

Region of Waterloo
Planning, Development, and Legislative Services
Growth, Development, and Sustainability

To: Sustainability, Infrastructure, and Development Committee
Meeting Date: November 4, 2025
Report Title: Monitoring Change in the Central Transit Corridor, 2025 Report

1. Recommendation

For information.

2. Purpose / Issue:

The purpose of this annual report is to update Council on the changes throughout the Central Transit Corridor (CTC) since 2011, the year that Council approved the ION route on its goals of moving people and building community.

3. Strategic Plan:

The CTC Monitoring Report provides information to support Strategic Priority

1: Homes For All – Transit investments have promoted transit-oriented community development, providing greater access to affordable housing options

2: Climate-Aligned Growth – Use of rapid transit reduces transportation related greenhouse gas emissions, promotes sustainable development patterns that promote active transportation and transit use and reduces the dependency on personal automobiles.

4. Report Highlights:

- Following ION's approval in 2011, it was recognized that the new rapid transit system would do more than just increase transit access throughout the Region. Its benefits were anticipated to include shaping the community, moving people more efficiently, promoting intensification, among other community objectives.
- Monitoring change within the CTC is used to better understand the changing nature of demographic, social, economic, and environmental characteristics of the corridor and provide a snapshot of the ways people and the market are adapting to ION year-over-year.

- As the Region of Waterloo pursues rapid transit to Cambridge, understanding the change in investment, transportation patterns and environmental impacts through monitoring change in the CTC becomes critical.

Due to market conditions, Federal immigration policies and other factors, change within the CTC and across the region is minimal when compared to 2024. Change compared to 2019 remains strong.

2024 CTC Monitoring Report Highlights

Moving People:

- Compared to 2023, transit ridership decreased by 9% in 2024, largely attributed to fluctuating student populations. Student ridership has been impacted by recent changes to federal immigration policies, reduced post-secondary enrolment, and campus consolidation.
- Overall ridership increased 17% above pre-pandemic levels.

Vibrant Communities

- Between 2023 and 2024, the population within the CTC increased at a similar rate (0.6%) than the population outside the CTC (0.6%).
- About one in five people in the Region reside in the CTC (over 141,000).

Restaurants

- In 2024, there were 1,061 restaurants located within the CTC, representing 49% of the Region's restaurants. Of the 1,061, 779 were located within Stage 1 and the other 282 were within Stage 2. There are 350 more restaurants within the CTC since 2011.

Heritage

- 11 heritage resources (defined as buildings built before 1920 or formally recognized) were lost in 2024, below the thirteen-year average of 16.

Investment

- 29% of new construction value in 2024 was within the CTC. Permits were issued for 1,113 new residential units and 390,000 square feet of new industrial, commercial, and industrial floor space.
- The total cumulative building permit value since 2011 is \$5.25 billion. The number of new developments and renovations are evident in assessment value growth of \$10 billion in 2011 to \$20.5 billion in 2024, an average annual increase of nearly \$800 million (5.7%).
- Municipal taxes generated on properties within the CTC were estimated at \$280

million in 2024, 110% higher than in 2011.

Crime and Safety

- The CTC has seen a 14% increase in the number of calls to police for reasons related to public perception of safety (e.g., unwanted persons, liquor offenses, graffiti) has occurred since 2011.
- It should be noted that a long-term increase was expected with more activity and people living in the corridor. Most calls that police respond to are not necessarily criminal in nature.

Inclusive Community

- There were 3,077 Community Housing units in the CTC – 330 more than in 2011 or a 12% increase

5. Background:

Following ION's approval in 2011, it was recognized that the new rapid transit system would do more than just increase transit access throughout the Region; it also created an opportunity to build healthy and vibrant communities along the route. Accordingly, the CTC Monitoring Program was established in 2015. The program has monitored change in the CTC throughout the pre-construction, construction, and post-construction/operations phases of the ION LRT.

Under the overarching goals of 'moving people' and 'building community', 18 indicators have been selected for their capacity to describe key aspects of the corridor. These are updated annually and reported to Council. Some indicators, specifically affordability have not been updated due to availability of updated data.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Information is shared with the Area Municipalities and is publicly available on the Region of Waterloo's website.

7. Financial Implications:

Nil.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Given the continued success of Stage 1 ION in accomplishing its dual goals of 'moving people' and 'building community', Staff see value in continuing to monitor the Central Transit Corridor. Work has initiated on the Rapid Transit to Cambridge business case. Construction timing is unknown and will depend on funding sources and approach to procurement. As such, it will be important to continue to monitor progress in the CTC throughout the Stage 2 project cycle, as was done for Stage 1.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Monitoring Change in the Central Transit Corridor, 2025

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