



## Transit Executive Committee Agenda

Council Chambers  
Regional Headquarters Building  
605 Rossland Road East, Whitby

**Wednesday, April 7, 2021**

**1:30 PM**

Please note: In an effort to help mitigate the spread of COVID-19, and to generally comply with the direction from the Government of Ontario whereby all organized public events of more than five people are prohibited, it is requested in the strongest terms that Members participate in the meeting electronically. Regional Headquarters is closed to the public, all members of the public may [view the Committee meeting](#) via live streaming, instead of attending the meeting in person. If you wish to register as a delegate regarding an agenda item, you may register in advance of the meeting by noon on the day prior to the meeting by emailing [delegations@durham.ca](mailto:delegations@durham.ca) and will be provided with the details to delegate electronically.

**1. Roll Call**

**2. Declarations of Interest**

**3. Adoption of Minutes**

A) Durham Region Transit Executive Committee meeting –  
February 3, 2021

Pages 4-9

**4. Delegations**

**5. Presentations**

A) Jamie Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services, DRT and Christopher Norris, Deputy General Manager, Operations, DRT re: Transit Assistance Program and Secondary Student Transportation Incentives

Pages 10-30

## 6. Correspondence

- A) Correspondence from Town of Ajax, re: Resolution passed at their Council meeting held on February 22, 2021, regarding the Durham-Scarborough BRT in Pickering Village

Pages 31-32

### **Pulled by Councillors Collier and Kerr from the March 5, 2021 Council Information Package**

Recommendation: Receive for Information

- B) Correspondence from City of Oshawa, re: Resolution passed at their Council meeting held on February 22, 2021, regarding Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit Project Public Information Centre 3

Page 33

### **Pulled by Councillor Kerr from the March 5, 2021 Council Information Package**

Recommendation: Receive for information

## 7. Reports

- A) General Manager's Report – April 7, 2021 (2021-DRT-05) Pages 34-49
- B) Transit Assistance Program pilot evaluation (2021-DRT-06) Pages 50-99
- C) Secondary student transportation (2021-DRT-07) Pages 100-108
- D) Paper Transfers (2021-DRT-08) Pages 109-117
- E) On Demand outcomes and next steps (2021-DRT-09) Pages 118-125

## 8. Advisory Committee

## 9. Confidential Matters

There are no confidential matters to be considered

## 10. Other Business

## 11. Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday, May 5, 2021 at 1:30 PM

## **12. Adjournment**

Notice regarding collection, use and disclosure of personal information:

Written information (either paper or electronic) that you send to Durham Regional Council or Committees, including home address, phone numbers and email addresses, will become part of the public record. This also includes oral submissions at meetings. If you have any questions about the collection of information, please contact the Regional Clerk/Director of Legislative Services

**The Regional Municipality of Durham**

**MINUTES**

**DURHAM REGION TRANSIT EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

**Wednesday, February 3, 2021**

A regular meeting of the Durham Region Transit Executive Committee was held on Wednesday, February 3, 2021 in the Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby, Ontario at 1:30 PM. Electronic participation was offered for this meeting.

**1. Roll Call**

Present: Commissioner Collier, Chair  
Commissioner Barton, Vice-Chair  
Commissioner Anderson  
Commissioner Carter  
Commissioner Drew  
Commissioner Mulcahy  
Commissioner Pickles  
Commissioner Smith  
Regional Chair Henry  
**\* all members of Committee participated electronically**

Also  
Present: Commissioner Crawford  
Commissioner Highet  
Commissioner Wotten

Staff  
Present: E. Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer  
W. Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit  
J. Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services, Durham Region Transit  
D. Beaton, Commissioner of Corporate Services  
M. Binetti, Transportation Service Design, Durham Region Transit  
D. Dunn, Project Manager, Transportation Design, Durham Region Transit  
S. Glover, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services  
L. Hatch, Marketing Assistant, Durham Region Transit  
L. Huinink, Director, Rapid Transportation & Transit Oriented Development, Office of the Chief Administration Officer  
R. Inacio, Systems Support Specialist, Corporate Services – IT  
A. McKinley, Deputy General Manager, Maintenance, Durham Region Transit  
A. Naeem, Solicitor, Corporate Services – Legal  
C. Norris, Deputy General Manager, Operations, Durham Region Transit

N. Pincombe, Director, Business Planning & Budgets, Finance Department  
S. Ramoutar, Transit Financial Analyst, Durham Region Transit  
T. Steffler, Supervisor, Transit Durham East, Durham Region Transit  
N. Taylor, Treasurer, Durham Region Transit, and Commissioner of Finance  
C. Tennisco, Committee Clerk, Corporate Services – Legislative Services

**2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**3. Adoption of Minutes**

Moved by Commissioner Carter, Seconded by Commissioner Drew,  
(5) That the minutes of the regular Durham Region Transit Executive  
Committee meeting held on Wednesday, January 6, 2021, be adopted.  
CARRIED

**4. Delegations**

There were no delegations to be heard.

**5. Presentations**

5.1 Bill Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit, and Nancy Taylor, Treasurer, Durham Region Transit, Finance Department, regarding: 2021 Durham Region Transit Business Plans and Budgets (2021-DRT-04) [Item 7. B)]

Nancy Taylor, Bill Holmes and Jamie Austin provided a PowerPoint presentation on the 2021 Durham Region Transit Business Plans and Budgets.

N. Taylor advised that the 2021 Durham Region Transit Business Plans and Budgets have been challenging based on the competing priorities and those affected by COVID. She advised that the budgets submission supports the approved guideline of 2.0% and is dependent on the safe restart of the transit stream.

N. Taylor provided an overview of the Strategic Priorities for the 2021 Budget.

Highlights of her presentation included:

- 2021 Budget – Strategic Priorities
  - Environmental Sustainability
  - Community Vitality
  - Economic Prosperity
  - Social Investment
  - Service Excellence
  - COVID-19 Response

Bill Holmes advised that the Durham Region Transit 2021 Business Plans and Budgets outlines the steps and investments that DRT is making in 2021 to advance key objectives, service improvements and initiatives; and addresses the current challenges, while being positioned to quickly respond to increasing ridership demands.

Highlights of his presentation included:

- Budget Overview
  - 2020 – A Year Like No Other
- 2020 Accomplishments
  - Service Improvements
  - Customer Service
  - Moving transit forward

Jamie Austin presented an overview of the Durham Region Transit 2021 proposed expenditures and financing.

Highlights of his presentation included:

- 2021 Proposed Expenditures and Financing
  - Proposed Gross Expenditures by Program Area (millions)
  - Proposed Gross Funding by Source (millions)
- 2021 Priorities and Highlights
  - Operating Costs
  - Staffing
  - Capital
- 2021 Risks and Uncertainties
- 2021 Initiatives to Modernize & Find Service Efficiencies
- Future Budget Pressures
  - Impacts on 2022 Budget
  - Forecasted Pressures

Commissioner Carter, on behalf of the Committee, thanked the Durham Region Transit Team for their extraordinary work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic; during a period of challenging times and difficult situations.

J. Austin and A. McKinley responded to questions regarding the logistics and required infrastructure costs to transition to the battery electric buses, including charging infrastructure and training requirements for staff to operate and perform the equipment maintenance and repairs on these buses; and, the life expectancy and maintenance costs of an electric bus compared to a conventional bus.

B. Holmes responded to a question regarding whether the 60 percent bus capacity meets the guidelines for social distancing. He advised that most Ontario transit agencies are operating at a seated load capacity. He added that currently, approximately 99 percent of the DRT trips are less than a seated load; and, that

the bus operators would continue to pick up customers, and not leave them stranded, if a bus encountered a seated load.

B. Holmes reviewed the COVID-19 policies in place which enables DRT to operate with a full load safely, and which are to be adhered to by all DRT customers on the buses.

J. Austin also responded to a question about the impacts resulting from the reduced 2020 DRT ridership fare revenues on the transit revenue to operating costs ratio.

## **6. Correspondence**

There were no correspondence items to be considered.

## **7. Reports**

### **A) General Manager's Report – February 3, 2021 (2021-DRT-03)**

Report #2021-DRT-03 from B. Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit, was received.

Chair Collier commended DRT staff on the launch of two retrofitted retired buses for the mobile COVID-19 testing clinic, in collaboration with the Region of Durham Paramedic Services.

At the request of Chair Collier, B. Holmes outlined the allocation of the Provincial Gas Tax funding being based on 70 percent transit ridership and 30 percent municipal population.

Chair Collier advised that residents have questioned why they cannot utilize the On Demand service in their area even though the regular transit services are being provided in their area. B. Holmes clarified that the On Demand service is provided within the urban areas of the Region where ridership is low.

Moved by Commissioner Carter, Seconded by Commissioner Anderson,  
(6) That Report #2021-DRT-03 of the General Manager, Durham Region Transit, be received for information.

CARRIED

### **B) 2021 Durham Region Transit Business Plans and Budgets (2021-DRT-04)**

Report #2021-DRT-04 from B. Holmes, General Manager, Durham Region Transit, was received.

Moved by Commissioner Carter, Seconded by Commissioner Barton,  
(7) That we recommend to the Finance & Administration Committee for subsequent recommendation to Regional Council:

That the 2021 Business Plans and Budgets for Durham Region Transit be approved.

CARRIED

This matter will be considered by the Finance and Administration Committee on February 9, 2021 and presented to Regional Council on February 24, 2021.

**8. Advisory Committee Resolutions**

**8.1 Durham Region Transit Advisory Committee**

**A) Transit Advisory Committee Minutes**

Moved by Regional Chair Henry, Seconded by Commissioner Mulcahy,  
(8) That the minutes of the regular Transit Advisory Committee held on January 19, 2021, be received for information.

CARRIED

**9. Confidential Matters**

There were no confidential matters to be considered.

**10. Other Business**

There was no other business to be considered.

**11. Date of Next Meeting**

The next regularly scheduled Durham Region Transit Executive Committee meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 3, 2021 at 1:30 PM in the Council Chambers, Regional Headquarters Building, 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby.

**12. Adjournment**

Moved by Commissioner Smith, Seconded by Commissioner Pickles,  
(9) That the meeting be adjourned.

CARRIED

The meeting adjourned at 2:14 PM



Respectfully submitted,

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S. Collier, Chair

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C. Tennisco, Committee Clerk

# Transit Assistance Program and Secondary Student Transportation Incentives

Transit Executive Committee

April 7, 2021





# Transit Assistance Program (TAP)

Pilot Evaluation

Results and Recommendations

A green-tinted background image of a Durham Region Transit bus, number 8523, with the company name visible on the front and side. The bus is shown from a front-three-quarter view.

# Overview

## TAP Pilot Evaluation



# TAP Background

- TAP pilot launched November 2019
- Open to all social assistance clients in Durham (OW and ODSP)
- Leverages loyalty cap features of PRESTO
- Pay-as-you-go for first 14 trips in a month, unlimited trips thereafter
- Reduces stigma
- Eligibility confirmation every 6 months
- Unused funds carry over to next month
- Protection against lost or stolen cards



# Evaluation Methodology

- Four key program elements:
  - Ridership behavior of TAP customers;
  - Accessibility and convenience of the program;
  - Strengths and opportunities to improve the program;
  - Sustainability of the program.
- Data collection and analysis:
  - Client feedback survey – 382 social assistance recipients
  - Staff feedback survey – 81 OW and ODSP caseworkers
  - Transit usage data – over 4,950 TAP PRESTO cards

A green-tinted background image of a Durham Region Transit bus, number 8523, with the company name visible on the front and side. The bus is shown from a front-three-quarter view.

# Results

## TAP Pilot Evaluation



# Summary of Results



## Ridership Behaviour of TAP Users

- TAP users are riding DRT for essential trips during the pandemic
- Overall ridership pattern similar to other PRESTO card users



## Accessibility & Convenience of the Program

- Majority of current and previous TAP users found the program easy and convenient
- Users found it easy to use the card, get information and get help about the TAP program



## Strengths & Opportunities

- The TAP program is an easy and convenient program helping users travel for essential purposes
- Technology and format of delivery could be improved



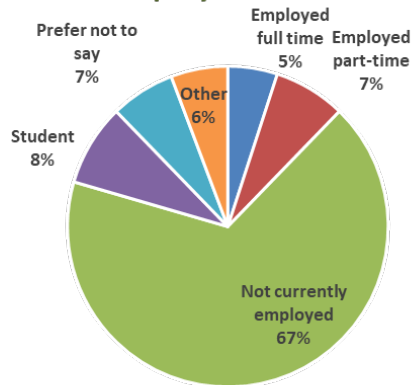
## Sustainability of the Program

- Overall experience of users are positive
- Some previous users are no longer on TAP because of eligibility
- Staff are very engaged and majority feel supported

