

Information Report



Service Area	Public Services
Date	Friday, October 6, 2023
Subject	Guelph Transit Future Ready Action Plan update

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This information report is a progress summary of the Guelph Transit Future Ready Action Plan (FRAP) implementations thus far and speaks to some of the most recent and upcoming enhancements. The report also outlines the projected ridership numbers and compares them to current levels. Furthermore, it defines the Council-approved service standards that define when service should be modified through frequency, schedule, or service hour adjustments. This is the final information report on the FRAP, as future progress updates will be included as part of the Corporate performance reporting process.

Key Findings

Guelph Transit has seen success in the initial implementations on route 99 Mainline, especially with Sunday service hour expansions. With the expansion of Sunday service hours, there is a distribution of 22 percent of route 99 Mainline trips occurring in the expanded hours of 7:00 a.m. to 9:15 a.m., and 7:15 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. and where 78 percent of trips occur between 9:15 a.m. to 7:15 p.m.

Holiday On-demand service has seen over 10,000 rides booked so far and continues to grow with each year-over-year stat holiday service, along with increased demand for bookings.

As a result of COVID-19, it was estimated that transit ridership in Guelph declined by 80 percent in 2020. Compared to 2020 levels, transit ridership across Canada is currently around 72 percent of pre-pandemic levels; a success of the Future Ready Action Plan is that it has supported Guelph Transit to return to 92 percent of the previous pre-pandemic ridership levels.

Passenger boardings from January 2023 to the end of July 2023 were 3,629,800 – which is set to meet the projected 7,083,944 passenger boardings for 2023 in the plan.

Strategic Plan Alignment

Guelph plans and strategies identify transit as an integral part when moving throughout the city. The City's Strategic Plan looks at investing in a better transit system to help achieve the goals of each pillar (theme).

The Future Ready Action Plan's findings and recommendations align with the following pillars (themes):

- Navigating our future (City Building theme) – Make it easier to get around
- Powering our future (Environment theme) – reduced congestion and fewer GHG emissions
- Working together for our future (Foundations theme) – improving safety, connectivity and continuing to build vibrant, safe and healthy communications
- Building our future (People and Economy theme) – providing attractive, affordable, and reasonable transportation to deliver core services to businesses and the community

Financial Implications

While funds for the Guelph Transit Future Ready Action Plan were approved in the 2021 budget, each year the budget for the plan is confirmed for the following year of the budget.

Report

Background

The [Guelph Transit Future Ready Action Plan](#) (FRAP) is the Council-approved 10-year network design that will shift the system toward a blended model of transit hubs, express routes, and routes that encourage grid-pattern and outer perimeter connections. The plan's design is to get people where they want to go with more route types, faster travel times, frequent service, and service reliability.

Currently, Guelph Transit is in the second year of the plan (2023) and is planning for year 3 (2024) implementations. As part of the annual service and route adjustments, Guelph Transit monitors all performance indicators and service standards to remain effective and efficient.

Implemented service enhancements to date

When making changes to existing transit routes and schedules, or introducing new service to an area, it can take up to three years to fully understand ridership trends and performance impacts. Even so, there is potential to gather information throughout this time to understand initial performance, immediate adjustments required, or to identify gaps in planning.

The following routes have had at minimum one year of implementation thus far; their results are outlined below:

Route 99 Mainline

- Nine-minute service in the a.m. and p.m. peak periods on weekdays has helped reduce the number of instances where the bus was too full to accommodate picking up passengers on Gordon Street.
- Sunday expansion of hours, where the 99 Mainline operates from approximately 7:15 a.m. to 10:15 p.m., was added. Passenger count data has shown that 22 percent of boardings occur between 7:15 a.m. to 9:15 a.m. and 7:15 p.m. to 10:15 p.m. This initial use of the service will pair well with the upcoming plan to implement On-demand service on Sundays to match the same extended hours offered by route 99 Mainline in year 3 (2024).

Route 16 Southgate and Route 19 Hanlon Creek

- 16 Southgate was re-introduced, and 19 Hanlon Creek newly introduced into conventional service, moving out of the On-demand structure from COVID-19. With this conversion from On-demand, these routes have already seen an overall growth of 55 percent from the previous ridership.

Table 1. On-demand vs. conventional service passenger boardings.

