

Peterborough Transit Plan
Peterborough Public Transit Operations Review – The Route Ahead

For full report go to:

<http://www.peterborough.ca/Assets/City+Assets/Transit/Transit+Operations+Review/Transit+Operations+Review+Draft+Final+Report.pdf>

Peterborough Transit has been working over the last 9 months on a Public Transit Operations Review called **The Route Ahead**. The purpose of this study has been to conduct a comprehensive review of Peterborough's transit services and to develop a service plan covering the period 2012 – 2017. This included an assessment and recommendations on conventional fixed route transit, Transcab and Handi-Van services.

Based on feedback obtained from members of the public, a draft plan was developed and recommendations were presented at a Special Committee of the Whole on July 30, 2012:

A special Committee of the Whole will be held **September 19, 2012** at the Evinrude Centre to allow for public input and to receive comments. Further information regarding this meeting will follow in August.

Here are some of the key factors about our public transportation system:

- Over the past decade ridership has grown by 62 percent on conventional services and with a current mode share of 4.5 percent, the City is on target to achieve its goal of having 6 percent of all trips within Peterborough to be on public transit by 2021.
- The report builds on an operational review of current conventional and Handi-Van services and provides advice on strategies to improve efficiency, increase ridership and ensure that all residents and visitors have effective transit access to employment, school, shopping, services, recreation and cultural activities within the community.
- There are many positive aspects to the current transit services and in a comparison with a peer group of Ontario municipalities, the performance of Peterborough Transit ranks high. The revenue/cost (R/C) ratio is 49 percent, transit ridership per capita is 37.92 and the average number of boardings per revenue vehicle hour is 29.23. This suggests a system that is meeting financial performance targets and is effective in capturing a reasonable share of the travel market.

- The conventional transit system is based on route running times of 40 or 80 minutes with 12 routes operating in a radial pattern focused on the downtown bus terminal. There is a service frequency of 40 minutes between buses during all hours of operation. The report states “While the service is effective, this is considered a long wait between buses during peak periods and some crowding and schedule adherence issues have resulted. An exception is the Trent express routes which provide 20 minute service between the downtown and the University at certain periods as warranted by demand.”
- The bus terminal was constructed in the mid 1970’s as part of a municipal parking structure when the City operated 35 foot buses. The design requires the current 40 foot buses to back out of their bays in groups of four and this reversing operation creates major problems for system operational efficiency and user security. Modern bus terminal designs feature ‘drive through’ operation and are capable of providing lower station dwell times which allows for enhanced transit productivity.

Proposed changes:

- **New transit terminal/mobility hub:** For the City to initiate the necessary planning activities to develop a future transit terminal as a mobility hub and catalyst for downtown intensification plans. Recognizing that such a facility will require funding support from senior governments and will take several years to realize, the transit options for the next five years assume continued use of the downtown terminal.
- **Maintenance facility:** The construction of a new Municipal Operations Centre has not yet been approved. A modern well equipped maintenance facility with the proper space for the storage and maintenance of the entire fleet of conventional and specialized vehicles is urgently required. Another study recommendation is for staff to bring forward a report seeking approval for this facility.
- **Revised routes for efficiency:** The study has recommended a number of efficiency improvements with the resulting savings in bus hours applied to improving the frequency of service during peak periods on four of the twelve routes. Key efficiency measures are the combination of the Trent East Bank Express service with the Route 9 Nichols Park; the conversion of Route 12 Major Bennett to a peak period employment special service for the industrial area; and the elimination of the first run on Saturday mornings for all routes.
- **Introduction of 20 minute service on some routes:** The 40 minute frequency between buses is a significant deterrent to ridership growth and it is proposed that 20 minute service be introduced on four of the twelve routes for 6 peak period hours weekdays. A fifth route (Route 9) will also operate at a 20 minute frequency during the school year with its integration with the West Bank Express service. This strategy is proposed to be extended to all routes over the 5 year life of this plan, providing the capacity and level of service needed to reach the City’s transit mode share target of 6 percent by 2017. (This will be subject to achieving financial and ridership growth targets established by the City.)

- **Interlined bus routes:** It is also proposed that bus routes be interlined at the terminal to improve the convenience of passenger transfers and the reliability of the bus schedules.
- **Revisions to the Handi-Van system:** Peterborough Transit has had considerable success in making its conventional service fully accessible and in encouraging registered Handi-Van users to make use of this service. Increased pressures on the expensive door-to-door service can be anticipated with the aging of the population (and the increased incidence of disability as people age), Peterborough's attraction as a retirement destination, and the requirements of Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities (AODA) legislation. It is therefore proposed that the City augment its dedicated vans with limited small increase in the use of taxi's which are less costly per trip (particularly in the shoulder periods) and also consider the introduction of a taxi scrip program which has been used by several municipalities to increase spontaneous trip making by persons with disabilities. It is further proposed to introduce a new Community Bus service which will benefit both Handi-Van registrants and the general population on seniors.
- **Community Bus routes:** Two Community Bus routes have been designed to operate Monday through Saturday from 8:40am until 4:40pm on routes that will serve large numbers of seniors and persons with disabilities. Productivity targets are established for this new service and it is suggested that one Community Bus route be introduced for a one year trial and the service be continued/expanded based on the success in meeting these targets.

Here are some questions to consider:

1. How will these changes to public transit decrease the use of cars and how will we be able to plan our communities differently?
2. How can these changes supplement a vibrant downtown?
3. What are the barriers to using public transportation? Are they all being addressed in this proposed plan?
4. If the ridership continues to increase at the level it has in the past decade, will this plan accommodate such growth?

For more information about our InfoNotes contact: Dawn Berry Merriam at 705-743-5915 or email dawnbm@pspc.on.ca.