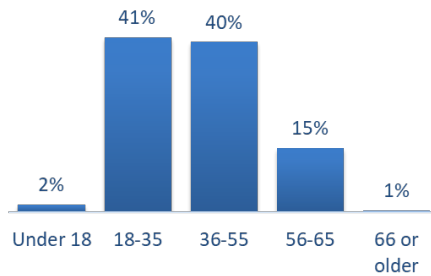


# TAP Customer Characteristics

## Employment status



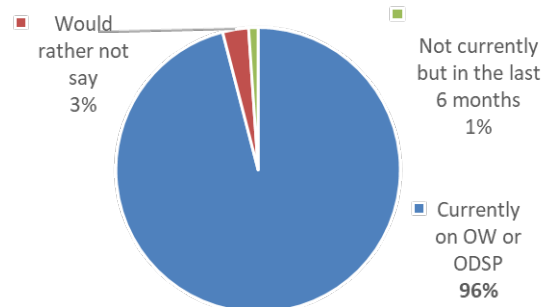
## Age Distribution



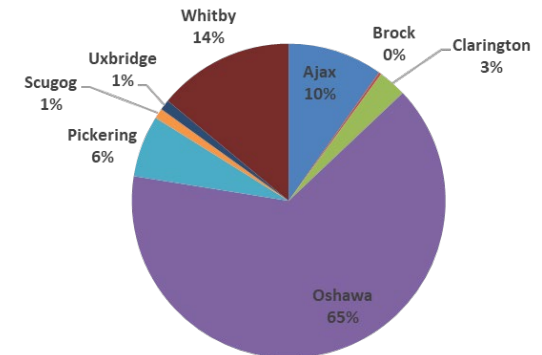
382 respondents



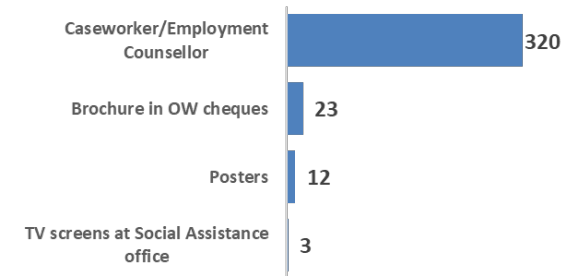
## Social Assistance



## Municipality

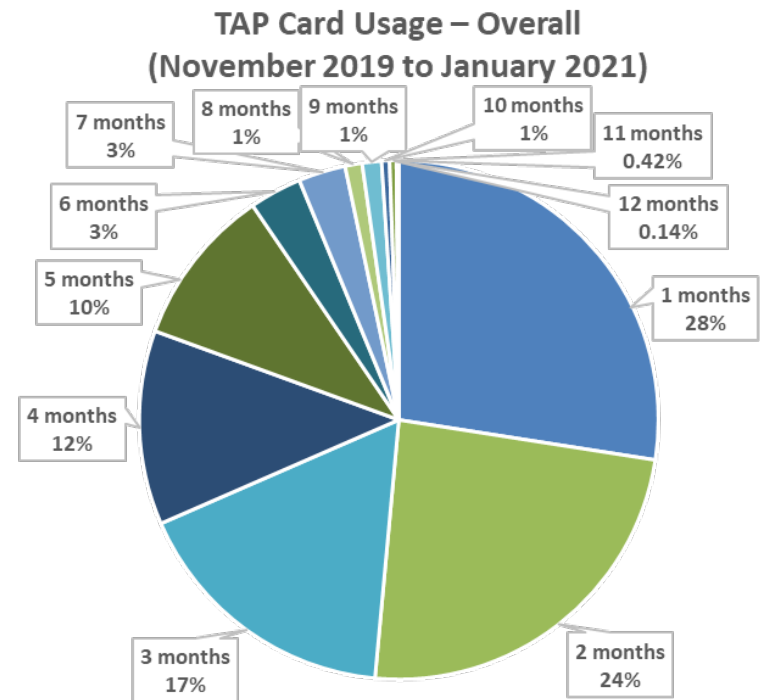


## How Clients Found out

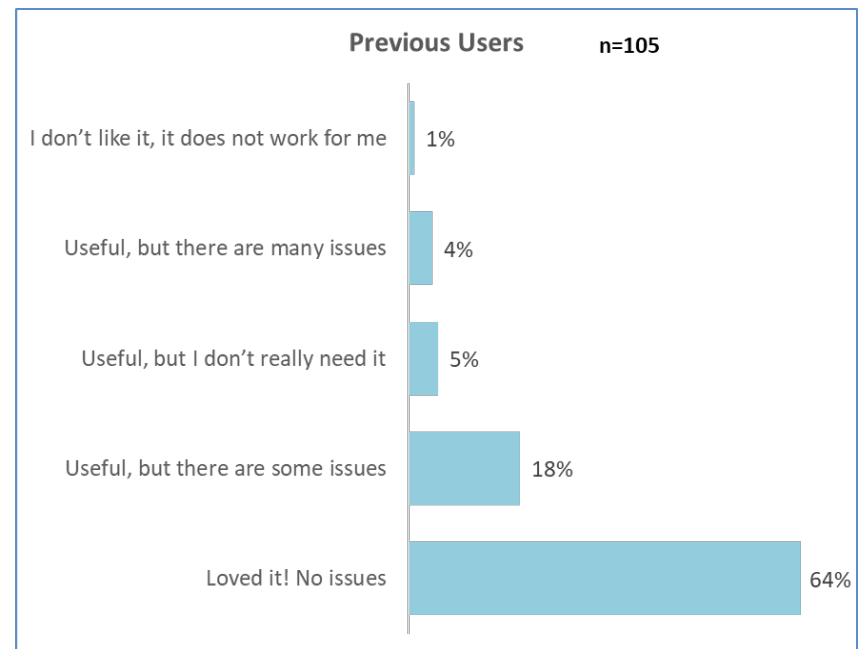
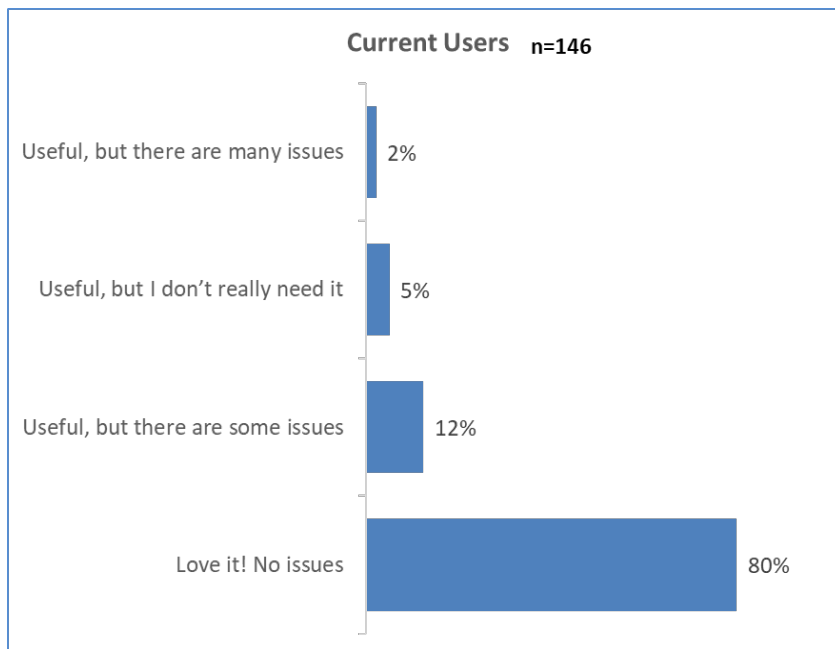


# TAP Card Usage

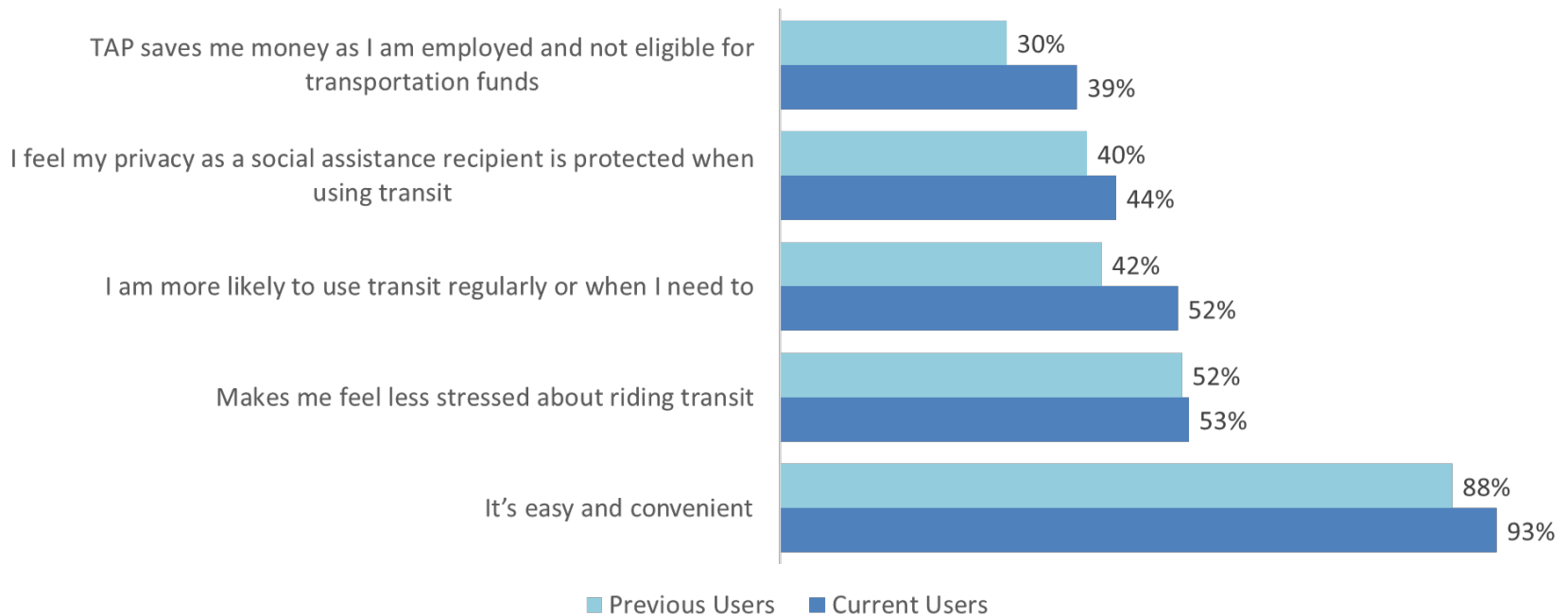
- Total of 4,958 TAP cards distributed
- 2,825 TAP cards used to travel on DRT (57 per cent)
- Average trips per month typically between 15 to 21
- 47,669 trips made with no fare required (estimated value of \$155,000)
- 70 per cent of customers participated in TAP for 3 months or less
- 62 per cent of TAP card usage occurred pre-pandemic (peak in January 2020)



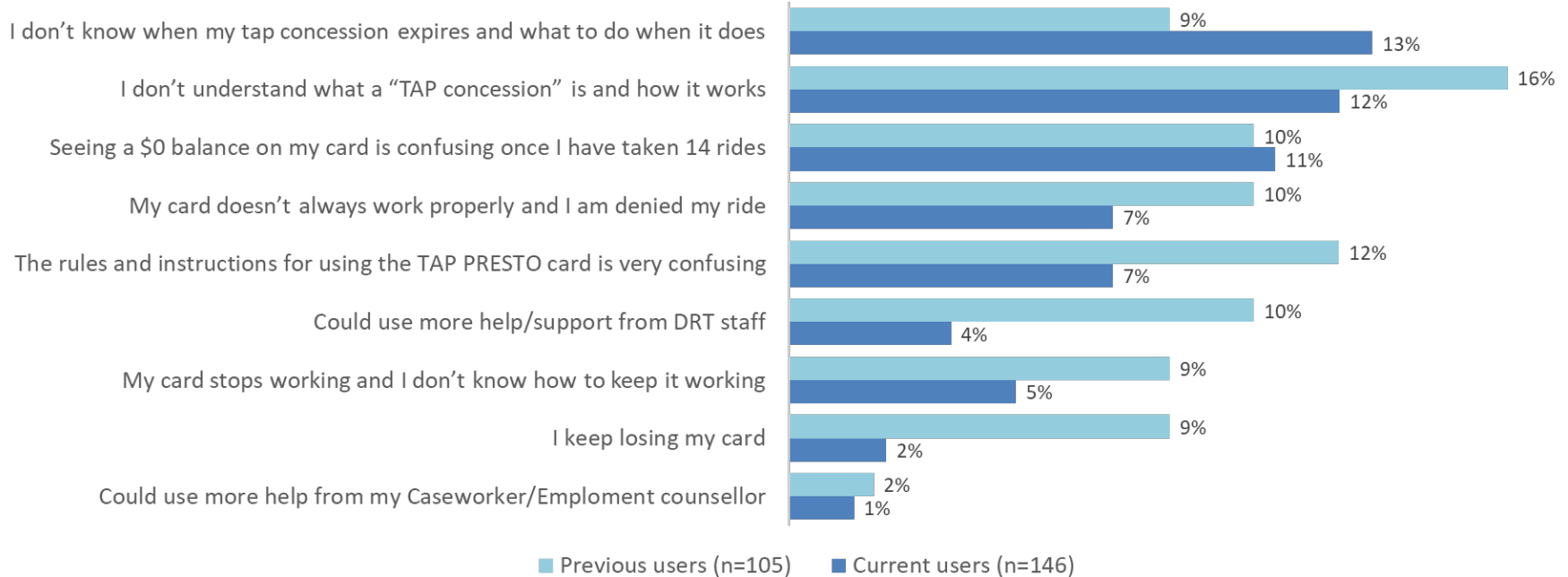
# Overall Customer Experience with TAP



# What Customers Like About TAP



# What Customers Do Not Like About TAP

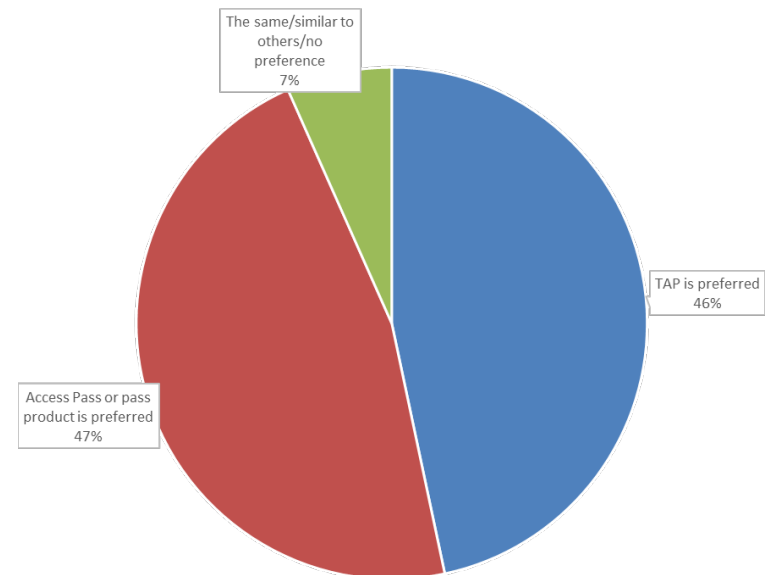


# Caseworker Impressions of TAP

Does TAP effectively support your clients?

Theme	Percentage represented
YES - better able to move around for life and work purposes	44%
YES - is more affordable for clients and provides savings for other necessities	23%
YES - in general	10%
YES - but only for some (eg. employed, in south Durham, non-transients) for employed clients	9%
YES - more clients can benefit/clients can benefit from transportation benefit even with less trips per month	7%
YES - reduces stigma	3%
YES - provides clients with more motivation to seek employment	2%
NO - no change, clients prefer a pass	2%
NO - didn't understand program to fully/properly utilize it	1%

Preference for TAP versus Monthly Pass



A green-tinted background image of a Durham Region Transit bus, model number 8523, with the company name visible on the front and side. The bus is shown from a front-three-quarter view.

# Recommendations

## TAP Pilot Evaluation





# Recommendations

- Extend TAP pilot through March 2023
- Provide more choice for TAP customers – Pay-as-you-go and Period Pass
- Discontinue paper Access Pass by end of 2021
- Waive PRESTO card fee for ODSP clients shifting to TAP
- Communications strategy to build awareness and explain TAP
- Pursue direct payment options with Social Services and Province
- Assess expansion potential to other vulnerable groups



# Comparing TAP and the Access Pass

Program Feature	Access Pass	TAP	
		Pay-As-You-Go (current pilot)	Period Pass (proposed)
Eligibility	ODSP	OW and ODSP	OW and ODSP
Fare Medium	Paper Pass	PRESTO Card	PRESTO Card
Monthly Cost	\$46.00	Up to \$45.50	\$46.00
Renewal Term	Monthly	Every 6 months	Every 6 months
Payment Terms	Upfront	Upfront or pay-as-you-go	Upfront
Unused Funds	Flat fee	Carry over to next month	Flat fee
Replacement	Not possible	Value can be transferred	Pass can be transferred
Purchase Options	In-person only at DRT points of sale	Initial set-up through caseworker or DRT PRESTO points of sale. Future card loads through DRT PRESTO points of sale, Shoppers Drug Mart locations, PRESTO app or on-line	



# **Secondary Student Transportation**

## Review and Recommendations

A background image showing a white Durham Region Transit Pulse bus and a white car, both with the Transit logo, parked on a street. The image is overlaid with a green gradient.

# Child and Youth Fares

## Initiatives

- 2006-2013 partnership with school boards
  - Bulk purchasing program for school boards
- 2019
  - Children (12 years of age and younger) ride free
  - Y10 program saving \$20 per month when purchasing a monthly youth pass each consecutive month from September through June
  - Summer 2 for 1 program: July and August pass for the price of one monthly pass



# Market Opportunities

## Secondary Students in Durham Region

- Students within 3.2 kilometres
  - Residual capacity within the existing network can accommodate up an additional 2,800 students.
- Students bused by Durham Student Transportation Services
  - Significant net operating and capital investments would be required.

A background image showing a white Durham Region Transit Pulse bus and a white car, both with the Transit logo, parked in front of a building. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent green filter.

