

The Regional Municipality of Durham

MINUTES

DURHAM REGION TRANSIT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Wednesday, February 8, 2023

A regular meeting of the Durham Region Transit Executive Committee was held on Wednesday, February 8, 2023 in the Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby, Ontario at 1:30 PM. Electronic participation was offered for this meeting.

Present: Commissioner Crawford, Chair
Commissioner Schummer, Vice-Chair*
Commissioner Anderson
Commissioner Brenner
Commissioner Carter*
Commissioner Garrod
Commissioner Wotten attended for part of the meeting
Regional Chair Henry
***denotes Commissioners participating electronically**

Also
Present: Commissioner Kerr

Commissioner Roy was absent due to municipal business

Absent: E. Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer

Present: W. Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit

R. Adamsz, Deputy General Manager of Maintenance, Durham Region Transit

J. Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services, Durham Region Transit

R. Inacio, Systems Support Specialist, Corporate Services – IT

C. Norris, Deputy General Manager, Operations, Durham Region Transit*

Z. Osime-Fakolade, Program Manager, Community Engagement and Change Management, Durham Region Transit*

N. Pincombe, Director, Business Planning and Budgeting, Finance Department

N. Taylor, Treasurer, Durham Region Transit, and Commissioner of Finance

C. Bandel, Deputy Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services

S. Ciani, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services

L. Soto Maya, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services

***denotes staff participating electronically**

1. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Adoption of Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Anderson, Seconded by Commissioner Garrod,
(6) That the minutes of the regular Durham Region Transit Executive
Committee meeting held on Wednesday, January 11, 2023, be adopted.
CARRIED

3. Presentations

**3.1 Bill Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit Re: General Manager's
Verbal Update**

B. Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit, provided a verbal update to the Committee.

B. Holmes highlighted positive impacts of the ridership recovery strategy reflected in January 2023 ridership exceeding 90 percent of pre-pandemic levels, with some weekday ridership exceeding pre-pandemic levels for the first time since March 2020; and stronger local travel patterns making up for continued weakened commuter travel to downtown Toronto. He stated that in 2022, On-Demand service provided 45,000 trips in rural areas, and 82,000 trips were delivered in urban centres. He added that PRESTO contactless fare payment using credit cards was launched in January and the use of debit cards will launch later in 2023.

B. Holmes shared a letter from Pathways Abilities Centre Program for youth over 14 with disabilities, thanking DRT for their ongoing collaboration and the positive impacts of DRT's visit helping to support participants' learning around how to be safe on the bus, plan bus routes, and how to use the bus. B. Holmes also congratulated the Parasport Games Organizing Committee and thanked DRT staff that provided timely transportation to participants.

B. Holmes provided an overview of highlights since DRT was formed in 2006, including: integrating local transit organizations into an efficient regional network; implementing state of the art systems in the Transit Control Centre; collaborating with neighbouring transit agencies to advance integrated travel between municipalities; providing 24/7 transit service in urban areas; and real-time information systems for customers.

B. Holmes stated that DRT seeks opportunities to maximize service such as the re-allocation of revenue service hours to best serve transit customers; and innovate such as partnering with Durham Regional Technology Development Site regarding the use of technology for a detection and communication system for

transit stops to help understand passenger behaviour and improve customer service.

B. Holmes advised that in January 2023 revenue services hours are the same as pre-pandemic levels in 2019, and all residents in Durham Region have access to transit. He also advised that significant investment in transit is needed to achieve the vision of a healthy, prosperous community for all, as public transportation is a vehicle for opportunity, equity, and a better quality of life.

B. Holmes outlined the DRT Long-Term investment plan recommendations to advance public transit across the region, and provided an overview of investment opportunities to shape the future of transit in Durham Region.

3.2 Bill Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit; Jamie Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services; and Nicole Pincombe, Director, Business Planning & Budgeting Re: Transit Service and Financing Strategy (2023-2032) (2023-DRT-05) [Item 7.2]

B. Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit; Jamie Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services; and Nicole Pincombe, Director, Business Planning and Budgeting, Finance Department provided a presentation regarding Transit Service and Financing Strategy for 2023 to 2032.

