

Appendix E: Summary of Engagement on Options to Achieve 2025 Budget Guideline

Public Input Session (December 3rd) and EngageWR

Input was gathered from approximately 40 residents through a third public input session on December 3rd and the EngageWR platform about proposed options to achieve the budget guideline outlined in report RSC-SPR-24-001. Feedback received on December 3rd and through the EngageWR site about the proposals can be summarized as follows:

- Those concerned about reductions were concerned that proposed reductions impacted primarily those living with low income and students. The reductions to GRT service could lead to overcrowding, decreased trust and reliability of the transit system. Reductions to dental supports and counselling were seen as impacting the most vulnerable. Concerns were raised about attractiveness of our community with reductions to garbage collection downtown and at bus stops. And, finally, proposed reductions were seen as not supporting our goals for climate action.
- There were some who felt the proposals were not meaningful enough to counteract tax increases. These residents felt that the Region should look further at efficiency and more significant cuts. There was a concern expressed that current residents are bearing the burden of growth. There was a request for more transparent budget information.

GRT Survey

A survey conducted by GRT about the proposals heard from nearly 1,200 residents. It was open for five days. The survey included three questions asking about feedback on the service reductions, fare increase and service expansion proposals. The survey was advertised on GRT's website, social media, in e-newsletters and with signage at stops and stations.

Overall summary:

- Concern was raised with the proposed service reductions, citing it will impact those living with low income, students and new Canadians most.
- Concerns about value of service were raised in relation to the additional fare increase from \$100 to \$104 (representing an \$8 total increase from \$96), especially when paired with potential reductions.
- Proposed service expansion were viewed as insufficient given overcrowding on key routes, especially when paired with the significant fare increase.

Survey Data:

- 95 per cent opposed the service reduction proposal; 3 per cent were neutral; 3 per cent were supportive.
- 82 per cent opposed the fare increase proposal; 11 per cent were neutral; 9 per cent were supportive.
- 78 per cent opposed the service expansion proposal; 11 per cent were neutral; 11 per cent were supportive.

Detailed resident feedback:

- Service reductions should not be made in areas where there are no transit alternatives, including Route 9 and Route 35.
- Decreasing service, increased fares and garbage at bus stops could discourage new riders from using the service.
- Those who provided comments were strongly opposed to the removal of garbage cans at GRT stops, citing safety concerns, littering and impact on the wider community, not just transit riders.
- Commenters were unsupportive of the service expansion proposal because it wasn't seen to be enough to address current issues with service, including crowding on Routes 7, 8, 12, 201 and 302.
- Reductions to service and a reduction to GRT's initial service proposal are counter to the Region's commitment to climate change and the Strategic Plan.