# Recommendations

## Fares

- Effective September 2021
  - Y10 pass discount to \$63.50, from \$73.50
  - Bulk pass purchase pilot program
    - Available to school boards in Durham Region and Durham Student Transportation Services
    - Minimum purchase of 570 monthly passes per month to qualify for a \$20 discount
- Report on Y10 and Bulk Pass program in 2022



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## Thank You

Durham Region Transit  
605 Rossland Road East  
Whitby, Ontario L1N 6A3  
Phone: 1-866-247-0055  
[durhamregiontransit.com](http://durhamregiontransit.com)




**TOWN OF AJAX**  
65 Harwood Avenue South  
Ajax ON L1S 3S9 [www.ajax.ca](http://www.ajax.ca)

Metrolinx BRT Project Team  
97 Front Street West  
Toronto, ON M5J 1E6  
[dsbrt@metrolinx.com](mailto:dsbrt@metrolinx.com)

**Sent by E-Mail**

February 24, 2021

 <b>Corporate Services Department Legislative Services Division</b>	
Date & Time Received:	February 24, 2021 4:15 pm
Original To:	CIP
Copies To:	
Take Appropriate Action	<input type="checkbox"/> File <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes/Comments:	

Re: **Durham-Scarborough BRT in Pickering Village**

The following resolution was passed by Ajax Town Council at its meeting held February 22, 2021:

**WHEREAS** Metrolinx is undertaking the Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project that will connect the southern Durham Region municipalities to Scarborough along Highway 2/Kingston Road, including a 5-lane design across Highway 2/Kingston Road through historic Pickering Village;

**AND WHEREAS** The Town of Ajax is proud of our storied history and commitment to preserving our heritage and historic areas like Pickering Village, and to telling the stories that shaped the importance of these areas;

**AND WHEREAS** Ajax Council recognizes Metrolinx for their ongoing commitment to partnership, demonstrated by providing updates to Council and working with the Town to expand the reach and availability of public information sessions, by extending consultation deadlines, and by holding a joint virtual public meeting with Ajax Council and staff;

**NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT:**

1. Council request that Metrolinx and the Region of Durham continue to work closely with the southern Durham Region municipalities as the Durham-Scarborough BRT project progresses through the Transit Project Assessment Process;
2. As the detailed design progresses for the proposed Pickering Village section, Metrolinx continues to consult with Town staff and local councillors on acquisitions and widening plans ensure that the design maintains the integrity of the area;
3. Metrolinx be encouraged to reflect the historical significance and place making opportunities of Pickering Village through;
  - a. The protection, conservation and restoration of historical properties impacted by the BRT construction;

- b. The design of key project features such as the bus shelters, gateway features and the expansion of the Duffins Creek bridge, so that they reflect the charm and historical character of the Pickering Village area;
  - c. The enhancement of existing and development of new public amenities in Pickering Village, in conjunction with the Town's Recreation Master Plan; and
4. This motion be distributed to the Metrolinx BRT project team and the Region of Durham.

If you require further information please contact me at 905-619-2529 ext. 3342 or [alexander.harras@ajax.ca](mailto:alexander.harras@ajax.ca).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'AH' followed by a long horizontal stroke.

Alexander Harras  
Manager of Legislative Services/Deputy Clerk

Copy: Regional Councillor M. Crawford  
Councillor R. Tyler Morin  
Region of Durham






File: A-2100

February 26, 2021

**DELIVERED BY E-MAIL**  
(dsbrt@metrolinx.com)

Metrolinx

 <b>Corporate Services Department Legislative Services Division</b>	
Date & Time Received:	March 01, 2021 8:56 am
Original To:	CIP
Copies To:	BB, DRT
Take Appropriate Action	<input type="checkbox"/> File <input type="checkbox"/>
Notes/Comments:	

Re: [Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit Project Public Information Centre 3](#)

Oshawa City Council considered the above matter at its meeting of February 22, 2021 and adopted the following recommendation of the Development Services Committee:

- “1. That the comments contained in Report DS-21-19 dated February 3, 2021 be endorsed as the City’s comments with respect to the Durham Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit Project Public Information Centre 3; and,
2. That Metrolinx and Durham Region Transit be requested to not advance the Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit Project described in this Report until all City comments have been addressed to the City’s satisfaction; and,
3. That staff be authorized to forward a copy of Report DS-21-19 dated February 3, 2021 and the related Council resolution to Metrolinx, the Region of Durham, the City of Pickering and the Towns of Ajax and Whitby.”

Please see attached a copy of Report DS-21-19.

If you need further assistance concerning the above matter, please contact Warren Munro, Commissioner, Development Services Department at the address listed below or by telephone at 905-436-3311.

Mary Medeiros  
City Clerk

- c. Development Services Department  
Region of Durham  
City of Pickering  
Town of Ajax  
Town of Whitby

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 3702



## The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Durham Region Transit Executive Committee  
From: General Manager, Durham Region Transit  
Report: #2021-DRT-05  
Date: April 7, 2021

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**Subject:**

General Manager's Report – April 7, 2021

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**Recommendation:**

That the Transit Executive Committee recommends

That this report be received for information.

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This report is submitted at each Transit Executive Committee (TEC), for information.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 The General Manager Report provides regular updates on key performance measures and summaries of current activities and transit issues in Attachment #1.

**3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 Not applicable

**4. Financial**

- 4.1 The General Manager's Report focuses mainly on performance and service standards. There are no financial impacts associated with TEC's receipt of this report.

**5. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Service Excellence

**6. Conclusion**

6.1 For additional information, contact: Bill Holmes, General Manager, at 905-668-7711, extension 3700.

**7. Attachments**

Attachment #1: General Manager's Report – April 7, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Bill Holmes

General Manager, DRT

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair

Chief Administrative Officer



## General Manager's Report

April 7, 2021

TEC

Attachment #1

Performance Measures Dashboard	<a href="#"><u>2</u></a>
Safety	<a href="#"><u>3</u></a>
Ridership	<a href="#"><u>4</u></a>
Service Delivery	<a href="#"><u>7</u></a>
Updates	<a href="#"><u>9</u></a>
General	<a href="#"><u>13</u></a>

# Performance Measures Dashboard

## Safety

Key performance indicator	Description	Latest Measure	Current	Target <sup>1</sup>	Current Variance to Target (per cent)	YTD Status <sup>2</sup> (per cent)
Collisions	Preventable collisions per 100,000 km	February	0.66	0.48	✗ 37.5	✗ 23.9

## Ridership

Conventional and On Demand (OD)						
Ridership (x1,000)	Monthly passengers	February	244	905	✗ -73	✗ -75.6
PRESTO Ridership	Customers paying using PRESTO	February	79.6 per cent	38.4 per cent	✓ 41.2	✓ 41.2
Bus full occurrences	Number operator reported occurrences	February	11 <sup>3</sup>	233	NA	NA
Ridership (OD)	Number customer trips	February	7,483	193	NA	NA
Specialized Services						
Ridership	Number customer trips	February	3,776	13,468	✗ -72.0	✗ -74.0
Unaccommodated Rate	Trip requests not scheduled	February	0.1 <sup>3</sup> per cent	0.9 per cent	✓ -0.8	✓ -0.7

## Service Delivery

Conventional						
On time performance	Per cent on-time departures from all stops	Q1 2021	Not Yet Available	80 per cent <sup>4</sup>	NA	NA
Service availability	Per cent scheduled service delivered	Q1 2021	Not Yet Available	99.5 per cent <sup>4</sup>	NA	NA
Mean Distance Between Failure (MDBF)	Average number of revenue service kilometres between occurrences of vehicle defects impacting service	February	7,120	N/A	N/A	N/A

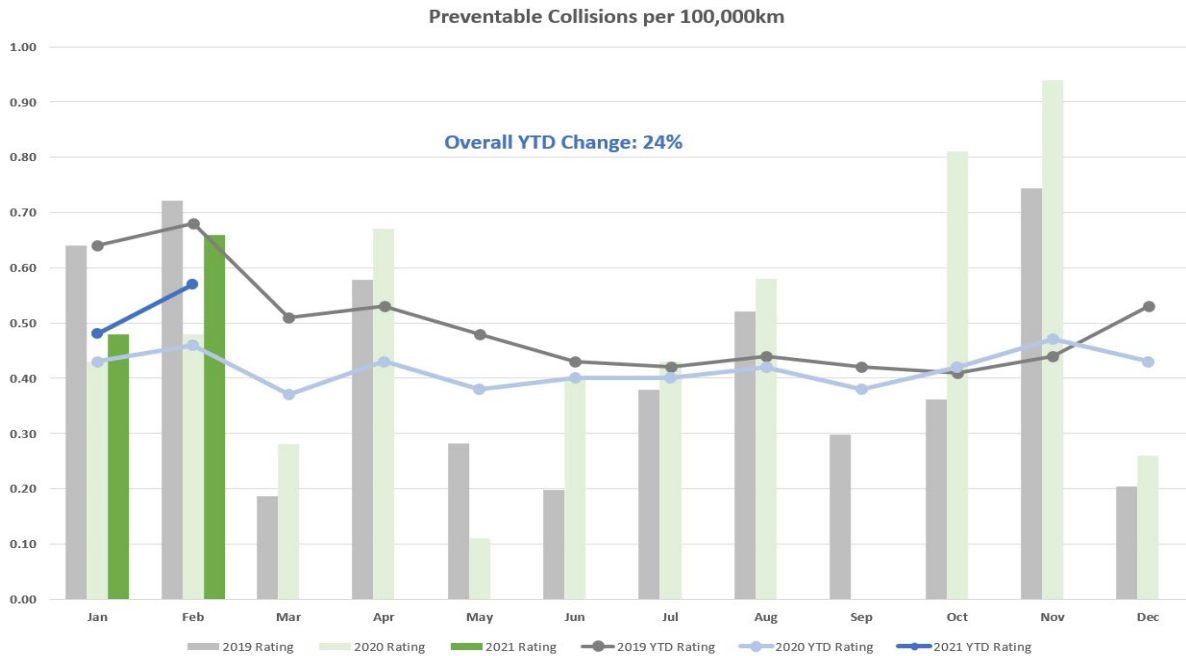
<sup>1</sup>Target is 2019 measure for the same period as latest measure

<sup>2</sup>Year to Date (YTD) compared to previous year

<sup>3</sup>Bus capacity limited to seated load, reduced ridership during pandemic

<sup>4</sup>Quarterly performance target

## Preventable collisions rate per 100,000 km



**Definition:** A preventable collision is one in which the driver failed to do everything reasonable to avoid the collision. The preventable collision rate is the number of preventable collisions per 100,000 kilometres of travel for all Durham Region Transit (DRT) vehicles.

A collision may not be reportable to police based on the Highway Traffic Act, but for DRT purposes all collisions are documented and investigated.

### Analysis

Preventable collisions in February were 38 per cent higher than 2020, and 24 per cent higher year to date.

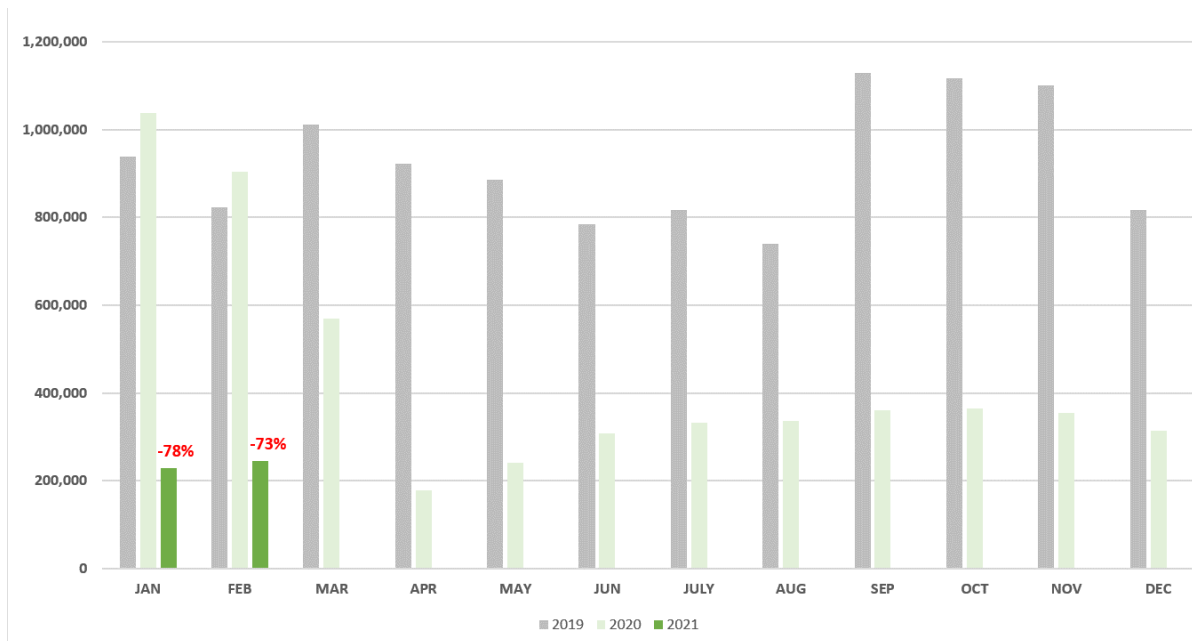
### Action Plan

In addition to mitigation measures previous reported, Safety and Training staff have implemented additional measures to curb the trend of increasing monthly collision rate.

- Trainers and mobile supervisors are being deployed to depots and relief points to host “safety talks” with bus operators, focussing on work preparations and defensive driving habits.
- Collaborating with corporate partners to develop data analysis tools to support monitoring of trends and hot spots to identify contributing factors and root causes such as traffic conditions, weather, and time of day.

# Ridership

## Conventional and On Demand

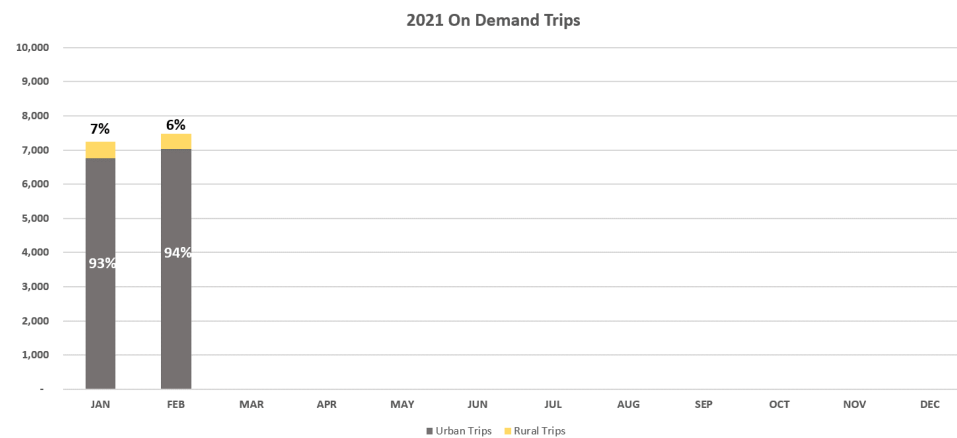


**Definition:** Ridership is the sum of all passenger trips. A passenger trip is considered a one-way trip from origin to destination, regardless of the number of transfers that may be required. Ridership data is calculated from fare box data and data from PRESTO, GO Bus One Fare Anywhere, and On Demand.

### Results

Following the holiday pandemic-related lock down, ridership has slowly increased; ridership in February 2021 was 27 per cent of 2020 levels.

On Demand:



Ridership on On Demand bounced back faster in 2021 than scheduled service with 7,483 trips delivered in February, only 14 per cent lower than November 2020 compared to 31 per cent lower on scheduled service.