Highlights of the presentation included:

- Transit Service and Financing Strategy (2023-2032)
- Recommendations
- Transit is essential to Durham's future
- Land use is essential to transit's success
- Ridership Recovery and Outlook
- Service Enhancement
- Durham Transit Investment vs Peers
- 2023-2032 Service Investment
- 2032 Frequent and Available Transit Network
- 2032 Integrated Transit Network
- Transition to Zero Emission Vehicles
- Fare Modernization
- Proposed Fare Structure
- DRT Charter Service
- Cost Pressures and Financing Opportunities
- 10-Year DRT Forecast
- Risks and Considerations
- Conclusions

J. Austin outlined the Transit Service and Financing Strategy for 2023 to 2032 to elevate the level of transit in Durham, increase the region's economic

competitiveness, and enhance mobility and connectivity. He stated that Durham Region Transit's (DRT) funding levels led to a significantly lower service level per capita than comparator municipalities. He added that alongside regional strategies, a long-term Region investment plan is needed along with continued advocacy to senior levels of government for sustainable funding to achieve the vision in the plan, including from an economic, social and environmental perspective.

B. Holmes highlighted the 2023 to 2032 service investment strategy and transit service plan. He stated the plan includes a minimum transit frequency of 15 minutes in urban areas and 60 minutes in rural areas to increase capacity and equitable access to residents with mobility constraints. The plan also includes integration with local transit networks and active transportation networks, and improved customer service.

J. Austin further noted the transition to Zero Emissions Vehicles, funding considerations for the lifecycle of the vehicles, and funding initiatives from the federal government.

J. Austin provided an overview of the advancements made in the modernization of fare products; proposed fare structure adjustments; the launch of DRT charter service rates; cost pressures such as on-going COVID 19 impacts and Bill 23 impacts on transit development charges; and, financing opportunities at the federal, provincial and regional levels.

N. Pincombe highlighted the modelled financial impacts of the 10 year DRT forecast. She stated that the plan supports delivery of Council approved strategic priorities including: increasing service levels aligned with the region's Transportation Master Plan model, which provides for an additional approximately 652,000 additional annual hours of services to a total of over 1.16 million service hours in 2032, and the transition of DRT's fleet to zero emission technologies by 2037. She noted that annual funding of the plan will be reviewed as part of the financing plan process.

N. Pincombe reviewed the future risks and considerations of the financial modelling including the financial impacts of Bill 23, debt servicing impacts, capital cost escalations, and uncertainty of fuel pricing and insurance.

J. Austin concluded by stating that the Transit Service and Financing Strategy outlines the level of investment required to realize Council's vision for transit in the Region, and that building a first-class transit system in a world-class region will require significant investment and funding from the Region and senior levels of government.

4. Delegations

4.1 Ian Sinnott, DRT Chair, Unifor Local 222 Re: Transit Long-Term Service and Financing Strategy

Ian Sinnott, Unifor Chairperson for Durham Region Transit, appeared as a delegation requesting more funding for the public transit system. I. Sinnott stated that many of the buses are running near or at capacity, and outlined a recommendation of a 10-minute frequency transit network from a recent Toronto Board of Trade report to meet the needs of the forecasted growth of the region.

I. Sinnott also identified the demographics that rely on transit, the aspects that global businesses look for, and key areas that attract top employers and skilled workers. This includes an infrastructure that can increase productivity, cut commute times, reduce greenhouse gases, and improve a person's quality of life. I. Sinnott further stated that a public transit system creates equitable and vibrant cities while enabling them to meet climate goals.

I. Sinnott requested Durham Region to invest in transit to meet a 10 minute service level on major routes in order to be part of the global investment and cultural growth that is coming to Canada.

