

Proposal for GRT Concessionary Transit:

1. **Children under 12 provided with free transit.** Currently, ages 0-5 are free, while 6-12 pay full fare with no option to pay for a monthly pass.
2. **Seniors over 65 to be provided with free transit on Wednesday and Sunday.** Currently, this group pays regular fare or pass rates.

Motivations

There are many reasons that would motivate an effort to increase access to free transit for both youth and older adults and a few of them are:

- Building transit ridership addresses:
 - **Transform Waterloo Region**¹ Actions 1, 2, and 6
 - **United Nations Sustainable Development Goals**² 1, 3, 10, 11, and 12
- Reduced reliance on personal automobiles, with reduced associated costs. In addition, transit use increases independence as access to personal automobiles is reduced as the population ages
- Studies are showing that people outlive their ability to drive by seven to ten years. The ability to use public transit is essential for many older adults in later stages of life.
- Reduced air pollution in the region
- Transit use reduces the need for parking at destinations, while removing congestion and parking as sources of stress for drivers
- Increased equity amongst members of Waterloo Region communities by providing mobility options to those that have few
- Improve health of the community, as transit use is accompanied by increased active transportation such as walking to a bus stop.
- Reduce social isolation, while promoting community building. This is carried out by creating additional opportunities for interactions and gatherings in shopping and social environments
- By providing free public transit for children, we build transit use as a habit leading to lifelong ridership
- As our population increases, the need for climate-friendly forms of transportation continues to grow
- Waterloo Region is an outlier amongst comparable Ontario systems in not adopting more concessionary transit policy targeting demographic groups. This is supported by

¹ <https://climateactionwr.ca/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Final-TransformWR-Strategy.pdf>

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

the data found in the following table. A needs-based focus carries a higher administrative overhead.