January 2021 Ridership data by municipality is summarized in the Update section of this report.

### **Action Plan**

Through mid-March 2021, the ridership monitoring framework indicates that ridership within low demand areas have not reached the minimum thresholds to return scheduled routes within the next four-week period.



# Specialized Service



## Definitions:

**Ridership:** A Specialized Services trip is considered a one-way passenger trip from origin to destination, regardless of the number of transfers that may be required. Ridership data is calculated from the scheduling system used by DRT Specialized Services.

**Trip Demand:** Trip demand is the sum of all trips delivered, no-shows and cancelled at the door, and unaccommodated trips.

**Unaccommodated Rate:** An unaccommodated trip is one where DRT is unable to schedule a trip for the specific requirements of the customer, or the customer declined to accept the trip option provided by the booking agent.

## Results

Following the holiday pandemic-related lock down, Specialized Services ridership is slowly increasing following the holiday pandemic-related lock down; ridership in February 2021 was 28 per cent of 2020 levels.

Specialized Services delivered 99.9 per cent of trip requests in February.

## Action Plan

Staff continue to liaise with customers to ensure DRT meet their transportation needs during the pandemic.

### On Time Performance and Availability (conventional)

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Note: Starting in 2021, On Time Performance (OTP) and service availability will be reported quarterly.

#### **Definition**

On Time Performance (OTP) is a measure of the percentage of buses departing a bus stop no more than zero minutes early and five minutes late. The annual OTP target has been increased to 80 per cent.

Service availability measures the actual service delivered by DRT compared to the scheduled revenue service. The service availability target is 99.5 per cent.

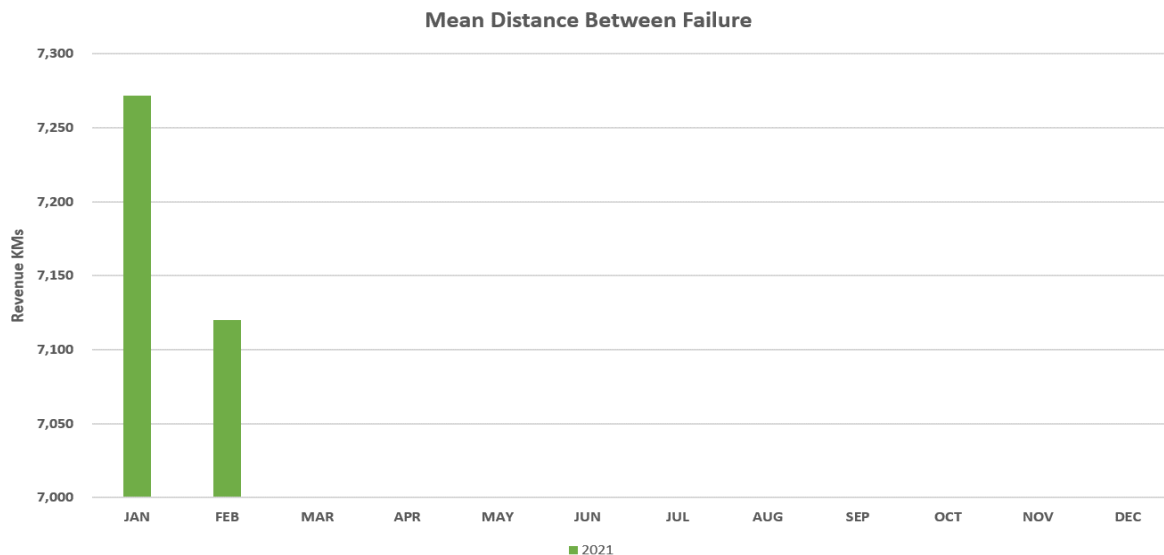
#### **Results**

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#### **Action Plan**

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# Mean Distance Between Failure (conventional)



## Definition

Mean Distance Between Failure (MDBF) measures the reliability of the fleet by tracking the mean distance between bus breakdowns or mechanical failures that result in cancelled service. A bus breakdown or mechanical failure is any incident that precludes a revenue vehicle from completing its trip or beginning its next scheduled trip, and is measured by the total number of revenue vehicle kilometers (conventional service fleet) divided by the total number of *chargeable vehicle defects* during the reporting period.

Chargeable vehicle defects (or chargeable mechanical failures) are consistent with guidelines from the Ontario Public Transit Association (OPTA) and does not consider failures resulting from passenger-related events (i.e. sickness on the bus), farebox or other technology defects such as PRESTO readers.

Service impacts resulting from bus breakdowns are mitigated by assigning an available bus or reassigning a bus from a lower priority trip, to cover all or a portion of the affected trip(s).

## Results

The MDBF for February 2021 was 7,120 km.

## Action Plan

DRT will establish an appropriate MDBF target at the end of 2021 with the objective to continuously enhance preventative maintenance practices and improve annual MDBF performance.

## Updates

### 1. On Demand ridership in rural areas, January 2021

Brock, Uxbridge and Scugog are classified as rural On Demand zones, whereas Clarington includes both urban (Bowmanville) and rural zones. For the month of January 2021, On Demand ridership within the municipalities of Brock, Clarington, Scugog, and Uxbridge, was 49 per cent of total On Demand ridership; Clarington accounted for 70 per cent of this ridership. Ridership in rural zones of the Region accounts for approximately six per cent of total On Demand ridership.

Clarington recorded 33 per cent of all On Demand ridership in January, with Scugog, Uxbridge and Brock recording seven per cent, six per cent and three percent, respectively.

Table 1: January 2021 On Demand Ridership within Rural and Urban areas of local area municipalities

Municipality	Rural	Urban	TOTAL	Per cent
Pickering	25	2135	2160	47
Clarington	101	1412	1513	33
Ajax	NA	955	955	21
Oshawa	NA	816	816	18
Whitby	NA	722	722	16
Uxbridge	11	313	324	7
Scugog	154	119	273	6
Brock	150	NA	150	3
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>4337</b>	<b>4603</b>	

The average On Demand wait time in January was ten minutes within urban zones and 23 minutes in rural areas, with average trip distances of five kilometers in urban zones and 16.5 kilometers in rural areas.

The highest weekly and daily ridership totals were recently recorded during the week ending March 13.

### 2. Tender for On Demand supplemental services

When On Demand was expanded in September 2020 the existing Specialized Services contracted service providers temporarily provide the required service to ensure area coverage across the Region. On Demand was and continues to be delivered using four internal vans and DRT bus operators, supplemented by the contracted service providers.

The tender for a third-party On Demand service provider was recently awarded and effective April 1, 2021 through February 28, 2022, Hudson Transportation Group Inc (Circle Taxi), of Whitby, Ontario, will provide supplemental On Demand services across the Region. There were six bidders for the work including submissions from organizations in Whitby, Ajax, Ottawa, Kitchener, Port Perry, and Prince George, British Columbia.

### **3. Fleet update**

As part of the 2020 capital plan DRT placed orders for several conventional and Pulse BRT buses.

Throughout May and June, 16 Pulse BRT buses will be delivered, funded through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Plan (ICIP); fourteen-12 metre buses and two-eight metre (articulated) buses. Six existing Pulse BRT buses (2013 New Flyer Xcelsior) will be refurbished in 2022 and added to the conventional fleet to replace several buses retired in 2020.

The Metrolinx Transit Procurement Initiative (TPI) team recently announced the award of the next 12 metre and 18 metre transit bus procurement contracts to Nova Bus of St. Eustache, Quebec. The new three-year contract includes procurement of diesel, CNG and hybrid propulsion buses. Staff are currently in the process of completing the Purchasing Agreement for the 2021 bus orders, including the 11 hybrid-electric buses funded through ICIP.

### **4. Support for students experiencing financial barriers to transportation**

The Customer Service team has been working closely with social and community agencies to assist students and their families whose success at school may be hindered by transportation insecurity and/or financial barriers. Leveraging PRESTO contactless fare payment solutions, students and agencies are realizing the benefits of E-Tickets and E-Purse.

### **5. Safe Restart Agreement (SRA), Phase 3**

On Monday, March 1, 2021 the Ontario government announced \$150 million in additional funding to help transit systems address financial impacts of the COVID-019 pandemic. The \$150 million is in addition to \$500 million already allocated to municipalities for the period April 1, 2021 through December 31, 2021, with extensions to December 2022 granted on a case by case basis. The Ontario government has called on the federal government to match the \$150 million in additional funding.

The total SRA transit funding allocated to the Region of Durham is \$27.1 million, including \$8.2 million in Phase 3 funding.

Phase 1 April 1 – September 30, 2020 \$8.4M, unused funds carried over into Phase 2

Phase 2 October 1 – March 31, 2021 \$10.5M, with balance of funding not required to be returned to MTO.

Phase 3 April 1 – December 31, 2021 \$8.2M, with balance of funding not required to be returned to MTO

Eligible expenditures under the SRA include COVID-19 transit financial impacts including net revenue

#### **a. Revenue Losses:**

- farebox revenue losses,
- advertising revenue losses,
- parking revenue losses,
- contract revenue losses,

- any other revenue loss incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that, in the opinion of the Province, is considered eligible

**b. Operating Costs:**

- costs associated with vehicle cleaning, except for those for which MTEC funds have been provided or claimed,
- costs associated with changes in fuel consumption (e.g., increases due to running additional buses or savings in consumption relating to lower service levels than budgeted, or both),
- costs associated with vehicle maintenance,
- costs associated with transit facilities,
- costs resulting from existing contracts with expanded scope/new contracts,
- employee related costs (i.e., salaries, wages, benefits),
- costs for employee personal protection equipment (e.g., face masks, gloves, sanitizer),
- costs for signage and other means of communications related to COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., social distance guidance),
- any other operating cost incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that, in the opinion of the Province, is considered eligible

**Capital Costs:**

- costs associated with installing driver protection barriers and other protection measures for transit drivers,
- costs associated with providing passenger protection equipment and other passenger safety measures,
- any other capital cost incurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic that, in the opinion of the Province, is considered eligible

For Phase 3 funding only, additional eligible expenses include a provincial/municipal 50 per cent cost share for:

- a) initiatives that support a long-term vision for regional fare and service integration,
- b) On-Demand Micro transit (ODMT) studies and pilot initiatives,
- c) the transformation of transit structures/governance between neighboring municipal governments, where the province has been engaged in discussions

Based on the approved 2021 budget the entire Phase 3 allocation (\$8.2 million) will be required to fund lost revenue and operating expenses. Item c) above is not applicable to the Region of Durham and DRT.

**6. Open Payment, PRESTO**

On March 11, 2021 Metrolinx launched the first phase of implementation for the PRESTO Open Payment pilot on UP Express. This additional contactless fare payment option will enable customers to tap their credit card or use their mobile wallet to receive PRESTO's best adult fare pricing. The added offering of debit card functionality will arrive later this spring. Both credit and debit options will

be tested with customers to further enhance the payment experience and to inform the rollout across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA). DRT expect to be one of the first transit agencies to roll-out Open Payment following the completion of the Metrolinx pilot program.

## **7. Service Change April 5, 2021**

As part of the regular travel time review process, schedule changes will be implemented on several routes to reflect actual travel times.

- Routes 291, 302, 403, 405, 407, PULSE 900 and 901, 902, 905, 915, 916

To improve access to employment areas, service on route 916 will begin earlier seven days a week so residents can access early morning shifts.

PULSE 900 B trips which currently end at Glenanna and the Esplanade will be extended to the Pickering Town Centre stop, just north of Pickering Parkway Terminal.

On Saturdays and Sundays, the last northbound and southbound trips for route 216, and the last eastbound trip for route 224, will be cancelled to align with GO Train schedules and weekday service.

Route 224 trips currently entering service at Kerrison and Salem will start at Salem and Kingston.

## General

### 1. Fare and Service Integration (FSI)

The Ministry of Transportation (MTO) has established a Fare and Service Integration (FSI) Provincial-Municipal Table (“the Table”), comprised of senior representatives from transit systems within the GTHA and the broader GO service area (Greater Golden Horseshoe).

The Table’s work and recommendations will help inform the provincial government on ways to improve transit and the customer experience when travelling between municipalities. The Table is expected to be an objectives-based, problem-solving body comprised of transit and transportation experts that will foster collaboration between the Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx, transit systems, and other transit-focused organizations.

In the short-term the Table will address immediate FSI objectives, such as:

- One bus/one fare;
- Cross-boundary challenges for short, “local” trips; and
- Harmonizing fare concessions across systems.

The Table will also identify FSI-related service challenges with the goal of supporting COVID-19 economic recovery by improving accessibility, mobility, and access to employment and other essential areas. In the long-term, the Table will advance broader FSI objectives with the goal of recommending a single regional fare structure and implementation steps.

The existing FSI-focused tables convened by Metrolinx, such as the Fare Integration Forum and GTHA FSI Working Group, will be paused as MTO convenes the new Table.

The Table convened on February 18, 2021 and at this time is meeting monthly.

Staff will report to TEC on the opportunities, options, and recommendations arising from the Table.

### 2. 416-905 Service Integration

In collaboration with the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC), MiWay (Mississauga), Brampton Transit, and York Transit, staff has been working since late 2020 to identify service integration opportunities to facilitate real change that will benefit customers travelling between Toronto and the neighboring municipalities.

The approach and goal of the agencies is to implement the most efficient overall system, or what would make the most sense if the service was being designed from scratch. From there, the business cases will analyze strategic alignment and the financial, customer, agency, environmental, economic and community benefits. The work is focused on integrating services to match shared



capacity with shared demand on shared corridors, and evaluating corridors where service currently overlaps and costs and savings for both agencies. The real opportunities will include the consolidation of service along a corridor using existing capacity and realizing savings or reallocation of revenue service hours and buses.

Based on preliminary analysis the existing Ellesmere corridor will be reviewed as part of Stage 2 of the work, with the Sheppard corridor work reviewed as part of Stage 3 to align with the Scarborough subway extension.

This work is being considered as part of the MTO FSI initiative.

### **3. Specialized Services contracted service provider in northern municipalities**

DRT has been informed that Island Taxi will be going out of business as of March 29, 2021. For over 15 years Island Taxi has supported residents in the Municipalities of Scugog and Uxbridge who booked trips with DRT Specialized Services. Island Taxi was also integral to the success of On Demand in the northern municipalities. Specialized Services will make the appropriate service delivery adjustments to ensure residents are not impacted by this change.

### **4. Service alignment within Operations**

As part of our continuous improvement efforts, an organizational review was recently undertaken to advance consistency in delivering revenue services.

Demand responsive services—which include specialized and On Demand services—are currently delivered by different units within Operations. To streamline operations, the Manager, Operations (Service Delivery) will be responsible for the delivery of scheduled, specialized and On Demand services. All unionized staff within Operations will be supported by the Manager, Operations (Employee Management).

The position of Manager, Specialized Services, will be reassigned to the Maintenance division to manage DRT's enhanced cleaning and disinfection of programs and operational management of new and existing remote facilities.