4.2 Jeff Gray, President, Unifor Local 222 Re: Transit Long-Term Service and Financing Strategy

Jeff Grey, President of Unifor Local 222, appeared before the committee regarding the Transit Long-Term Service and Financing Strategy and the need to meet the evolving workforce.

J. Grey stated that Unifor Local 222 collaborates with employers to create diverse, gender equitable, safe and inclusive workforces where everyone can succeed. J. Grey also noted that there are employees that cannot afford gas, insurance and car payments, and often rely on transportation service companies to get to work because they cannot wait for transit. J. Grey would like DRT to improve transit service to a 10 minute wait time in order for members to get to work on time.

4.3 Alexa Walker, Ontario Tech University Student Re: Safety and Accessibility of Bus Routes near Ontario Tech/Durham College North Campus

Alexa Walker, Ontario Tech University student, appeared before the committee regarding the safety and accessibility of bus routes for a person with a disability. A. Walker identified student concerns related to the 901 and 905 routes related to over-crowding, access to the exits on the buses, and weather-related concerns.

A. Walker noted that while the transit app real-time data is helpful, it is only available to individuals with access to wireless service and data, and the app does not identify if the bus is full and skipping stops along the route.

A. Walker requested consideration of returning more bus routes to service the bus loop on the Durham College and Ontario Tech north campus.

A. Walker responded to a question from Committee.

B. Holmes responded to questions regarding student transit routes.

4.4 Ame Gilham, Ontario Tech University Student Re: Transit for Students living near Durham College / Ontario Tech North Campus

Ame Gilham, Ontario Tech University student, appeared before the committee regarding transit related matters for students that live in the Durham College /Ontario Tech North Campus area.

A. Gilham discussed the 901 and 915 bus routes, and expressed concerns regarding capacity related matters for student commutes in the Durham Region.

4.5 Ian Reynolds, Ontario Tech University Student Re: Options available for students travelling to/from Ontario Tech University, and changes that have been made to Routes 901, 915, and 920

Ian Reynolds, Ontario Tech University student, appeared before the committee to express concerns regarding the transit routes to Ontario Tech University and the changes made to the bus routes that previously used the north campus bus loop.

I. Reynolds discussed routes from across the region and the need for connections to Scarborough for students that rely on using transit to get to the campus.

4.6 Angelique Dack, Ontario Tech University Student Re: Safety and Accessibility of Bus Routes for Ontario Tech Students and Community Members

Angelique Dack, Ontario Tech University student, appeared before the committee regarding bus routes to the Ontario Tech campus.

A. Dack congratulated DRT on the improvements to transit but also expressed concerns regarding safety and accessibility specifically in relation to the 901 route, and transfers to other bus routes.

4.7 Michael Wilson, Durham Resident Re: 920 Bus Route Accessibility, Timing and Reliability

Michael Wilson, Ontario Tech University student, appeared before the committee regarding the timing, reliability and accessibility of the 920 bus route.

M. Wilson stated that the 920 bus route no longer connects to the bus loop inside the north campus, which contributes to accessibility and timing issues for the large number of students that use the 920 route.

M. Wilson also stated that the 920 bus route is not available for students that attend night classes at Ontario Tech, and taking an alternate route can add 20 minutes for students travelling to Scarborough. M. Wilson identified that this creates barriers that can prevent students from optimizing an environment for student success.

4.8 Tien Huynh, Durham Resident Re: The Need to Implement the 2023-2032 Transit Service and Financing Strategy

Tien Huynh, Durham resident, appeared before the committee regarding the 2023 to 2032 Transit Service and Financing Strategy and the strategy's potential to transform transportation and mobility within the Region of Durham.

T. Huynh identified the need for investment in a reliable and accessible transit network to meet the needs of the growing population in the Region of Durham, and the importance of ensuring that transit infrastructure is in place to serve new developments.

T. Huynh stated that frequent and reliable transit will encourage residents to choose transit as their mode of transportation and change how people get around the Region.

