



Friday, April 21st, 2023

Dear Mayor Guthrie and members of Guelph City Council,

Please accept the suggestions and advice of the Board of the Transit Action Alliance of Guelph (TAAG) in order to enhance the Guelph Transit Fare Strategy and maintain equitable fares for everybody. We have put a call out to community partners and individuals to provide additional comment and are hopeful this has happened.

Guelph, like most North American cities, depends heavily on fare revenue to pay for a sizeable percentage of its transit operations. However, many cities in Canada and around the world are reevaluating the R/C funding ratio. They are doing this to combat climate change by reducing prices, introducing fare-free or fare reduced products, and, in some cases, going entirely fare-free.

To help cut fares and relieve the local government of the financial load, we will keep urging the provincial and federal governments for ongoing operational support.

Monthly Fare Capping

TAAG is in support of fare capping. This simple concept in public transit fare payments eliminates the inadvertent social inequity caused by having riders pay upfront for unlimited monthly rides.

Fare capping means that all passengers – including those who prefer to ‘pay as they go’ – get access to the best fares based on their public transport usage. It also allows riders flexibility to carry over unused rides they did not use the previous month.

Fare Increase

While we support modest increases to fund transit services and expansion, the proposed 19% increase on Adult monthly fares and 12.5 for Youth and Seniors is way above inflation and

would cause a burden for those that are struggling to make ends meet during these difficult cost of living times.

Yes, Guelph Transit's fares were locked for almost seven years, and yes, we recognise that in order to match operations and costs, our fares must catch up. However, it is inconceivable to subject riders to a well above inflation rise on monthly capped fares at a time when affordability is at a all time low. These are members of the BIPOC community, these are essential workers we supported through the pandemic, and these are people who need transit to get around everyday of the week.

Many transit users are living payday to paycheck and earning less than the living wage of \$19.95, according to our friends at the Guelph-Wellington Poverty Task Force. A large portion of these passengers are ineligible for the sliding-scale bus pass system. If this hike is approved, they will use the transit system less frequently to save money for other costs.

It is worrying to subject them to an above-inflation rise at a time when they are struggling to afford food, clothing, housing, and other bills, especially because many of these riders are members of the BIPOC community.

Guelph Transit estimates that the rate capping policy change will result in an increase for 18% of riders and a savings for 11%. Most passengers will still, though, be charged at or above the cap cost of \$95.20.

Transfer Time

The current transfer policy is supposed to be used for a continuous trip from point A to point B; however, this has been changing for the past decade as transit systems increase frequencies and more riders hop off for quick shopping or other things and then hop back on to complete their journey.

As a member of CUTA (the Canadian Urban Transit Association, of which Guelph Transit is also a member), we have attended meetings with other transit agencies to learn how transit is growing, changing, and adapting to the new realities of the world. We have learned that the industry standard for transfers is indeed changing—and quickly. Increasing transfer times will bring freedom and equality to riders and help local businesses and restaurants gain new and increased revenue.

As the types of trips are changing, so are transit system transfer times. In Guelph's own Transportation Master Plan, one of the goals to increase transit ridership is to encourage people to make more short trips on transit instead of using the car. Increasing the transfer time to 2 hours would be an attractive way to increase ridership and revenue, not just for transit but for our local economy. According to CUTA, every \$1 we put into transit can have an economic spinoff of between \$3 and \$5.


The cost to extend the transfer by 1 hour is \$33,000 according to City Staff. The increase in revenue from the fare increase is projected to be over \$300,000. As a customer services measure and investment in our local economy, we believe this is a great investment.

An example of a stop over trip can be found below:

Kevin Konnyu 🇺🇸🇩🇪🇨🇦 [REDACTED] Apr 19
#Guelph 1hr is TOO short for the bus transfer. #GuelphTransit


1 2 3 182

Kevin Konnyu 🇺🇸🇩🇪🇨🇦 [REDACTED] Apr 19
1hr is TOO short for transfer to be useful w/present service schedules. I got on at 11:37, arrived at physio at 12, was done by 12:35. Scheduled my next appointment, checked bus schedule, next bus home is 10min PAST the transfer @guelphtransit @cityofguelph #Guelph @Ward2Rodrigo



2 1 2 135

2 1 2 135

 **Guelph Transit**
@guelphtransit

Hello Kevin, a transfer is valid for one hour from time of issue and is valid as part of one continuous trip from origin to destination.

1:43 PM · Apr 19, 2023 · 118 Views

1 Quote 1 Like

Kevin Konnyu 🇺🇸🇩🇪🇨🇦 [REDACTED] Apr 19
Thanks. I'm trying to argue that that is just too short. Based on my experience in other cities I think it should be changed to 2hr any direction. Investments in transit pay dividends in commerce & job growth whilst decreasing traffic & reducing environmental impacts.

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Self-service terminals

We fully support these terminals, however it is troubling that they won't be located at Guelph Central Station, where transit riders and visitors will be. We are aware that these will be installed after Guelph Central's renovations are finished, however that date is currently set for roughly five years from now. Yes, installing them outside at GCS will cost money, but if this transit system is meant to be accessible to the public and simple to use, it cannot be hidden behind the locked doors of City Hall on weekdays, weekends, and holidays. An alternative site might be at one of the Parkades, which are open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year, or across the street at Sleeman Centre.

We also hope that these machines will also sell cards for new and visiting members of the public so that they can access the transit system easily.

We support the location of terminals at both recreation centres and encourage installing additional terminals at Stone Road Mall, Sleeman Centre, and the University Centre by 2025.

Delegated Authority

We believe that any future increases to fares should come to City Council for approval at Budget Time.

Fare program for Youth and Seniors

We are in full support of the Free Transit Rides for Children under 12. We were hopeful that this report would include some movement towards investigating a High School Student Transit Pass, a Field Trip Transit Pass Program, and lowering or eliminating Senior fares.

We support the motion from the Mayor to investigate these programs. We encourage Council and Community members to look at the Kingston model (excluding how it is funded) as how to operate and implement.

Ridership Growth

According to the information we obtained from our membership with CUTA, a 10 percent increase in fare could result in a 3.3 percent decrease in transit ridership. It could take between 1 to 3 years to recover from that impact. Increased frequency and other improvements can offset some of that loss, however, there would still be some loss. This report should have covered this in more detail. We hope that Council asks for the numbers and how they balance out.

Conclusion

No one is being fooled into thinking that a fare increase is not actually needed. With fares frozen for 7 years and increasing operational and expansion costs, fares will need to be increased at an affordable and predictable rate.

We applaud staff's efforts to ensure that the fee Strategy satisfies customers' needs both now and in the future by developing a reasonable, appealing, and easily accessible fare system.

We hope the points above are seriously taken consideration while making your decision in order to improve ridership and inspire more people to take transit.

Thank you.

On behalf of the Board,

Steven Petric
Chair, Transit Action Alliance of Guelph
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