

## In Edmonton, there's an LRT station you can't use beside the new arena /April 24, 2017

As the Edmonton Oilers prepare for round two of the Stanley Cup playoffs, fans descending on Rogers Place using transit will have to be prepared to walk — as the LRT station that's a weak wrist-shot length from the arena isn't big enough to handle arena traffic.

As part of an investigative story I'm working on, I submitted a freedom of information request about the limitations of the MacEwan LRT station. You will note this station is the first stop northwest of Churchill along the [\\$600-plus million Metro Line](#), the transit link many in Edmonton would likely rather forget, thanks to it announcing a period of infrastructure misses we're still enduring (see Walterdale Bridge, et al).

Well, it turns out Edmonton Transit would prefer you forget the MacEwan station exists, too, and has employed a communications campaign to encourage that amnesia.

Since 2016, as the documents I obtained in the FOIP reveal, Edmonton Transit's advertising has encouraged Edmonton residents to "beat the crowds" to the arena by taking the Capital Line LRT to Bay/Enterprise Station and then taking a "short walk" along 103 or 104 Streets to Rogers Place.

The reason? The MacEwan station was not designed or built to handle large crowds, despite being right next door to an arena and despite featuring prominently in the Ice District's marketing campaign (see 0:20 in this [video](#)).

"At no time should a steady flow of more than 100 customers be allowed to enter the west concourse [of the MacEwan station]," reads an ETS standard operating procedure briefing that was included in the FOIP documents I obtained.

"[Transit peace officers] will stop the crowd flow if the concourse fills or if more than 100 customers are attempting to use that path to concourse in one continuous crowd, and will not start allowing customers through until the concourse has cleared."

Translation: 100 people at a time, max, for an LRT station beside a venue with about 150 times that seating. The documents also explain how train cars will be added to the Capital Line during the biggest events at Rogers Place and that Metro Line trains will continue on with their usual three cars.

Before you yell at me for stirring a pot or some such, a few thoughts: One, I'm all for having lots of people on Edmonton's streets, most especially 104 Street (because, let's be honest, 103 Street south of 102 Avenue is not a good place to walk).

Two, I'm sure much of the Metro Line was planned before the arena was even a possibility.

Still, I'm also supportive of having people realize LRT is by far the best option rather than driving. And unless that's the case, as an LRT station right beside the arena would suggest, rather than a walk outside in a winter city, I also know that we'll endlessly be pushed to build more parking for peak demand and suffer the limp-life streets catering to cars creates — which, you'll recall, public money spent on the arena was aimed at changing.

I'll have far more in future on this story. Stay tuned.