

Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Infrastructure and Engineering Services
Engineering and Transportation Division

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Ian Clark, Transit Project Manager
Date: July 2, 2020
Subject: Driving Forward: Chatham-Kent's Transit Strategy

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. Driving Forward: Chatham Kent's Transit Strategy be approved for the purpose of public transit capital and operational planning.

Background

The CKTransit system includes conventional and specialized service. Council-approved service levels are as follows:

- Conventional Urban
 - Mon. – Sat., 6:15 A.M. – 7:15 P.M., 30-minute frequency
- Conventional Inter-Urban
 - Mon. – Sat., four round trips (6:15 A.M., 8:45 A.M., 4:15 P.M., 6:45 P.M.)
- Specialized
 - Chatham Accessible
 - Mon. – Thu. & Sat., 6:15 A.M. – 7:15 P.M.
 - Fri., 6:15 A.M. – 11:00 P.M. / Sun., 9:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.
 - Wallaceburg Accessible
 - Mon. – Sat., 8:00 A.M. – 7:00 P.M. / Sun., 9:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.

In June 2019, the Municipality initiated a review of public transit needs and strategies with the objective of prioritizing and recommending policies, projects, and operating service standards to guide CKTransit over the next 5-10 years. During the review period, Council took several actions due to initial project findings, to prepare for future service contracts, or to pilot initiatives explored in the report:

- On June 24, 2019, Council approved two temporary service level increases. Route 5 in Chatham and a 12:15 P.M. inter-urban trip commenced operation in September 2019 and were subsequently extended until June 30, 2021;

- On September 23, 2019, Council approved a temporary demand-responsive service to extend Chatham's public transit service hours into the evening. CKTransit OnRequest was launched in March 2020;
- On November 4, 2019, Council approved administration enter into a cooperative purchasing agreement with Metrolinx, a crown agency owned by the province of Ontario, for the purpose of purchasing transit vehicles and related equipment;
- On December 9, 2019, Council approved administration purchase and retain ownership of its public transit vehicles, with continued third party operation, storage, and maintenance, for future operator contracts expected to commence after June 30, 2021;
- On March 23, 2020, Council approved administration purchase two larger 9-metre public transit buses, as well as two 6-metre specialized transit vehicles, for use in future transit services;
- On May 25, 2020, Council approved administration enter into an agreement with the Province of Ontario to access funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) Public Transit Stream. Funding will allow CKTransit to proceed with several capital projects discussed in Driving Forward, including:
 - Additional transit vehicles;
 - Security camera systems;
 - Demand-responsive software licensing;
 - Shelters at transit hub locations in primary urban centres outside Chatham;
 - Rehabilitation of the Downtown Chatham Terminal;
 - Electronic messaging boards at transit hubs;
 - Kiosks for SmartCards and fare payments.

Administration has now completed the public transit review and authored a document titled Driving Forward: Chatham-Kent's Transit Strategy (Appendix A). This document is intended to serve as Chatham-Kent's master plan for public transit planning.

Comments

Driving Forward includes 60 actionable recommendations that will impact the planning, design, and service levels of public transit in Chatham-Kent. Recommendations are intended to sustainably meet the transit needs identified by the public and are in alignment with overarching master plans.

New recommendations include:

- Proactively planning transit infrastructure alongside new land developments to improve transit access and first-mile-last-mile connections for riders;
- Utilizing demand-responsive service during times or areas with lower ridership;
- Leveraging partners such as Four Counties Community Transportation, Erie Shores Community Transit, and adVANtage Transportation for rural transit options within the Municipality and access to neighbouring jurisdictions;

- Extending service hours in Chatham to accommodate local employment opportunities and social demand;
- Introducing conventional urban transit within Wallaceburg;
- Matching conventional service hours, days, and fares with specialized service;
- Implementing larger buses on the busiest routes;
- Prioritizing new concession fares towards low-income riders;
- Improving Inter-Urban frequency and coverage within Chatham-Kent's primary urban centres;
- Empowering ridership with the knowledge to effectively navigate the system; and
- Improving accessibility and aesthetics of bus stops and transit hubs.