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 3702



## Durham Region Transit Report

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To: Durham Region Transit Executive Committee  
From: General Manager, Durham Region Transit  
Report: #2021-DRT-06  
Date: April 7, 2021

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**Subject:**

Transit Assistance Program pilot evaluation

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**Recommendation:**

That the Transit Executive Committee (TEC) recommends:

- A) That the General Manager, Durham Region Transit be directed to undertake the following with respect to continuing and expanding the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) providing low cost transit access to eligible Durham residents:
- i) The TAP pilot be extended an additional 24 months to allow time for further assessment of customer preference for the existing pay-as-you-go versus a proposed period pass PRESTO option as transit ridership recovers from the COVID-19 pandemic;
  - ii) The Access Pass currently available to Ontario Disability Support Program clients as a monthly paper period pass, be transferred to the PRESTO electronic fare payment card (and electronic ticketing if feasible) by Fall 2021 as the TAP Period Pass at an estimated cost of up to \$23,000 in 2021 dependent on ridership levels to be funded from within DRT's approved 2021 budget that eligibility for the TAP Period Pass be expanded to include Ontario Works clients, and that the paper Access Pass be discontinued;
  - iii) The initial PRESTO card acquisition fee be waived for Ontario Disability Support Program clients during 2021 to assist with the transition from the paper Access Pass to TAP, at an estimated cost of \$15,000 to be funded from within DRT's approved 2021 budget for ridership incentive initiatives;

- iv) Durham Region Transit work with Durham Social Services, the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services and Metrolinx on a communications strategy to build awareness about TAP among social assistance clients and staff and educate about program features and requirements;
  - v) Durham Region Transit continue to work with Metrolinx and the Region's Social Services and Finance departments to introduce direct payment options from social service agencies for transit fare products on behalf of eligible clients; and
  - vi) Durham Region Transit continue to work with the Region's Social Services and Finance departments to review and report back as part of the annual business planning and budget process on the results of the pilot and recommended actions, including potential extension to other vulnerable Durham residents.
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**Report:****1. Purpose**

- 1.1 This report updates TEC on the status of DRT's Transit Assistance Program (TAP) pilot implemented in November 2019 to provide reduced cost transit access to customers in receipt of social assistance in Durham Region through either Ontario Works (OW) or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP). The report summarizes the results of an evaluation conducted on the pilot and makes recommendations on TAP moving forward.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 DRT's Access pass program offers ODSP beneficiaries a monthly pass for unlimited travel on DRT discounted to \$46.00 per month, equivalent to 39 per cent of an Adult monthly pass at \$117.00. The Access Pass is a paper fare, which an eligible customer purchases by visiting a DRT point of sale with they/their monthly ODSP statement as proof of eligibility. The customer is currently able to travel on all DRT conventional, On Demand and specialized services by presenting the pass to the operator when boarding.
- 2.2 Access pass ridership on DRT has increased significantly since its introduction in 2006. Over the ten-year period from 2008 to 2018, Access Pass ridership increased from 285,000 rides to nearly 958,000 – or 235 per cent. In 2019, the Access Pass represented about nine per cent of DRT's overall ridership and four per cent of annual revenue (\$1.1M). Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic DRT sold 1,900 Access Passes each month, amounting to a total discount value of \$1.3M annually. DRT receives an annual allocation of \$350,000 in Regional funding through the

Corporate Items portion of the budget as a partial offset to the discounted Access pass fare.

- 2.3 In November 2019 DRT, in partnership with Durham Social Services, also launched the TAP pilot, expanding access to transit at a reduced cost to OW as well as ODSP clients (#2019-DRT-14). TAP leverages the pay-as-you-go loyalty features of the PRESTO card to allow social assistance clients to load funds to the card and never pay more than \$45.50 in any one month to ride on DRT (equivalent to 14 adult single ride fares). Any unused funds on the PRESTO card at the end of the month are carried forward to the following month, reducing the amount that customers need to add to their card.
- 2.4 TAP offers eligible customers a number of benefits compared to the current paper Access Pass. This includes:
- a. Expanded eligibility to cover all social assistance recipients in Durham (OW and ODSP);
  - b. Reduced stigma of having to show a pass that indicates the customer is receiving social assistance – under the TAP program customers use a standard PRESTO card used by all customers;
  - c. The opportunity for customers to save money if they travel less than expected, while those travelling more frequently have the certainty of not paying more in a month than the \$45.50 cap;
  - d. The option to add as little or as much money to the PRESTO card as the customer wishes or has available, as opposed to paying a full flat fee up front;
  - e. Extending the eligibility determination period to six months from monthly, providing an important transitional support as OW or ODSP clients get established in new work opportunities; and
  - f. Protection for the value loaded onto the PRESTO card once registered in the event that card becomes lost or stolen.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 At its meeting on June 5, 2019 (#2019-DRT-14), TEC approved a report from the General Manager of DRT and Commissioner of Social Services authorizing the implementation of the TAP pilot from November 1, 2019 through March 31, 2021. In approving the pilot, TEC directed DRT to report back on the pilot as part of the 2021 budget and business plan process. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on transit ridership, including fare suspension for a three-month period during the spring of 2020 and public health advice to limit travel to essential trips only,

additional time in the Fall of 2020 and Winter of 2021 was required to assess TAP program uptake and ridership.

- 3.2 TEC further approved DRT's long-term fare strategy (#2019-DRT-25) at its meeting on December 4, 2019. The strategy set out key principles and milestones for advancing transit fare policy. For the period of 2021 to 2024 the focus is on fare harmonization and acceleration of PRESTO adoption. This included completing reviews of existing fare incentive programs such as TAP and adjusting the program as necessary. It also involves possible expansion of TAP to other low-income customers where feasible. Over the longer term (2025 and beyond) the strategy envisions a more simplified, needs-based fare structure in place of the current age-based structure.

#### **4. Current status**

- 4.1 Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, DRT planned to work with Durham Social Services and the local ODSP office in Oshawa to undertake a series of data collection and program evaluation activities at regular intervals throughout the duration of the pilot. With the onset of the pandemic and its impact on overall transit ridership, this was no longer possible.
- 4.2 Instead, an evaluation was conducted in early 2021 allowing for assessment of TAP usage and customer feedback on the program following the Spring 2020 lockdown and resulting fare suspension. The evaluation included a review of TAP card usage data, a survey of 382 social assistance recipients participating in the TAP pilot conducted between January 20 and February 3, 2021, and an additional survey of 81 OW and ODSP caseworkers who work closely with their clients to introduce the program and distribute the TAP cards conducted between January 25 and February 3, 2021.
- 4.3 The evaluation of the TAP pilot focused on four key program elements:
  - a. Ridership behavior of TAP customers;
  - b. Accessibility and convenience of the program;
  - c. Strengths and opportunities to improve the program; and
  - d. Sustainability of the program.
- 4.4 Attachment #1 provides a full summary of the evaluation results. Key highlights of the evaluation include:
  - a. Ridership behavior of TAP customers:

A total of 4,958 TAP cards were distributed to OW and ODSP clients and eligible family members between November 2019 and January 2021. 2,825 TAP cards (57 per cent) were used during this period. The overall TAP card usage rate was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic including lockdown and fare suspension periods during 2020 and 2021.

- For almost all months during the TAP pilot (excluding months subject to fare suspension) the average number of monthly trips taken by TAP customers varied between 15 and 21 trips. The estimated number of trips where a fare was not required (after the fourteenth trip in any one month) between November 2019 and January 2021 was 47,669 at a value of approximately \$155,000. At its peak in January 2020, 479 TAP card users benefitted from over 8,800 trips where no fare was required at a value of \$28,000. Based on the total number of trips made using TAP that month, the average fare per ride was \$1.76 – equivalent to a 46 per cent fare discount on the regular PRESTO adult fare (\$3.25).
- More than 60 per cent of all TAP card usage between November 2019 and January 2021 occurred before the first COVID-19 lockdown in March 2020. Only 12 per cent of TAP cards were used both prior to and after the first COVID-19 lockdown. The overall reduction in boardings for TAP users during the pandemic was similar to that of all other PRESTO card users throughout the evaluation period.
- Approximately half (52 per cent) of TAP card users participated in the program for two months or less. Nearly 70 per cent participated for three months or less. It is not known the extent to which the COVID-19 pandemic, or any difficulty customers may have experienced with the program, contributed to ending their participation.
- Three quarters of respondents (76 per cent), indicated that they now travel less on DRT since the pandemic began. Travel for shopping (essentials) and medical appointments have remained relatively the same while travel for all other purposes has decreased among the group of current users of the TAP program. Time of day travel patterns show that TAP users tend to travel more in mid-day off-peak hours than other PRESTO card users.

b. Accessibility and convenience of the program:

- The majority of TAP card users had a positive opinion of the program. More than three quarters (80 per cent) of current users responded

positively to the program and reported no issues or concerns with it. Of the 105 TAP card users who stopped using the program, 64 per cent responded positively and reported no issues or concerns.

- The majority of current TAP customers (93 per cent) and previous users (88 per cent) found the TAP program was easy and convenient. Half of respondents (53 per cent) liked the fact that using the TAP PRESTO card made them feel less stressed about riding transit. For OW and ODSP staff, when asked to comment on what their clients liked most about TAP, the most common responses included cost effectiveness in providing savings for client transportation (52 per cent) and ease and convenience of use (35 per cent).
- TAP card users struggled most with PRESTO related functionalities such as setting up the PRESTO cards, loading money or concessions and reviewing transactions online. Compared to current users, more previous users struggled with setting up their TAP PRESTO cards, reloading money on their PRESTO cards and loading and renewing concessions. Social Services staff felt that the areas where customers struggled the most were in getting information about the TAP program itself or about the TAP PRESTO cards.

c. Strengths and opportunities to improve the program:

Key strengths of the program identified by social assistance clients and staff include reduced stress about riding transit, increased likelihood of riding public transit, cost savings provided for clients, increased ability to travel for essential purposes, and the ease of getting information about the TAP program and the TAP PRESTO cards. Some respondents indicated that they like how the program does not identify them as social assistance recipients.

Social Service staff have indicated that TAP has supported life stabilization efforts with clients noting they are still able to maintain travel for essential needs and medical purposes, some reporting being able to connect with the support they need, and others reporting being able to job search or attend interviews.

Key opportunities to enhance the program include improved understanding of PRESTO-specific functions and added support with features such as card loading and concession renewals, additional education and information tools as some aspects of TAP are confusing

for social assistance clients, and more options for OW and ODSP staff to assist clients in getting started with TAP.

- Approximately 20 per cent of TAP users indicated they were required to add additional funds to their cards to travel on connecting services such as the GO Bus, GO Train and TTC.

d. Sustainability of the program

- Social assistance clients who have stopped participating in the program (previous users) indicated that this is either because they no longer qualify (44 per cent) due to the eligibility criteria or that they found the program complicated and confusing (40 per cent).
- Based on staff perspective, about half indicated that their clients preferred the TAP program (46 per cent), while the other half indicated that their clients preferred other offerings such as monthly period passes (e.g. the Access Pass).
- Overall, staff felt that they were empowered to deliver the program as the majority reported feeling confident that they can provide needed information to their clients.

4.5 Based on the outcomes of the evaluation, several actions are recommended as the next phase of the TAP program, including:

- a. Extension of TAP by two years through March 31, 2023 to allow for further assessment and evaluation as transit ridership recovers following the COVID-19 pandemic.

In response to customer and staff concerns regarding challenges with the complexity of the loyalty cap, particularly when travel involves multiple transit agencies, DRT make available a PRESTO period pass option as part of the TAP program by Fall 2021 giving customers more choice in how they pay for and use their TAP card. With this change, OW and ODSP clients can choose TAP Pay-as-you-Go to load funds as they are available and pay per trip to a maximum of \$45.50 with unlimited rides thereafter, or to opt for the peace of mind of the TAP Period Pass and pay \$46.00 up front for unlimited rides throughout the month. Table 1 below summarizes the key features of the program compared to the paper Access Pass. DRT will review and assess the uptake and usage of both TAP options during the extended pilot period and report back to TEC prior to March 31, 2023.



<b>Table 1: Comparing TAP and the Access Pass</b>			
Program Feature	Access Pass	TAP	
		Pay-As-You-Go (current pilot)	Period Pass (proposed)
Eligibility	ODSP	OW and ODSP	OW and ODSP
Fare Medium	Paper Pass	PRESTO Card	PRESTO Card
Monthly Cost	\$46.00	Up to \$45.50	\$46.00
Renewal Term	Monthly	Every six months	Every six months
Payment Terms	Upfront	Upfront or pay-as-you-go	Upfront
Unused Funds	Flat fee	Carry over to next month	Flat fee
Replacement	Not possible	Value can be transferred	Pass can be transferred
Purchase Options	In-person only at DRT points of sale	Initial set-up through caseworker or DRT PRESTO points of sale. Future card loads through DRT PRESTO points of sale, Shoppers Drug Mart locations, PRESTO app or on-line	

- b. With the introduction of the TAP Period Pass, DRT will discontinue the paper Access Pass for ODSP clients by the end of 2021. DRT will work closely with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to engage ODSP clients through the Oshawa office and to ensure they are supported with the information required to make a seamless transition to the PRESTO-based TAP program.

- c. DRT will continue to explore other options for making TAP more easily available to eligible customers. This includes the potential addition of TAP to the PRESTO e-ticket app making it directly available to customers through their smartphone. It also involves working with Metrolinx, Durham Social Services and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services to establish direct payment options between social service agencies and DRT/Metrolinx for TAP card fund or pass loads, and to develop a communications strategy related to the TAP program and how the PRESTO card works targeted towards social assistance clients and staff.
- d. DRT will further work with the Durham Social Services and Finance departments to assess the potential expansion of TAP eligibility to other support programs administered by the Region to assist other Durham residents. Examples may include individuals receiving child care subsidies and/or housing supports who are not receiving social assistance through OW or ODSP. DRT will report back through the 2022 budget and business plan process on any plans to extend eligibility for TAP beyond OW and ODSP recipients.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 As part of the initial TAP pilot, DRT agreed to make available up to 6,000 free PRESTO cards to OW and ODSP clients to support the transition to TAP. To date, more than 4,950 cards have been issued. Pilot roll out and PRESTO card distribution was impacted throughout 2020 by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 5.2 With the discontinuation of the paper Access Pass at the end of 2021, DRT will waive the \$6.00 card acquisition fee to assist ODSP clients in making the transition to TAP. It is estimated that up to 3,000 cards may be issued at an estimated cost of \$15,000 to DRT. The provision of free PRESTO cards to program participants is to be funded from within DRT's approved 2021 budget for ridership incentive initiatives.
- 5.3 As part of its ridership recovery strategy, DRT continues to make available free PRESTO cards to customers loading a minimum of \$6.50 onto the card. OW clients will continue to access free PRESTO cards under this program. Replacement cards remain subject to a \$6.00 fee.
- 5.4 The shift to PRESTO from the paper Access Pass will generate modest PRESTO commission fees to DRT in 2021 in accordance with the Metrolinx-905 PRESTO Operating Agreement. Dependent on ridership and timing of when customers transition to PRESTO in 2021, additional commission fees are estimated at up to

\$23,000 and will be funded from within DRT's approved 2021 budget. On an annualized basis, and based on pre-COVID-19 2019 ridership levels, the net cost is estimated at up to \$16,000 accounting for savings on the production of printed paper passes and commission fees on paper pass sales at third party locations, to be provided for in DRT's annual business plan and budget. The transition to PRESTO aligns with DRT's Long-Term Fare Strategy and provides added customer benefits and value to DRT through improved ridership data and reduced operational burdens (e.g. operator inspection of paper fare products).

## **6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 Upon approval of this report, DRT will work with Metrolinx to transition the Access Pass to a PRESTO solution by Fall 2021, including communication to current Access Pass purchasers and outreach through the provincial ODSP offices. The paper Access Pass will be phased out by the end of 2021.
- 6.2 DRT will work with Durham Social Services and Finance, as well as Metrolinx and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services, to establish direct payment and/or loading of PRESTO cards for TAP customers receiving social assistance along with a TAP communications strategy for social assistance clients and staff. Region staff will also review potential extension of TAP eligibility to other vulnerable residents of Durham, such as those receiving child care subsidies, housing supports or property tax relief.

