

Region of Waterloo
Transportation Services
Transit Services

To: Planning and Works Committee
Meeting Date: May 7, 2024
Report Title: Grand River Transit – Fall 2024 Service Improvements

1. Recommendation

For information.

2. Purpose / Issue:

This report outlines GRT service improvements for the Cambridge Business Park area that would take place on September 3, 2024. These changes were approved on December 13, 2023 as part of the 2024 Regional Budget. To provide more direct service to the business park and surrounding neighbourhood, most of the existing Route 72 BusPLUS service will be converted and expanded to a conventional bus route, while the remainder would be served by a new BusPLUS route that would also connect the Waterloo International Airport and Breslau to Sportsworld Station.

3. Strategic Plan:

The proposed service improvements support the Strategic Plan's Climate-aligned Growth and the Equitable Services and Opportunities priorities. In particular, the improvements align with the 2024 Action to "increase public transit service levels and support the new Conestoga College U-Pass".

4. Report Highlights:

- The approved 2024 Budget included a transit service expansion package to accommodate increases in ridership across the GRT network and increased service to/from the Conestoga College terminal to support the U-Pass program starting this fall.
- Starting Tuesday September 3, 2024 two new bus routes will begin operating in the Cambridge Business Park and Breslau areas. Appendix A shows a map of these routes.

- Cherry Blossom Rd., Royal Oak Dr., Speedsville Rd. and sections of Fountain St. N. will all benefit from new transit stops and expanded hours of service.
- A new conventional route will operate from Sportsworld Station, offering improved transit for residents of the growing River Mill subdivision, many local businesses, a new cultural centre, and students accessing Conestoga College's Reuter campus. This route will operate five days a week, 18 hours a day in one direction every 30 minutes. With this change, GRT customers and businesses in this area will move from a flex service to a fixed route, scheduled service with expanded (all day) hours.
- A new BusPLUS route will provide additional service to the Cambridge Business Park with connections at Sportsworld Station to the Waterloo Region Airport reallocating the vehicle from the current Route 72. This will provide a second connection for residents of Breslau to the GRT network and will operate five days a week, in the AM and PM peaks with some late evening service. It will serve major employers in the Cambridge Business Park and add a new connection to the Airport. Sportsworld Station offers connections to local and express GRT routes and inter-regional (GO) services.
- New concrete landing pads will be built this year for new stops on Cherry Blossom at Reuter Drive. Regional Staff are working with Municipal Staff to confirm options for improved pedestrian connections along the roadway.

5. Background:

Hours for service expansion were approved in the 2024 budget to support growing GRT's service and preparing the network for College U-pass related ridership.

Demand for Route 72 has reached capacity, and the surrounding residential area and business park are growing. Additionally, Conestoga College opened its Reuter Drive campus in September 2022, and opportunities to better serve the campus area were raised during the College U-Pass referendum.

GRT Customers have also requested additional transit connections to GO inter regional services, which are provided at Sportsworld Station. Regional staff from the Waterloo Region Airport and Economic Development also supported the design of these routes.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Area Municipalities: Regional staff have had discussions with City of Cambridge staff regarding improving the pedestrian connections to Conestoga College Reuter Drive campus.

Public: Transit staff will use the information in this report as the basis for public engagement over the next two weeks. The changes to the service will be part of an information campaign and feedback will be collected on proposal. Staff will engage key stakeholders during the process.

7. Financial Implications:

The approved 2024 Budget includes a transit service expansion package to improve service and accommodate increased ridership demand in this area.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

The new routes will be implemented on September 3, 2024 with the start of GRT's fall service, along with all other fall service changes approved in the 2024 Budget.

Staff will continue to monitor the ridership on these new routes and the growth in the area to assess if any adjustments are required. As the area continues to expand, additional transit improvements will be evaluated.

New route numbers, route names, stops and final schedules will be publicized this summer in advance of the service changes.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Map of Fall 2024 Cambridge Service Additions

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