multi-disciplinary services. Through partnership with Calgary Police Service, joint initiatives have been successful due to collaboration between frontline officers.
- Increased station cleaning to provide 24/7 coverage for cleaning with additional 14-day porters and four-night cleaners.
- Executed a four-week marketing campaign to increase awareness of the Calgary Transit Watch program. This program enables Calgarians to discreetly report safety concerns through silent text services. Calls range from reports of icy platforms, station cleanliness, and requests for welfare checks. The percentage of calls that require a transit peace officer response is 11 per cent of total calls. Throughout 2023, there were 110,000 contacts via text and 20,000 HELP phones/buttons calls were logged.

Social disturbances are critical safety indicators that Transit Public Safety monitors closely. A social disturbance is defined as verbal fighting, screaming, insulting people, or using obscene language. When physical contact occurs, it may become an assault and Calgary Police Service is notified.

Additional investments from Council were allocated toward increasing dedicated transit safety personnel working toward mitigating the 125 per cent increase in social disturbances since 2019. Proactive officer patrols disrupt incidents before they escalate in terms of severity.

Social disturbances are trending upward; it is difficult to explain why this trend exists outside the understanding that increased patrols equate to increased reporting. Disturbances typically trend lower during the summer when fewer people are sheltering on transit.

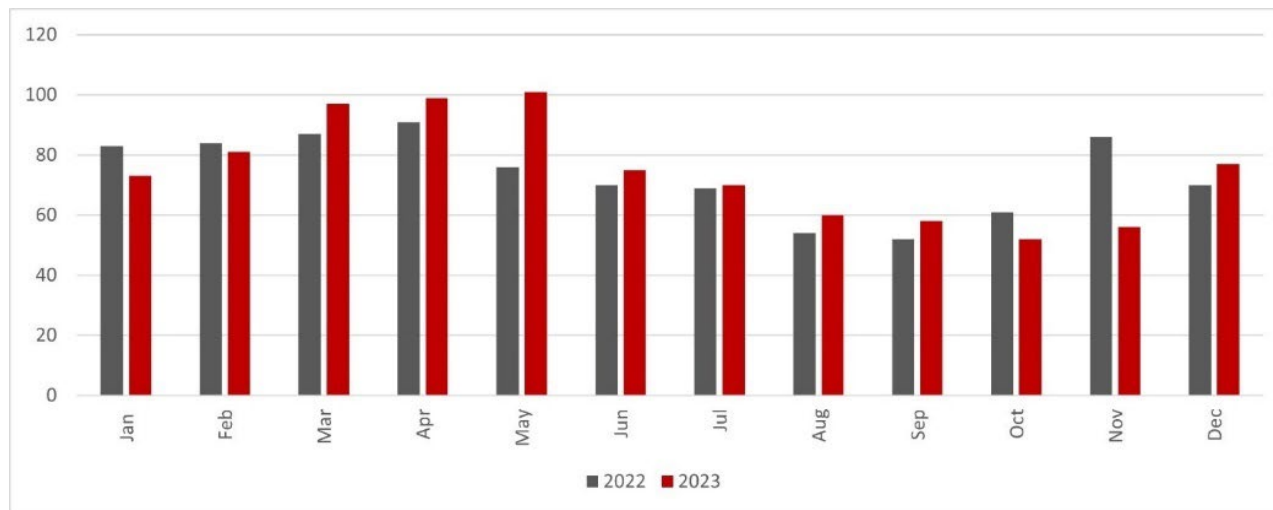


Figure 3 – Comparing 2022 and 2023 monthly totals for social disturbances.

Safety indicator: use of transit for non-transit purposes

Actions taken:

- Launched the Calgary Transit Ambassador program in November 2022. Transit ambassadors maintain visibility, build rapport, and support transit customers. Ambassadors work multiple shifts between 6:30 a.m. and 9:00 p.m.
- In April 2023, increased contracted security guards from eight to twenty-four, in addition to the thirty hired corporate security guards to expand the overall security guard coverage. Expanded the overnight patrols that pair police officers and community peace officers from four nights to seven nights a week.
- In June 2023, Transit Public Safety launched its downtown safety unit. The eight-member unit began exclusively patrolling the downtown core. This action was the first step toward establishing a district model.

Calgary Transit provides public transportation to all residents and visitors to Calgary. Persons using transit buildings and spaces for non-transit purposes (such as drug consumption, panhandling, smoking, swearing, public intoxication, customer intimidation, and blocking access to services) may undermine customer perceptions of safety and security. These behaviours are addressed in the Calgary Transit Bylaw 4M81 which encourages positive community relationships and regulation of transit public space.

The bar chart below suggests that an increase in uniformed officers as of September 2023 has resulted in a decline in large gatherings and use of transit for unintended purposes.

