

Public Transit Operations

I have a few thoughts on transit operations. I will start with a few quotes from the Official Plan:

“Public transit will be the first priority for vehicular transportation infrastructure planning and transportation investments”

“...consider public transit as a high priority for transportation infrastructure planning, second only to active transportation;”

“...maintaining efficient transit service through improvements to travel time, reliability, overall routes and regularity of service, especially for those routes that link areas of population and employment concentrations;”

<https://edmontonjournal.com/news/local-news/new-fare-policy-in-an-effort-to-increase-transit-ridership-faces-councillors>

<https://humantransit.org/basics/the-transit-ridership-recipe>

Resist cutting the system

I am concerned that the temporary drop in Guelph Transit ridership due to the Covid 19 pandemic may lead to service cutbacks and curtailments of already approved service enhancements.

In attempting to balance the budget it will be tempting to cut transit costs by reducing service. The problem with this is that reducing service will lead to those still using transit to abandon it which will trigger even further reductions in service.

This may suit those who are ideologically opposed to funding public transit in principle but it won't suit employers in Guelph who have asked for increased service in employment areas.

Keep the #19 route

In particular the recently approved #19 bus to the West Hanlon Business Park is needed, not only because it will serve a currently unserved employment zone, but because it will enhance service along the Laird Road portion of the Southgate Business Park, currently under served by the #16 route.

We should not let a temporary dip in ridership hamstring the development of an efficient transit system which we will need in the future due to our need to move away from the private automobile

as a primary means of transportation.

Let's build for the future, or at the very least, not hobble any chance of building a better future.

I urge council to work towards improving service on all routes.

Move forward with electric busses

We should continue with the already approved purchase of electric busses. If we fail to do this, older busses will need to be replaced with new diesel busses thus delaying the future uptake of electric busses and potentially jeopardizing the cities climate change goals.

Keep fares low

In April 2018, Toronto introduced a Fair Pass program that gives people with low incomes access to discounts on TTC fares. The first phase of the program was available to anyone receiving payments from Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program.

These discounts have made a transformational difference, according to a consultant's report. Before they received the cheaper fares, just 55 per cent of people eligible for the program who were surveyed said they were able to take transit as much as they'd like. After getting and using the discounts, that number jumped to 90 per cent.

And the transit trips they're able to make now are important ones. The number of survey respondents indicating they can work or volunteer as much as they'd like leapt from 36 per cent to 72 per cent after the pass launched.

For people accessing education, training or job interviews, the number went from 35 per cent to 73 per cent, while people who said they can access their medical appointments went from 50 per cent to 84 per cent. Access to things such as grocery shopping, visits to family, and children's activities also increased.

All because transit got cheaper.

If these newly-offered cheaper fares are enabling people to get to work and school, logic suggests many past fare hikes worked to deny access to those same things.

I urge council to keep transit fares low.

Thanks for your time,

Scott Frederick