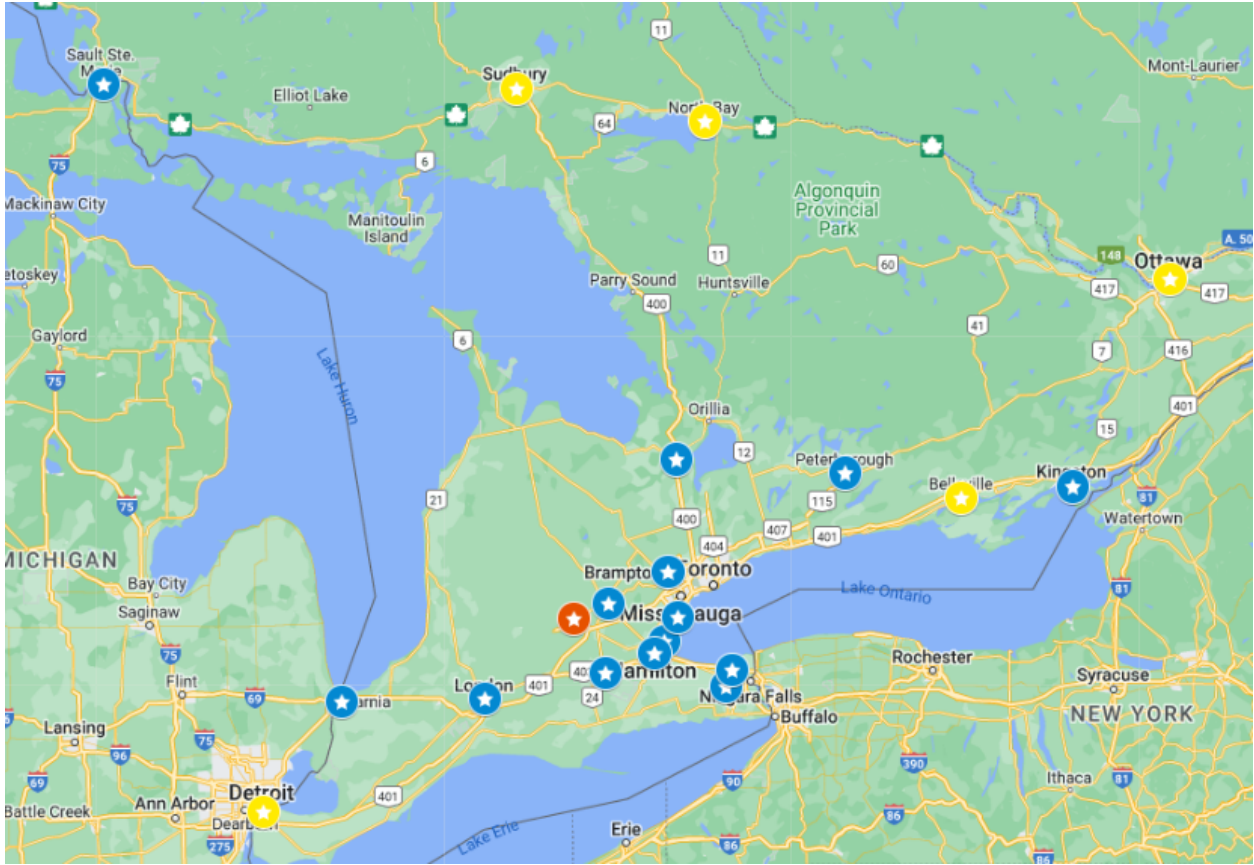
Regional System Comparisons

It's difficult to make a broad apples-to-apples comparison of transit systems. This is because there is no universal fare/pass grid. For example, some systems have a child/adult/senior grid, while others have a child/youth/secondary/adult/senior grid. Nevertheless, the table and map below summarize the practices of 20 systems in Ontario. A few notes:

- Where a pass is expressed as a percentage, this is in relation to a standard adult cost. For example, if an adult pass is \$100 and a seniors pass is \$75, then it would be recorded as "65+, \$75 (75%)"
- Waterloo Region offers free transit for veterans that are 65+
- Brantford offers free transit for all veterans.
- Orangeville has begun a two-year pilot to evaluate free transit for all residents. It's not clear at a glance how non-residents are accommodated.
- Many systems have a parallel needs-based fare/pass structure.
- Most systems require children to be accompanied by a paying adult, but it's not entirely clear what happens for unaccompanied children.
- Most systems begin senior pricing at 65, but Sault Ste Marie and Windsor begin at 60.
- This table focuses on monthly pass prices. Only Peterborough appears to have annual and semi-annual passes, while a few others have part-month passes and weekly passes.

Transit System	Child	Seniors
Waterloo Region	0-5 FREE 6-12 fare (100%) No pass	65+ Regular Fare
Barrie	0-12 FREE	65+ \$53 (60%)
Belleville	0-4 FREE 5-12 fare (67%)	65+ fare (75%) pass \$65 (100%)
Brampton	0-5 FREE 6-12 \$84 (66%)	65+ FREE
Brantford	0-12 FREE	65+ \$55.50 (76%)
Burlington	0-12 FREE	65+ FREE 0900-1430
Guelph	0-12 FREE	65+ \$68 (85%)

Hamilton	0-12 FREE	65+ \$38.50 monthly (34%) 65+ \$385 annual pass (28%) 80+ FREE
Kingston	0-14 FREE	65+ \$68.75 (100%)
London	0-12 FREE	65+ \$95 (100%)
Niagara	0-12 FREE	65+ \$63 (74%)
North Bay	0-12 FREE (up to 3 w/adult)	65+ \$61 (71%)
Oakville	0-12 FREE	65+ pass \$65.40 (48%) FREE on Monday
Orangeville	0+ Free	0+ Free
Ottawa	0-7 FREE 8-12 fare (50%)	65+ \$47.75 (38%) FREE on Wednesday and Sunday
Peterborough	0-12 FREE	65+ \$250 (annual)
Sarnia	0-12 FREE	65+ \$60 (78%)
Sault Ste Marie	0-12 FREE	60+ \$63.50 (86%)
St Catharines	0-12 FREE	65+ \$57 (63%)
Sudbury	0-4 FREE 5-12 \$56 (64%)	65+ \$56 (64%)
Windsor	0-12 FREE	60+ \$51.40 (51%)



In this map, the tabular data is summarized broadly. The red star is Waterloo Region. Blue Stars offer free transit for 0-12. Yellow stars sub-divide the 0-12 age group into free and paid tiers.