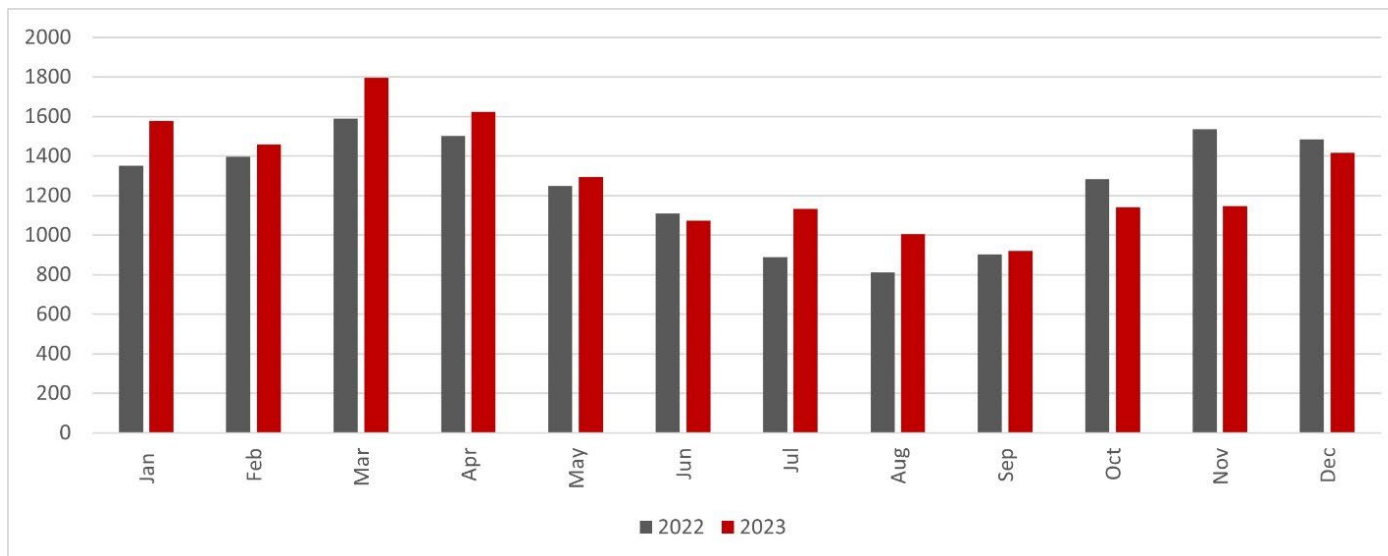


Figure 4 - Comparing 2022 and 2023 monthly totals for persons using transit for non-transit purposes.

Safety indicator: after-service gathering of vulnerable Calgarians at CTrain stations

Actions taken:

- Established the overnight safety initiative, increasing peace officer and a police presence during non-transit service times.
- Applied Crime Prevention through Environmental Design principles at highly impacted stations, deterring loitering by physically altering the spaces.
- Established the Coordinated Community Extreme Weather Response, activating the emergency shelter shuttle during winter months. To date:
 - 925 individuals transported over 21 nights winter in 2022/2023.
 - 650 individuals transported to since December 1, 2023.
 - 6,400 visits to warming stations across the city.
 - 63,500 essential items distributed to those in need.

Although gatherings happen throughout the year, numbers increase during cold weather events. To help mitigate this issue, The City has partnered with Calgary Alpha House, Calgary Homeless Foundation and community outreach organizations to connect displaced individuals with resources and supports during late autumn and winter.

Each night, Calgary Transit counts the number of people who remain in bus and CTrain stations once service has ended. A formal process for accurately collecting this data was put in place in 2023. Accurate data for previous years is not available for comparison.

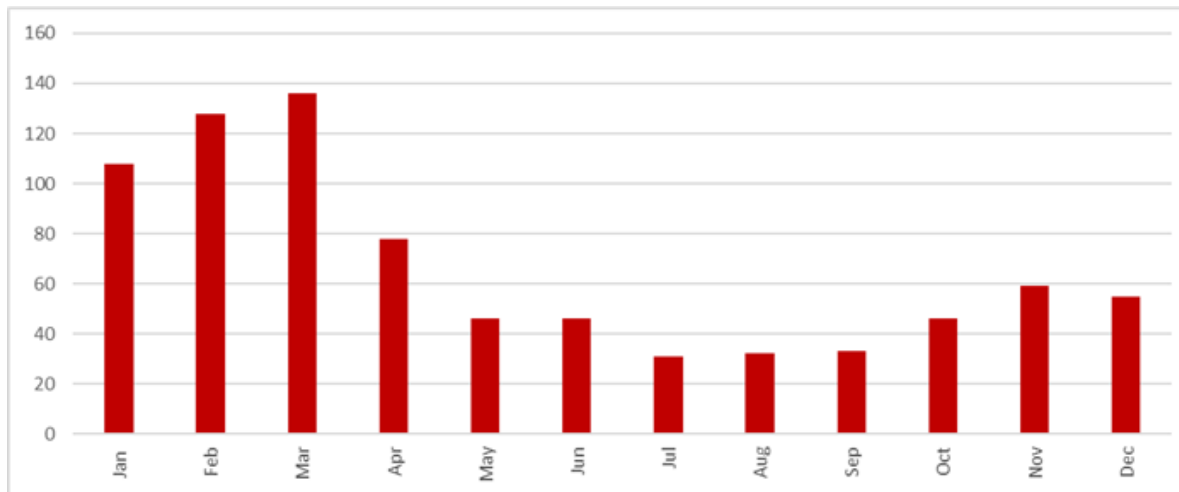


Figure 5 - 2023 monthly totals for gatherings at CTrain stations after service.