## **7. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

- 7.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
  - a. 2.4 Support a high quality of life for all through human services delivery
  - b. 2.5 Build a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging
  - c. 4.4 Expand access to existing life stabilization program
- 7.2 These goals are supported by expanding eligibility for reduced cost transit to the broader social assistance population to ensure access to safe and reliable travel options to work, school, health care and other essential needs, and by assessing further eligibility extensions to other vulnerable Durham residents.

## 8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Since November 2019, more than 2,800 social assistance clients have participated in the TAP pilot. The overall response from social assistance clients and staff on the TAP pilot has been largely positive, with the program generally perceived as being easy and convenient while supporting more affordable access to transit. Opportunities for improvement have also been identified with respect to additional information and education related to the program and simplifying PRESTO card usage requirements.
- 8.2 Given the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the rollout and customer participation in the TAP pilot, the pilot needs to be extended with the enhancements outlined in this report for further review and assessment including the potential extension of eligibility to other vulnerable residents of Durham Region.
- 8.3 For additional information, contact: Jamie Austin, Deputy General Manager, Business Services, Durham Region Transit, at 905-668-7711, extension 2624.

## 9. Attachments

Attachment #1: Transit Assistance Program (TAP) Pilot Emulation, summary of results

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Bill Holmes

General Manager, DRT

Original signed by

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Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou  
Commissioner, Social Services

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer



# Attachment #1: Transit Assistance Program (TAP) pilot evaluation

summary of results

# Background

- In November 2019 DRT, in partnership with Durham Social Services, launched the Transit Assistance Program (TAP) pilot, expanding access to transit at a reduced cost to Ontario Works (OW) as well as Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) clients.
- TAP leverages the pay-as-you-go loyalty features of the PRESTO card to allow social assistance clients to load funds to the card as available with the certainty of never having to pay more than \$45.50 in any one month to ride on DRT (equivalent to 14 adult single ride fares). Any unused funds on the PRESTO card at the end of the month get carried over to the following month, reducing the amount that the customer needs to add to their card.
- TAP offers eligible customers a number of benefits compared to the paper monthly Access Pass (currently available to ODSP clients only). This includes:
  - Expanded eligibility to cover all social assistance recipients in Durham;
  - Reduced stigma of having to show a pass that indicates the customer is receiving social assistance. Under the TAP program customers use a PRESTO card that looks like everyone else's;
  - The opportunity for customers to save money if they travel less than expected, while those travelling more frequently have the certainty of not paying more in a month than the \$45.50 cap;
  - The option to add as little or as much to the PRESTO card as the customer wishes or has available, as opposed to paying a full flat fee up front;
  - A six month eligibility determination instead of monthly, providing an important transitional support as OW or ODSP clients exit social assistance and get established in new work opportunities; and
  - Protection for the value loaded onto the PRESTO card once registered in the event that card becomes lost or stolen.

# Methodology

- This program evaluation utilized a community-focused, mix-method quantitative and qualitative approach
- Evaluation Questions:
  1. What are the ridership behaviours of TAP users?
  2. Is the program accessible and convenient for eligible users?
  3. What are the reported strengths and opportunities of the program?
  4. Is the program sustainable?
- Study population – recipients/clients of the OW and ODSP programs
- Data Collection:
  - Client feedback survey: a six to twelve question survey to explore user experience and feedback. Questions were tailored in such a way as to potentially help answer the evaluation questions and test assumptions in the program logic model. This involved both quantitative and qualitative methods.
  - Staff feedback survey: a five-question survey created in-lieu of focus groups. Predominantly qualitative to explore context around some of the responses obtained from the clients, and also to test some assumptions around the delivery model of the program.
  - DRT transit usage data: relevant data regarding TAP users and all PRESTO card users were analyzed to understand ridership patterns among this group.

# Summary of findings



## Ridership Behaviour of TAP Users

- TAP users are riding DRT for essential trips during the pandemic
- Overall ridership pattern similar to other PRESTO card users



## Accessibility & Convenience of the Program

- Majority of current and previous TAP users found the program easy and convenient
- Users found it easy to use the card, get information and get help about the TAP program



## Strengths & Opportunities

- The TAP program is an easy and convenient program helping users travel for essential purposes
- Technology and format of delivery could be improved



## Sustainability of the Program

- Overall experience of users are positive
- Some previous users are no longer on TAP because of eligibility
- Staff are very engaged and majority feel supported

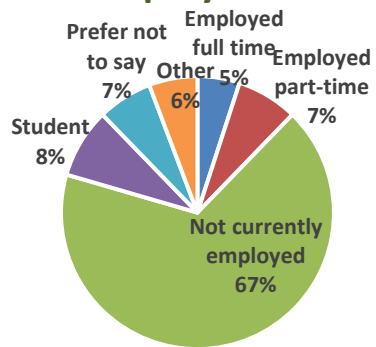


## DEMOGRAPHICS

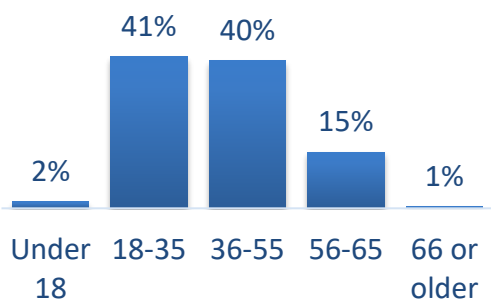


# Customer feedback

## Employment status



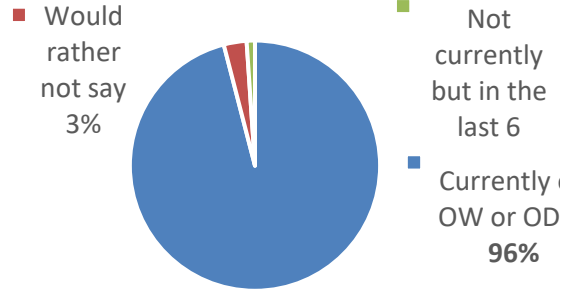
## Age Distribution



## 382 respondents



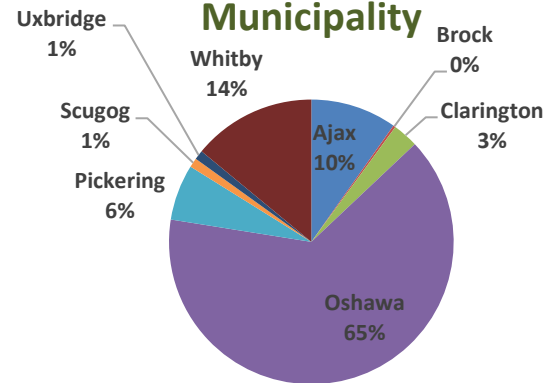
## Social Assistance



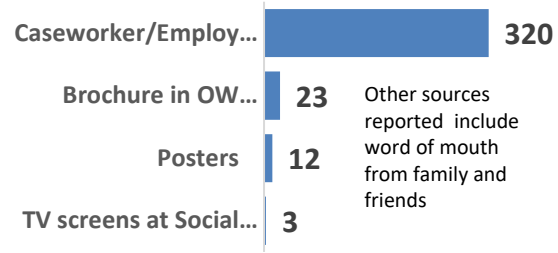
ODSP clients made up less than one per cent of the 382 respondents. This could be due to a number of reasons:

- Initial launch of TAP in late 2019 focussed on OW clients
- Targeted outreach to ODSP clients began in early 2020 just as the COVID-19 pandemic began
- Access Pass continued to be available to ODSP clients throughout the TAP pilot.

## Municipality

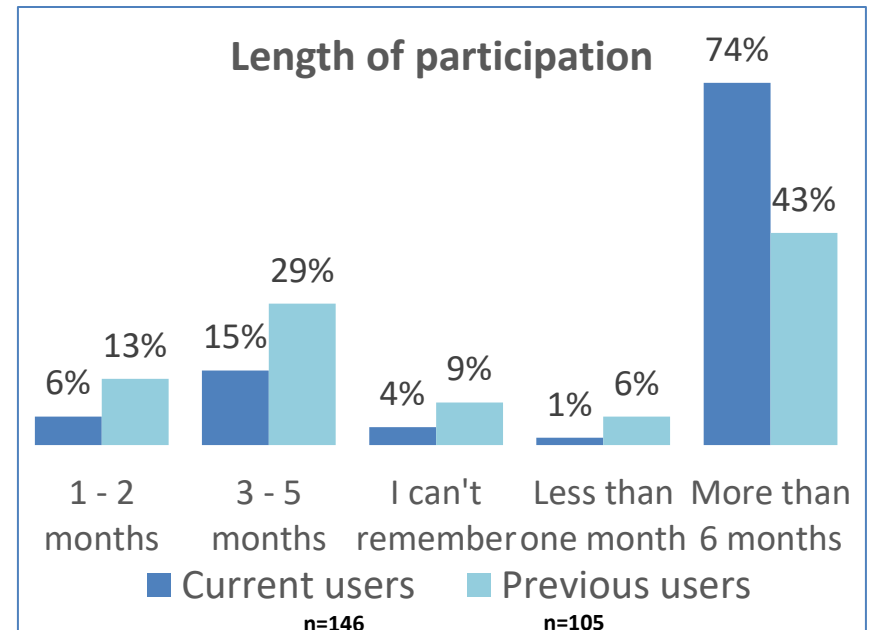
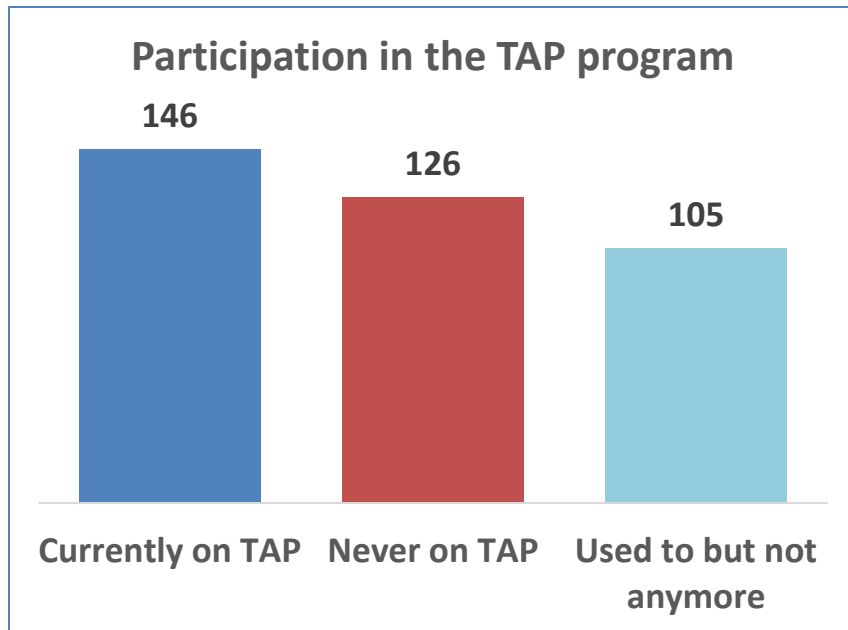


## How Clients Found out



TAP program users are social assistance recipients who are most likely to find out about the program from their caseworkers. They are most likely to be between employment, aged between 18 to 55 years and reside in Oshawa.

# Participation in the TAP program



Most respondents are current users of the TAP program. Some, a third of respondents, had never been on the program while the remaining had previously been on the program but not anymore at the time of the survey.

About three quarters of current users (74 per cent) have participated in the TAP program for more than a month

# Exploring length of participation

## Current Users

How long have you been using the TAP PRESTO card? * Age Crosstabulation							
How long have you been using the TAP PRESTO card?	Age						Total count per option
	Under 18	Between 18-35	Between 36-55	Between 56-65	I prefer not to say	66 or older	
1 - 2 months	0%	7%	4%	8%	0%	0%	8
3 - 5 months	33%	15%	13%	20%	0%	0%	21
I can't remember	0%	7%	0%	0%	100%	0%	5
Less than one month	0%	2%	0%	4%	0%	0%	2
More than 6 months	67%	69%	83%	68%	0%	100%	102
Total % per age group	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
Total count per age group	3	54	54	25	1	1	138

## Previous Users

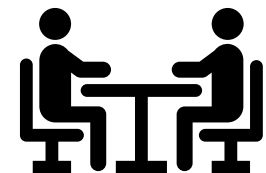
How long did you use your TAP PRESTO card before you stopped? * Age Crosstabulation							
How long did you use your TAP PRESTO card before you stopped?	Age						Total count per option
	Under 18	Between 18-35	Between 36-55	Between 56-65	66 or older	I prefer not to say	
1 - 2 months	0%	17%	14%	6%	0%	0%	14
3 - 5 months	0%	27%	42%	11%	0%	0%	30
I can't remember	0%	4%	14%	11%	0%	0%	9
Less than one month	0%	6%	6%	6%	0%	0%	6
More than 6 months	100%	46%	25%	67%	0%	100%	45
Response	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1
Total % per age group	100%	100%	100%	100%	0%	100%	
Total count per age group	1	48	36	18	0	1	105

A deeper look at the length of participation in the program revealed some interesting patterns.

- Of the current users of the TAP program, the majority within the age groups spanning 18 to 65 year old have stayed with the program for more than six months with the highest representation coming from the 36 to 55 age group.
- In contrast, previous users seem to differ slightly as those aged 36 to 55 years mostly stayed with the program for between three to five months only.
- When looking at length of time by municipalities, Oshawa residents represented the largest group of those who stayed on the program longer than six months.

## Staff survey

- 81 staff members responded to this staff feedback survey
- These are staff who are providing service to potential TAP users through:
  - The Ontario Works and the Employment Services programs of the Durham Region Social Services Department
  - The Ontario Disability Support Program of the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services



#### HIGHLIGHTS:

- Overall pattern of boarding taps for all TAP users is similar to that of all other PRESTO card users
- Time of day travel patterns show that TAP users tend to travel more in the off-peak hours than other PRESTO card users.
- Since the pandemic, travel for shopping (essentials) and medical appointments have remained relatively stable while travel for all other purposes has reduced among current users of the TAP program.
- TAP users are benefiting from free taps on DRT. The total amount benefitted increases rapidly after every pandemic related lock down indicating that the ridership of TAP users increases rapidly as well.