The report includes guidance on prioritization, timelines, funding sources, operational cost estimates, and metrics for performance monitoring.

Upon Council approval of Driving Forward, administration will conduct the recommended Route Optimization Study. This study will address systemic issues with schedule adherence by reviewing the fixed route design in Chatham, as well as bus stop locations along the inter-urban network. This study will be complete before the end of 2020.

Administration will also proceed with the release of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new transit operator contract following the expiry of current agreements on June 30, 2021. To achieve operational efficiencies discussed in the report, administration will be seeking an operator to deliver all CKTransit conventional and specialized services. Operating contracts will only be for existing service levels approved by Council. However the provision of service enhancements, as outlined in Driving Forward, will be a requirement of the successful vendor.

Staff will then return to Council prior to the 2021 Budget Process with incremental cost and staffing impacts associated with the implementation of Driving Forward's project and service level recommendations.

Areas of Strategic Focus and Critical Success Factors

The recommendation in this report supports the following areas of strategic focus:

Economic Prosperity:

Chatham-Kent is an innovative and thriving community with a diversified economy

A Healthy and Safe Community:

Chatham-Kent is a healthy and safe community with sustainable population growth

People and Culture:

Chatham-Kent is recognized as a culturally vibrant, dynamic, and creative community

Environmental Sustainability:

Chatham-Kent is a community that is environmentally sustainable and promotes stewardship of our natural resources

The recommendation in this report supports the following critical success factors:

Financial Sustainability:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is financially sustainable

Open, Transparent and Effective Governance:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is open, transparent and effectively governed with efficient and bold, visionary leadership

Has the potential to support all areas of strategic focus & critical success factors

Neutral issues (does not support negatively or positively)

Consultation

Over 190 hours of public consultation took place to present the recommendations in Driving Forward. Consultation included meetings with service groups, committees, local businesses, municipal departments, vendors, peer jurisdictions, ridership, as well as through an online portal at www.letstalkchatham-kent.ca. Over 2,000 comments were reviewed by the project team.

The following public information centres were also held:

- August 12, 2019, 11:30 AM – 2:00 PM, Municipal Centre, Tilbury
- August 12, 2019, 4:00 PM – 6:30 PM, Municipal Centre, Wallaceburg
- August 13, 2019, 12:00 PM – 2:30 PM, Adult Activity Centre, Ridgetown
- August 13, 2019, 4:00 PM – 6:30 PM, Community Senior Centre, Blenheim
- August 14, 2019, 10:00 AM – 12:00 PM, Civic Centre, Chatham
- August 14, 2019, 1:30 PM – 3:30 PM, Active Lifestyle Centre, Chatham
- August 14, 2019, 4:30 PM – 6:30 PM, W.I.S.H. Centre, Chatham
- December 5, 2019, 9:30 AM – 11:00 AM, Adult Activity Centre, Ridgetown
- December 5, 2019, 3:30 PM – 5:00 PM, Community Living, Wallaceburg
- December 6, 2019, 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM, Public Library, Tilbury
- December 11, 2019, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM, Public Library, Dresden
- December 12, 2019, 12:00 PM – 1:30 PM, Public Library, Blenheim
- December 12, 2019, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM, Royal Canadian Legion, Wheatley
- December 13, 2019, 3:00 PM – 4:30 PM, Royal Canadian Legion, Wheatley
- January 29, 2020, 4:00 PM – 5:30 PM, Bothwell Theatre, Bothwell

- January 29, 2020, 6:30 PM – 8:00 PM, Brunner Community Centre, Thamesville
- May 6, 2020, 6:00 PM – 7:00 PM, Facebook Live

Financial Implications

There are no financial implications associated with the approval of Driving Forward. Administration will return to Council prior to the 2021 Budget Process with incremental cost and staffing impacts associated with the implementation of project and service level recommendations outlined in Driving Forward.

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Attachments: Appendix A: Driving Forward: Chatham-Kent's Transit Strategy

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