Safety indicator: 7th Ave CTrain station - rider experience ratings

Actions taken:

- Allocated resources toward the opening of the downtown safety unit, contributing to improved passenger ratings for CTrain stations.
- Joint operations with Calgary Police Service and tiered security initiative have created a greater visible presence and improved response times. Now that a downtown team has been deployed from a hub at City Hall, officers are nearby to respond to calls for service along 7th Avenue CTrain stations.

According to Calgary Transit's monthly customer experience tracker survey, the average per-station ratings for the 7th Ave CTrain stations are shown in the graph below. The survey asks customers about which CTrain stations they used on their last trip (first and last station used), including their perceptions of safety and security while waiting at each station. Riders were asked 'how safe do you feel while waiting at a CTrain station', (1- very unsafe 10- very safe). Demonstrated below is improvement in customer experience, specific to perception of safety.

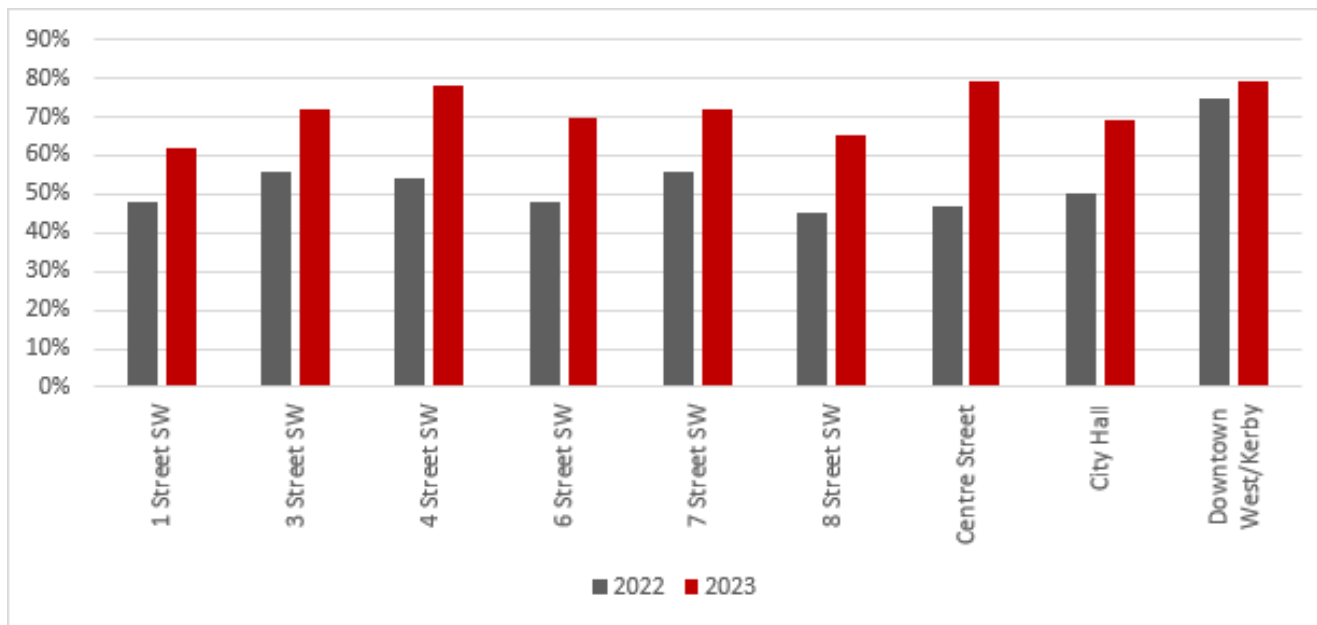


Figure 6 – comparing 2022 and 2023 December monthly results on customer experience.

Next steps

The safety concerns on and around transit are complex, but data indicates that with actions taken over the past year, Calgarians are seeing improvement. With the implementation of the Public Transit Safety Strategy underway, our intention is to increase this trend and continue to provide improvements.

As we execute the Public Transit Safety Strategy, this report will be published quarterly. This frequency of reporting will allow for observation of trends over an extended period, providing concrete comparisons.

Safety indicators will be monitored and adjusted as we move toward implementation and new data sources become available. These will include:

Re-occurring measures

- feelings of safety by transit users
- vulnerable persons using transit centres to shelter
- proactive officer-generated interactions

Future measures

- response time to safety incidents
- crime and social disorder event and calls
- engagement with community groups
- community activations
- community outreach team activation
- safety training completion
- employee safety rating
- implementation of upgraded systems

Transit Public Safety remains committed to providing safe and welcoming environments for transit riders. We anticipate that the journey toward implementation will be marked by significant milestones and subsequent successes. We aim to report on our progress in partnership with the community outreach teams, Calgary Police Service, Corporate Security and Calgary Transit to reflect the collaborative efforts to improve the safety and security of Calgarians.