On-demand boardings (May 2021 – May 2022)	Route 16 and 19 boardings (May 2022 – May 2023)
42,593	66,442

Introduction of Holiday On-demand

Guelph Transit introduced Holiday On-demand service for statutory holidays service in May 2022, with a hybrid service of Route 99 Mainline core service and On-demand service. In the first year of its introduction, there have been 10,629 rides booked. There has been such an increased demand as the program continues that Guelph Transit is monitoring to see if enhancements to the services would be warranted in the future.

As the plan continues to expand the number of core routes from one to four (96 Victoria, 97 Edinburgh, 98 Speedvale, and 99 Mainline), all core routes will operate during statutory holiday service as well as the On-demand service. This adjustment will encourage new riders to utilize Guelph Transit for statutory holiday travel, as it provides more options and availability to travel throughout the city.

Recent and upcoming implementations

The following routes have only seen recent implementations within the last four months (May to September 2023) and cannot be fully assessed at this time. Guelph Transit continues to monitor these routes for performance and trends:

May 2023

Route 10 Paisley, Route 12 Delhi, and Route 13 Eastview

- Added 20-minute mid-day service on weekdays

September 2023

Route 8 Janefield

- Added 20-minute service on weekdays between the hours of 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Route 19 Hanlon Creek

- Route extension to Stone Road Mall via Woodland Glen Drive added
- Teal Drive service converted to On-demand service
- New bi-directional service to Cooper/ Quarterman

Enhancements driven by service standards

As Guelph Transit continues to develop, FRAP sets out to establish a set of standards that will determine service growth, planning and development in the future. Within the FRAP, there are industry service standards that have now become the basis for:

- Service design standards and types
- Service coverage and bus stop placement
- Bus stop amenity prioritization
- Service level targets (passenger loads, service hours and frequency, on-time performance targets)
- Service expansion targets (build-up targets)
- Service review targets (review timelines, financial review)

These indicators become the basis for route performance monitoring and future plan adjustments as a consistent measure can be applied and prioritized.

Keeping the plan connected to the needs of Guelph

Guelph Transit will conduct ongoing audits of the 10-year roll-out and update the implementation timelines as needed, accounting for engineering/construction timelines, development applications, along with City plans, strategies, and initiatives.

There have been several pieces within the plan that have shifted to a different budget year than previously selected, several linked to construction impacts to the planned route network. For example, there is planned construction work on Speedvale Avenue East and West between 2024 and 2028. These plans have led to adjusted timelines and implementation patterns for route 98 Speedvale, as Guelph Transit aims to provide the best service introduction with the least impact to the on-time performance and reliability of the route.

If the plan's implementation timeline adjustments in the multi-year budget are approved, Guelph Transit will update the Future Ready Action Plan with shifted yearly implementations and re-circulate these.

Projections meeting reality

As a result of COVID-19, it was estimated that transit ridership in Guelph declined by 80 percent in 2020. In 2021, Guelph Transit began to reintroduce service levels that matched pre-pandemic service, later introducing new and improved services to continue recovering ridership and attract new riders.

Compared to 2020 levels, transit ridership across Canada is currently around 72 percent of pre-pandemic levels; a success of the Future Ready Action Plan is that it has supported Guelph Transit to return to 92 percent of the previous pre-pandemic ridership levels.

Passenger boardings from January 2023 to the end of July 2023 were 3,629,800 – which is set to meet the projected 7,083,944 passenger boardings for 2023 in the plan.

What's coming up for Guelph Transit

With the almost full completion of year 2 implementations, Guelph Transit continues to monitor and track the performance of what has been introduced thus far, utilizing service standards outlined in the plan to drive future recommendations and service adjustments where feasible.

The City of Guelph is rapidly changing and growing, with pressure to accommodate a significantly larger population within the next 30 years. A connected and effective transportation system is necessary for meeting the needs of current and future residents, in which a viable transit system is a key component. The Future Ready Action Plan will make Guelph Transit a more attractive mode of transportation for residents as it will offer shorter travel times, more direct trips, better frequencies, and more routing options than the existing network by 2031.

Beyond 2031, Guelph Transit will continue to expand and modify service where there is demand, to continue meeting the needs of residents. This includes adding frequency to busy routes, expanding the On-demand service, and introducing new routes to service growing areas of the community.

Financial Implications

While funds for the Guelph Transit Future Ready Action Plan were approved in the 2021 budget, each year the budget for the plan is confirmed for the following year of the budget.

Consultations

- Guelph Transit
- Trapeze Group
- Transit Advisory Committee

Attachments

Attachment-1: Guelph Transit Future Ready Action Plan

Departmental Approval

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