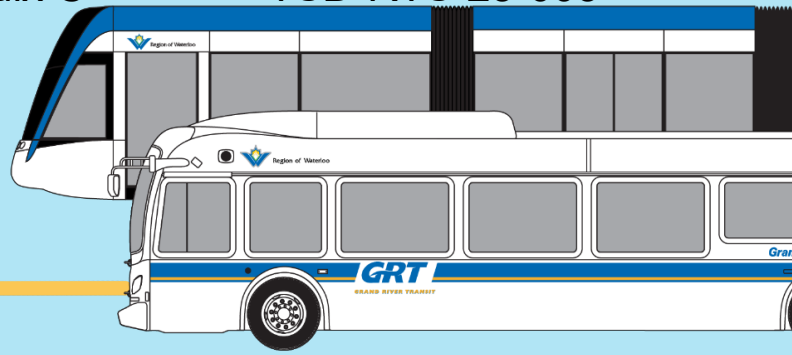


Rapid Transit to Cambridge



Appendix C: Engagement summary

While the Initial Business Case results provide a look at the benefits and costs of different options for Rapid Transit to Cambridge, engagement activities from August until the end of October, aimed to collect data on public sentiment and the level of support it has within the community. Together, the IBC results and the engagement summary will guide decisions on the route length and vehicle technology. The engagement strategy aimed to reach residents throughout Waterloo Region, inform them on the project goals and Initial Business Case, and ask them their preferences on the project alternatives. The project received a high level of engagement within Waterloo Region and Cambridge, specifically.

The primary way of receiving feedback from the public was on Engage Waterloo Region (engagewr.ca/Stage2ION), through a public survey. Information was also provided at various events throughout the region, on social media, in stakeholder workshops and a more in-depth survey was conducted on the Region's behalf by Ipsos.

Throughout engagement, the public preferred light rail transit for the vehicle technology and extending rapid transit from Fairway Station to Downtown Cambridge for the route length. This finding informed the recommendation to council.

Rapid transit engagement by the numbers

- About 12,000 visits to the Engage Waterloo Region page
- More than 2,500 Engage Waterloo Region survey responses
- Staff attended 30 events to engage the public and hand out information
- 2,800 handouts distributed
- 11,000 flyers delivered along the proposed route in Cambridge
- 160,000 views of social media posts
- More than 1,600 participants in the Ipsos survey

Engage Waterloo Region survey results

In total, more than 2,500 people took part in the survey hosted on Engage Waterloo Region.

- 78% of respondents preferred a light rail transit extension from Fairway Station to Downtown Cambridge. Of Cambridge respondents, 74% preferred the full extension of LRT to Cambridge.
- 53% of survey respondents were from Cambridge
- Regardless of how often people ride transit, they see the benefits of LRT; even people who indicated that they rarely or never ride transit want to see full LRT.
- Respondents were asked to weigh in on how the project aligned with the Region's Strategic Plan. The following percentages represent people who believe the project is well aligned, or very well aligned with the Strategic Plan priorities.
 - Homes for all: 64%
 - Climate Aligned growth: 75%
 - Equitable Services and Opportunities: 74%
 - Resilient and Future Ready Organization: 72%
- A strong majority of respondents indicated expanding Rapid Transit to Cambridge is important or very important to achieving the project's strategic goals.
 - Shaping growth and development in Waterloo Region: 82%
 - Connecting all three cities: 84%
 - Supporting expansion of transit in Waterloo Region: 83%
- Survey respondents were given the opportunity to provide additional feedback. Key themes included:
 - General support of the LRT
 - Cost/funding concerns
 - Preference for additional GRT service in Cambridge
 - Traffic/construction concerns
 - Preference for expediting the project

Third-party Ipsos survey

The Region hired Ipsos, a market research company that specializes in public surveys, to complete public opinion research to gauge community sentiment as Stage 2 moves toward construction.

The primary objectives included measuring awareness and support for the Cambridge extension, understanding preferences between LRT and BRT, and identifying drivers of support or opposition across demographic and geographic segments. The research assesses public attitudes toward funding sources—whether residents support regional contribution or expect full provincial/federal funding—and if the timing for this investment is appropriate.