## HOW ARE TAP USERS RIDING TRANSIT?





# TAP card usage summary <sup>(1/4)</sup>

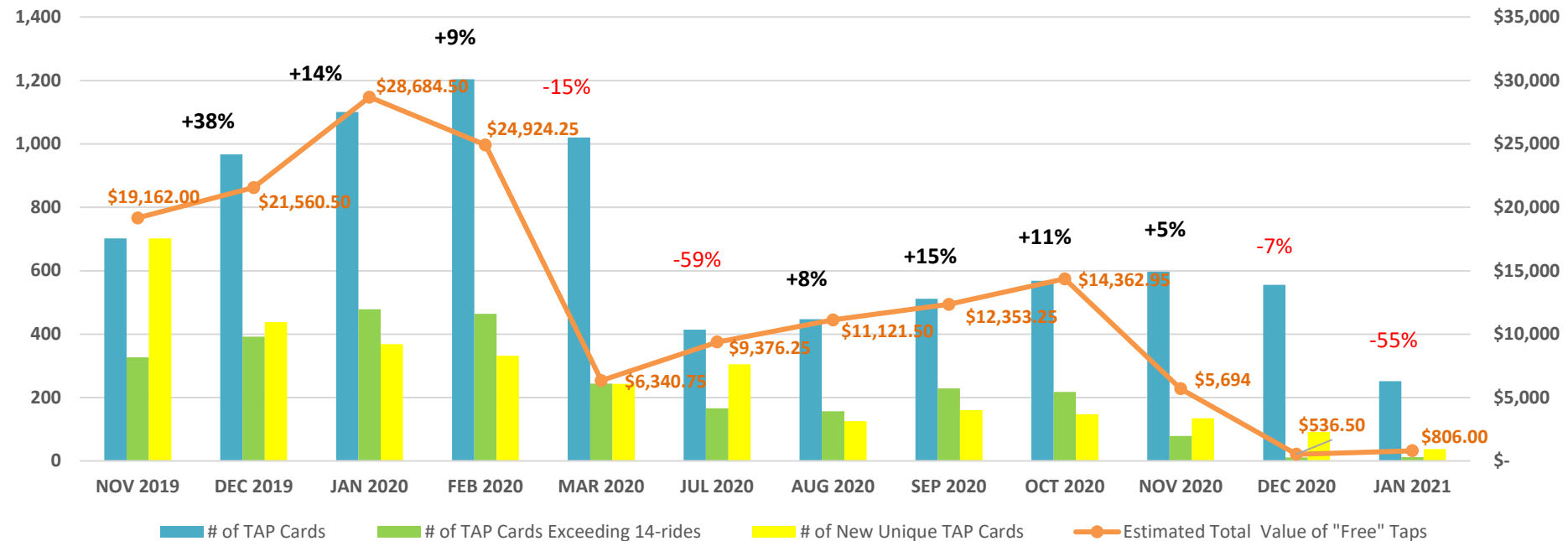
From November 2019 to January 2021, the TAP concession was applied to **4,958** PRESTO cards. Of these cards, **2,825** cards (**57 per cent**) showed usage data.

	NOV 2019	DEC 2019	JAN 2020	FEB 2020	MAR 2020	JUL 2020	AUG 2020	SEP 2020	OCT 2020	NOV 2020	DEC 2020	JAN 2021
# of Cards with TAP Concession in Use	702	967 (+38%)	1101 (+13.9%)	1204 (+9.4%)	1020 (-15.3%)	414 (-59% from March)	447 (+8.0%)	512 (+14.5%)	568 (+10.9%)	597 (+5.1%)	556 (-6.9%)	252 (-54.7%)
# of New Unique Cards with TAP	702	438	369	332	243	305 (from March)	157	160	148	135	92	38
# of Cards from Preceding Month Not Used	N/A	179	260	285	1069	1095 (from March)	126	95	93	107	135	342
# of TAP Cards exceeding 14-rides	327 (47%)	392 (41%)	479 (44%)	464 (39%)	244 (24%)	166 (40%)	192 (43%)	229 (45%)	218 (38%)	79 (13%)	11 (2%)	12 (5%)
Average # of Taps per TAP card	18	21	18	16	10	15	11	17	17	17	17	16
TAP Cards with >50 "Free" Taps	15 (1.7%)	8 (0.8%)	12 (1.1%)	8 (0.7%)	0	5 (1.2%)	5 (1.1%)	7 (1.4%)	12 (2.1%)	5 (0.8%)	0	1
Highest # of Taps per TAP card	87	80	94	88	48	111	115	105	99	85	46	51
Estimated # of "Free" Taps and Value	5,896 - \$19,162	6,634 - \$21,560.50	8,826 - \$28,684.50	7,669 - \$24,924.25	1,951 - \$6,340.75	2,885 - \$9,376.25	3,422 - \$11,121.50	3,801 - \$12,353.25	4,419 - \$14,362.95	1,752 - \$5,694	166 - \$539.50	248 - \$806.00
Average Fare	\$1.77	\$1.91	\$1.76	\$1.93	\$2.61	\$1.76	\$1.77	\$1.85	\$1.80	\$2.70	\$3.22	\$3.05

No data available from April – June 2020 due to temporary fare suspension in response to COVID-19.

# TAP card usage summary (2/4)

No data available from April – June 2020 due to temporary fare suspension in response to COVID-19.

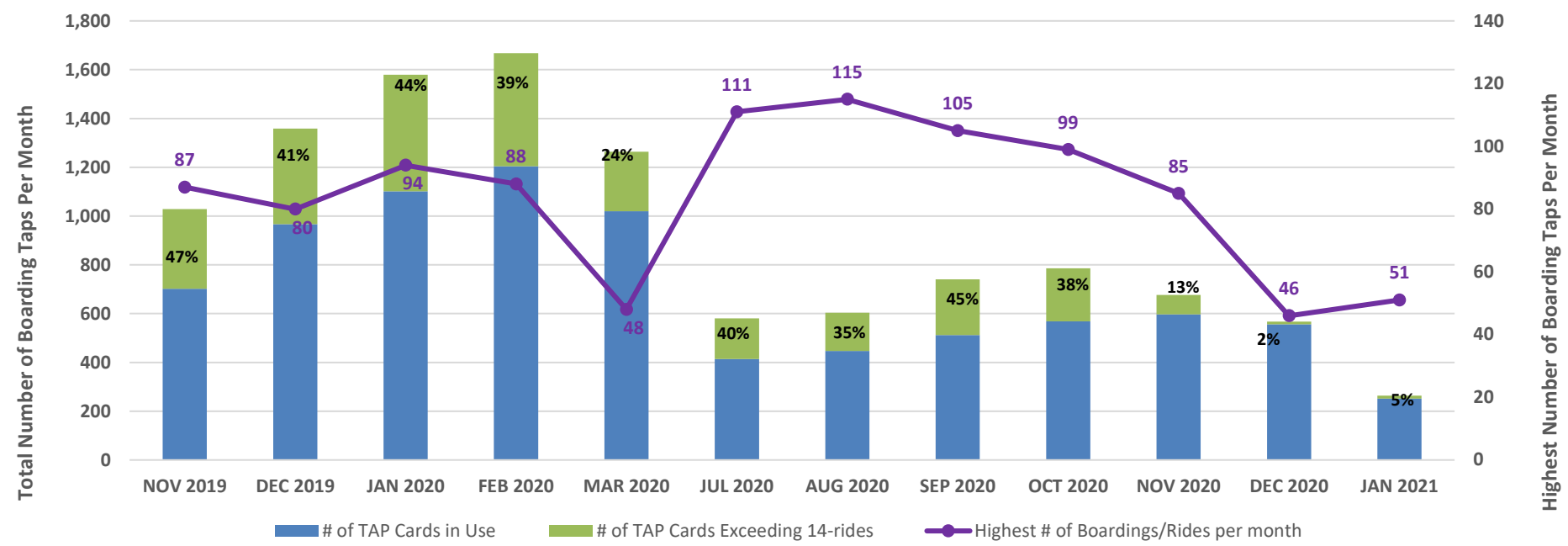


The TAP Program saw healthy uptake from its launch in November 2019. At its peak, TAP card users benefitted from over \$28,000 in subsidized fares and enjoyed an average fare per tap of \$1.76 – effectively a 46 per cent fare discount on the regular PRESTO adult fare. The COVID-19 pandemic has adversely affected transit usage, including TAP users. Program uptake and TAP card usage has waxed and waned closely with the first and second wave “lockdowns” and their subsequent “re-openings”.



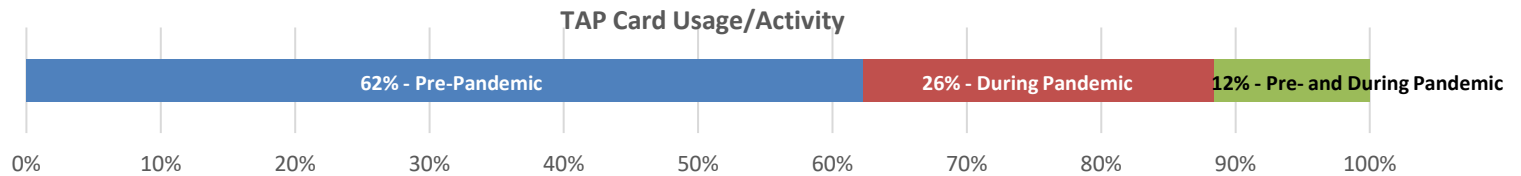


# TAP card usage summary <sup>(3/4)</sup>

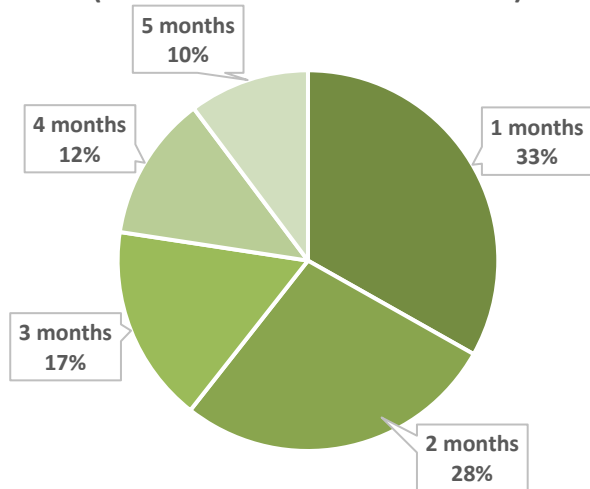


Each TAP user pays the regular adult PRESTO fare for their first 14 trips in the month. For TAP users eligible for transportation benefits, the cost of the first 14 trips is covered by their social assistance program. Trips after the first 14 in a month are not charged a fare. Typically, a healthy number of TAP users do exceed 14-trips per month, with a small handful (a little over one per cent) of users exceeding 50 trips a month.

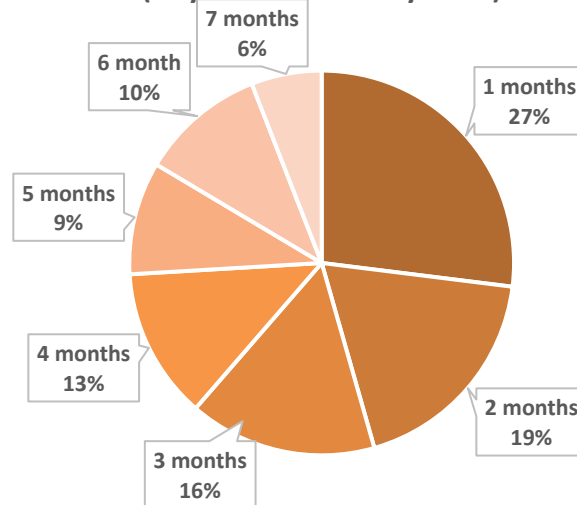
# TAP card usage summary (4/4)



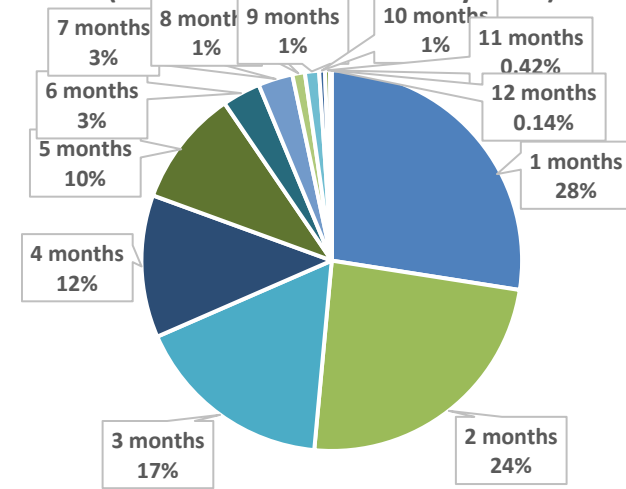
**TAP Card Usage – Pre-Pandemic  
(November 2019 to March 2020)**



**TAP Card Usage - During Pandemic  
(July 2020 to January 2021)**

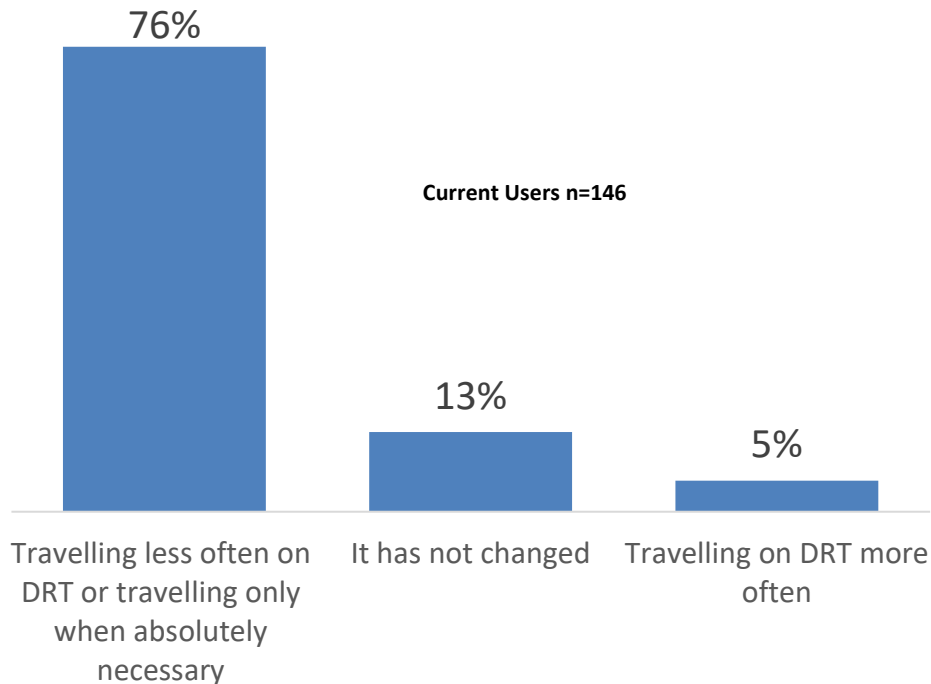


**TAP Card Usage – Overall  
(November 2019 to January 2021)**



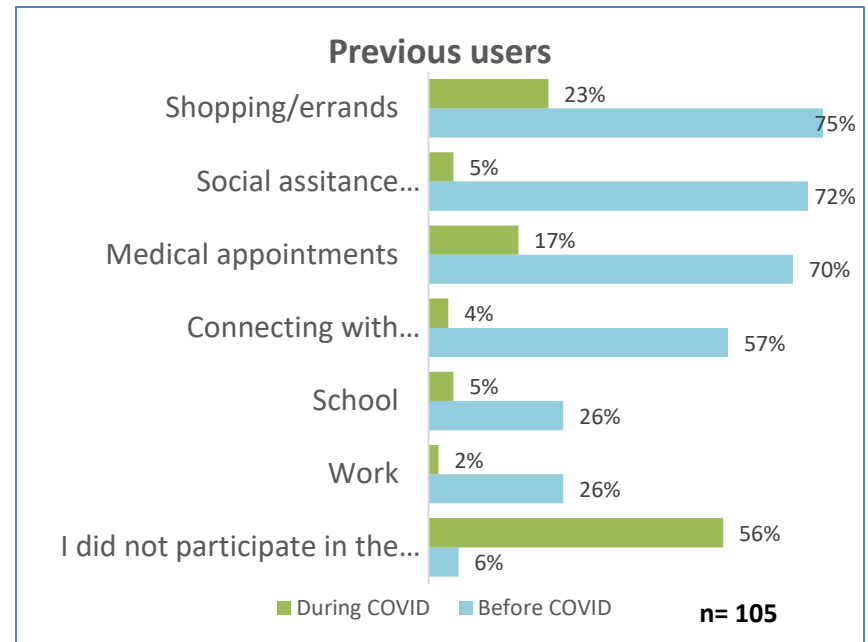
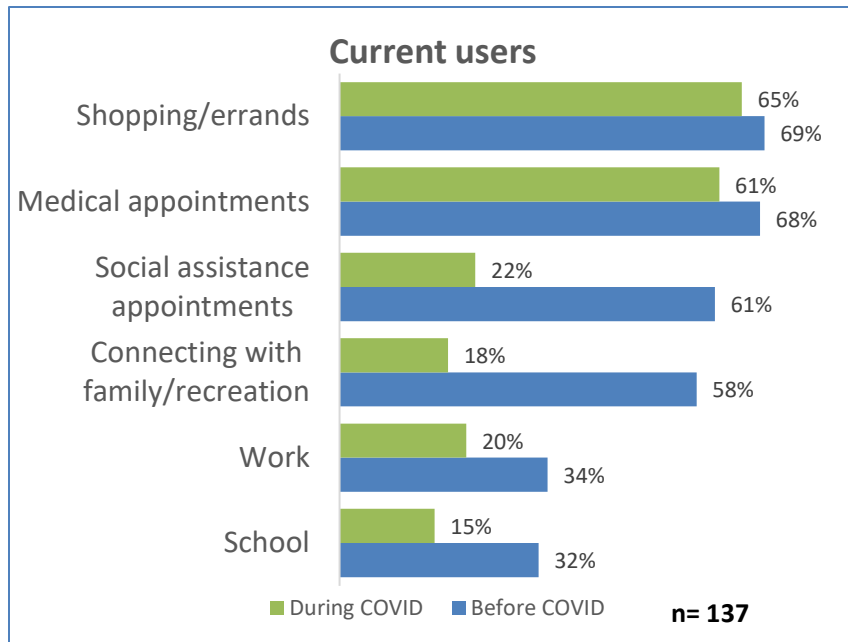
The pie charts above show the number of consecutive months a TAP PRESTO card was used by a customer throughout the program period. More than 60 per cent of all TAP card usage occurred before the first COVID-19 lockdown. Only 12 per cent of TAP cards were used prior to and after the first COVID-19 lockdown.