5. Correspondence

There were no correspondence items to be considered.

6. Reports

A) General Manager's Report - February 2023 (2023-DRT-04)

Report #2023-DRT-04 from B. Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit, was received.

B. Holmes responded to questions regarding feedback and communication from transit customers; transit service standards; transit service for students to get to the college and university campus; and student safety concerns.

Moved by Commissioner Anderson, Seconded by Commissioner Wotten,
(7) That Report #2022-DRT-04 of the General Manager, Durham Region Transit, be received for information.

CARRIED

B) Transit Service and Financing Strategy (2023-2032) (2023-DRT-05)

Report #2023-DRT-05 from B. Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit, was received.

B. Holmes and J. Austin responded to questions regarding how to incentivize residents to use transit; parking at GO stations; the long-term sustainable funding model; transit needs for the growing region; the 60 minute minimum frequency service standard in rural areas; capacity within the DRT system; revenue service hours per capita; on demand service in rural areas; and investment for future transit needs.

N. Taylor, Treasurer and Commissioner of Finance, and N. Pincombe, Director, Business Planning and Budgeting, Finance Department, responded to questions regarding the Transportation Master Plan financial component; the need for deliverable metrics in order to plan for the roads investment; clarification of the individual by-laws from municipalities to approve transit costs; and capital infrastructure expenses.

Moved by Commissioner Wotten, Seconded by Commissioner Garrod,

(8) That the Transit Executive Committee recommends to the Finance and Administration Committee for subsequent recommendation to Regional Council:

- A) That the 10-year plan to phase investment in transit service enhancements, electrification, and new facilities and amenities be approved in principle subject to annual investment approvals through the Region's business planning and budget process, and that the 10-year plan be reviewed every four years or earlier as necessary in consideration of new information that may impact plan delivery, financing and timelines;
- B) That given the current level of funding to Durham Region Transit supports a significantly lower service level than that provided by our comparators, and that the 10-year plan requires a long term, not a one year commitment, to achieve the outcomes needed, that annual incremental increases for Durham Region Transit be acknowledged at a starting increase of approximately 2 per cent per year on the overall Regional tax levy;
- C) That staff continue to advocate for sustained, incremental, targeted funding from the Provincial and Federal governments to support the funding gaps identified in this 10-year plan;
- D) That the General Manager of Durham Region Transit and the Commissioner of Finance be authorized to implement a 2023 charter service rate for standard 12 metre transit buses on a cost recovery basis at \$925.00 per hour for a minimum four hour booking, with a rate of \$505.00 for each additional bus and \$130.00 for each additional hour;

- E) That the proposed DRT Fare Structure listed in Attachment 2 of Report #2023-DRT-05 of the General Manager, Durham Region Transit be approved establishing a base adult fare and associated discount or trip rates for each fare category ensuring the proportional application of any future adjustments to the base fare is maintained;
- F) That DRT fares be adjusted with a \$0.10 increase to the base fare to take effect on July 1, 2023 as detailed in Attachment 2 of Report #2023-DRT-05; and,
- G) That the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) for customers eligible for Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program be made a permanent product within Durham Region Transit's fare structure, and that staff report back on the feasibility and financial implications of expanding eligibility for TAP to include persons receiving assistance through other income-tested government support programs.

CARRIED

This matter will be considered by the Finance and Administration Committee on February 14, 2023 and presented to Regional Council on March 1, 2023.

7. Advisory Committee Resolutions

There were no advisory committee resolutions to be considered.

8. Confidential Matters

There were no confidential matters to be considered.

9. Other Business

There was no other business to be considered.

10. Date of Next Meeting

The next regularly scheduled Durham Region Transit Executive Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at 1:30 PM in the Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby.

11. Adjournment

Moved by Regional Chair Henry, Seconded by Commissioner Garrod,
(9) That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 3:35 PM

Respectfully submitted,

M. Crawford, Chair

L. Soto Maya, Committee Clerk