The survey also examined anticipated usage patterns, perceived benefits, and potential concerns about construction impacts. These insights will inform the Region's communication strategy and stakeholder engagement as the project advances. 1,686 people completed the online or telephone survey.

The survey was conducted between Sept. 9 and Sept. 29, 2025.

To ensure robust Cambridge representation and enable meaningful regional comparisons, a disproportionate sampling approach was employed. Cambridge residents were oversampled relative to their population proportion. Results were subsequently weighted by age, gender, and municipality based on the latest census data to accurately reflect the adult population of Waterloo Region.

Ipsos survey results

- Support for Stage 2 stands at a robust 75% across the Region, with 54% expressing strong support.
- While Cambridge shows slightly lower support (72% vs. 76% outside), opposition remains limited to 22% in Cambridge—meaning support exceeds opposition by more than 3 to 1.
- 70% of residents indicate their decision is firm, suggesting public opinion is unlikely to shift.
- The reasons for support clarifies public priorities.
 - Connectivity leads at 33%, with residents emphasizing closing the gap between Cambridge and Kitchener
 - Improved mobility for specific groups (commuters, students, elderly) at 26%
 - Supporting population growth at 15%

- The main driver for opposition, while limited, centers on cost concerns. Cambridge opponents focus more on practical concerns: traffic impacts, construction disruption, and questioning population density justification.
- The majority (54%) prefer LRT technology over BRT (22%), with 23% expressing no preference. Cambridge shows stronger BRT support (28% vs. 21%) while maintaining LRT preference.

Stakeholder workshops and feedback

The Rapid Transit Project Team includes representation from the City of Cambridge and the City of Kitchener. Consultation with area municipal staff and other Stakeholder Groups continues to be a priority at each step of project development.

Additional stakeholder engagement included five online meetings in September 2025. The Region provided a brief presentation, and Arcadis facilitated a discussion activity. Engagement focused on describing the preliminary IBC results and collecting feedback on the preferred Rapid Transit to Cambridge alternative.

The various stakeholder groups are described below:

- Institutional strategy working group, including representatives from major institutions including school boards, and post-secondary institutions
- Economic development working group, including representatives from members of the business community
- Community leadership working group, including representatives from organizations like community associations, retirement homes, health centres
- Development industry working group including representatives from various developers and related groups.

Key findings

Full LRT is most desirable: Stakeholders unanimously voted in favour of full LRT and expressed pride in the Region's existing LRT system and its role in differentiating the region from other municipalities in Canada.

LRT is perceived more favourably than Bus Rapid Transit (BRT): LRT was perceived as fast, comfortable, smooth, modern, and permanent. In contrast, BRT was perceived as slow, congested, unpredictable, and a "cheap alternative".

Stakeholders expressed strong support for all the project's strategic goals: The strategic goals of shaping growth, connecting communities, and moving people all

resonated with stakeholders. While different stakeholder groups expressed various rankings, each strategic goal was ranked as most important by at least one group.

Strategic Plan priorities are aligned: Stakeholders expressed that Rapid Transit to Cambridge aligns with all four of the Region's Strategic Plan priorities (homes for all, climate aligned growth, equitable services and opportunities, and resilient and future ready organization).

The expansion of Rapid Transit to Cambridge as LRT is perceived as connecting Cambridge equitably: Linking Cambridge with Kitchener-Waterloo through rapid transit will improve convenience and help bridge the gap between Cambridge and the rest of the region. Stakeholders expressed a desire for LRT in alignment with previous plans for LRT in two stages throughout the Central Transit Corridor.

Rapid Transit to Cambridge will promote economic development: Many stakeholders highlighted the benefit of rapid transit in driving economic growth and creating employment opportunities. They also noted it is likely to attract further population growth to the region, improve housing access and stimulate housing development, and support cultural attractions.

Rapid Transit alone is not enough to attract development and build community: Stakeholders described several other factors that contribute to development success and community building. Features such as including walkable neighbourhoods, amenities, feelings of community/connection, human-scale design, public spaces, parks, the arts, events and entertainment areas, and post-secondary growth are essential to long-term growth.