# Changes in travel during COVID



- When asked about changes to their travel during the COVID-19 pandemic, three quarters of respondents, 76 per cent, indicated that they now travel less on DRT or they travel only when absolutely necessary (for example, for work or for medical appointments).
- In contrast, five per cent of respondents indicate that they are travelling more on DRT
- Travel patterns have not changed for 13 per cent of respondents.
- Other reasons given include: “staying at home”, “no bus service on McQuay, had to walk” “less buses running during COVID”.

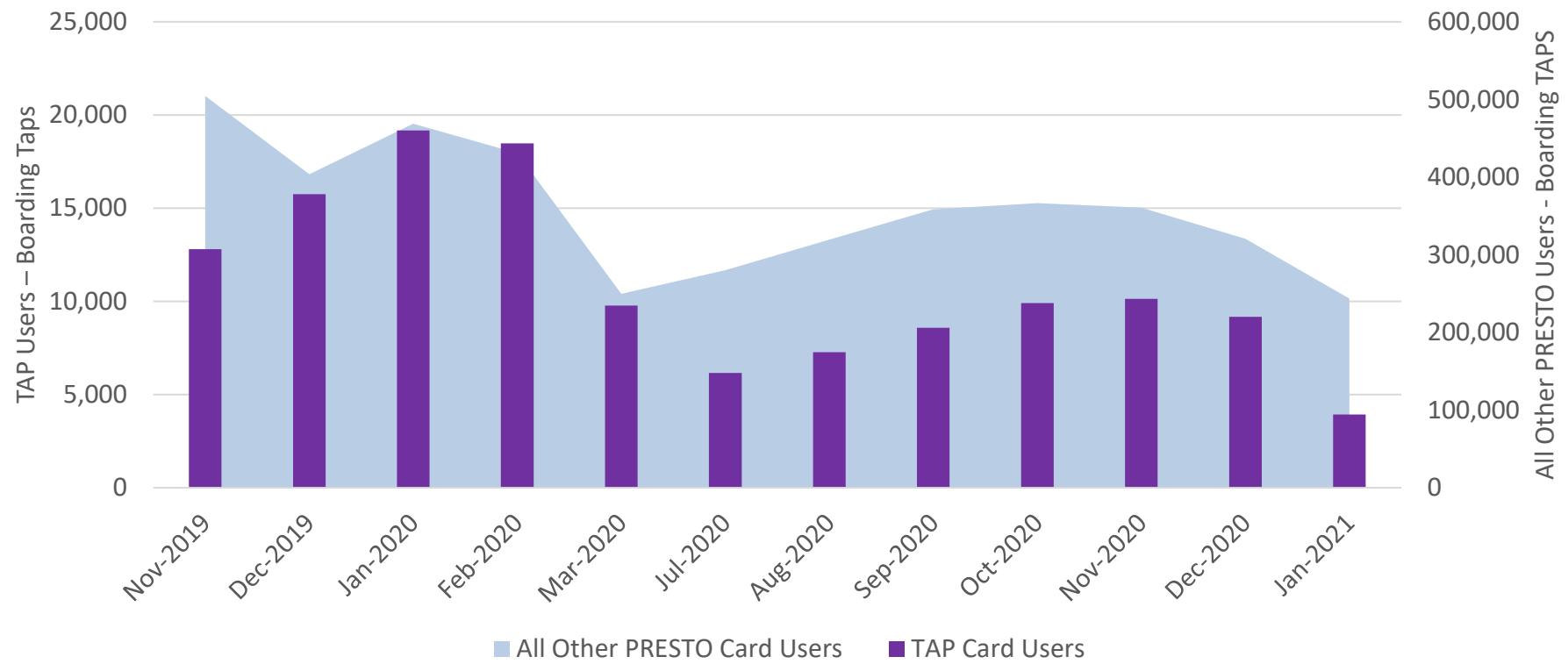
# Reported travel patterns before and during COVID



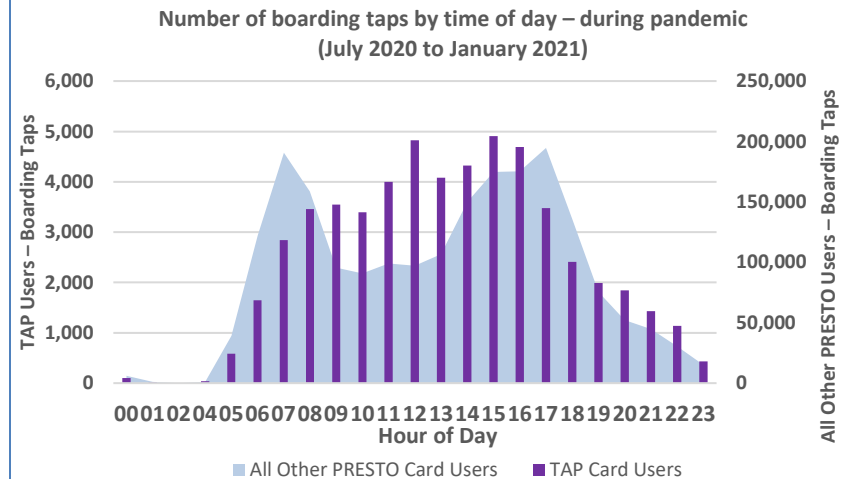
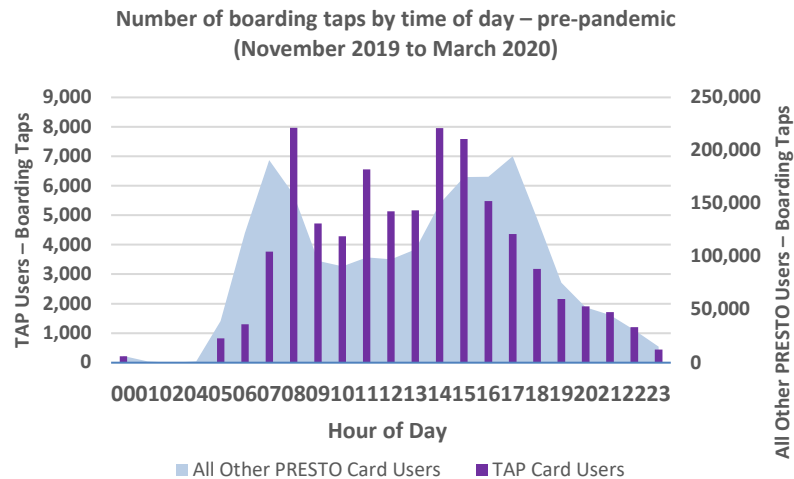
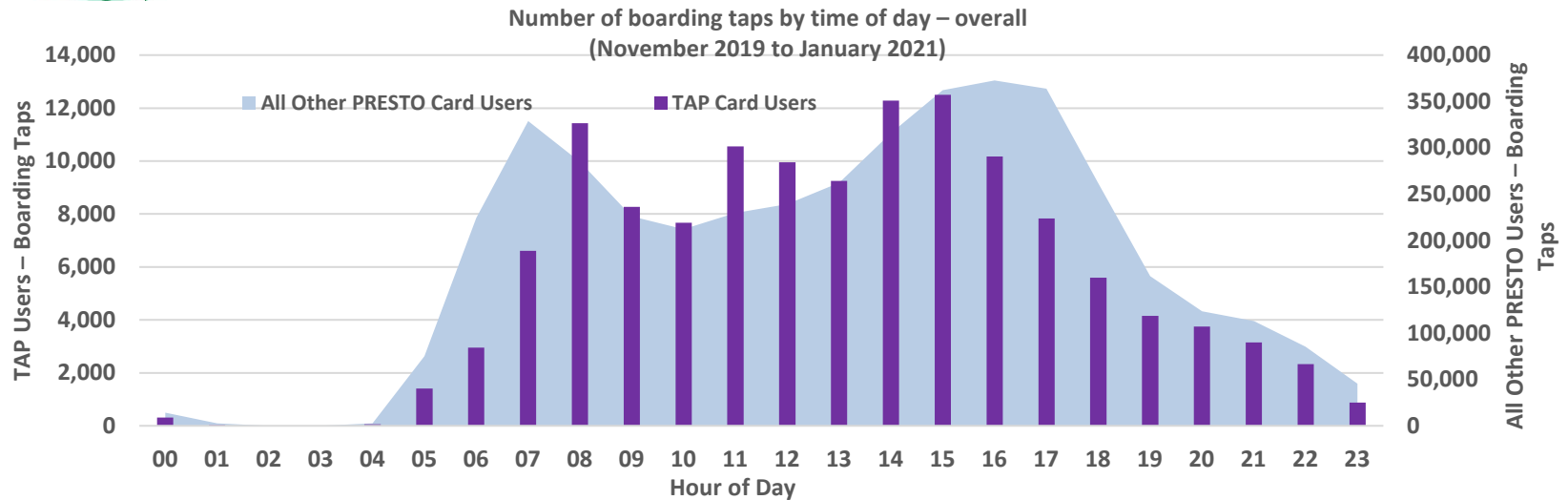
Current users of the TAP program have been able to maintain travel for essential purposes like grocery shopping or errands and medical appointments. Most programs and services have moved to virtual delivery and many recreational activities involving big gatherings have been largely restricted during COVID-19. Many of the previous users of the TAP program dropped off during COVID-19.

# TAP card usage patterns (1/2)

Number of boarding taps by month



# TAP Card Usage Patterns (2/2)



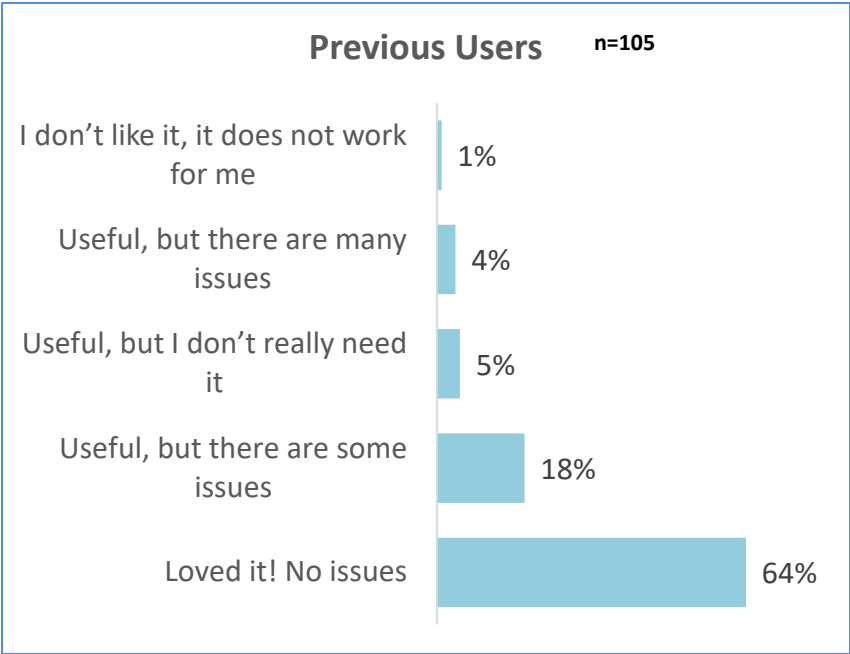
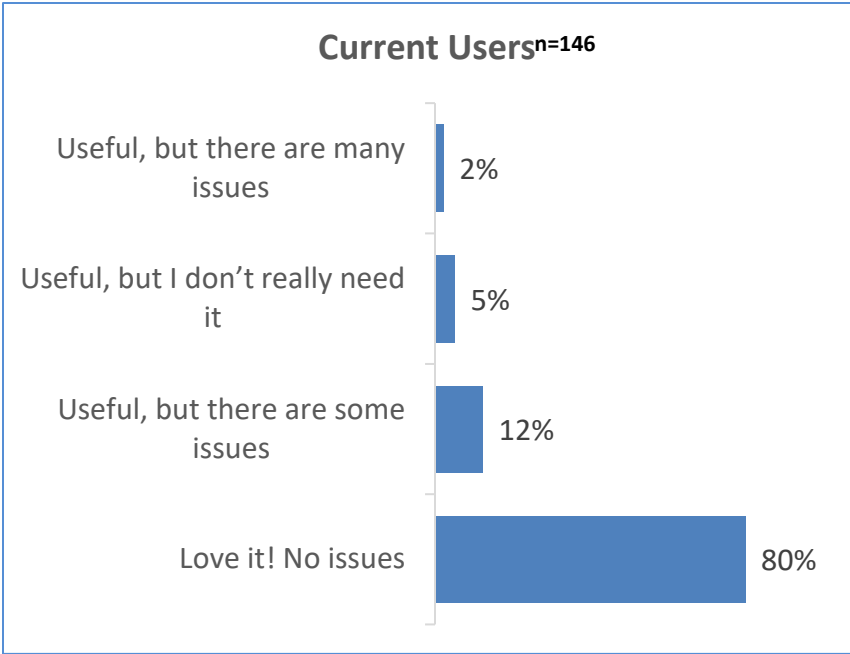
HIGHLIGHTS:

- Majority of TAP users, both current and previous, found many aspects of the program to be easy
- Users struggled most with PRESTO related functionalities like reviewing transactions online, setting up the PRESTO cards, loading money or concessions the most challenging. This is more visible among previous users and could have contributed to their decision to stop using the cards.

**IS THE PROGRAM ACCESSIBLE AND  
CONVENIENT FOR ELIGIBLE USERS?**



# User experience with the TAP program



Four out of five (80 per cent) current users love the program and have no issues with it. Of those who have stopped using TAP, 64 per cent indicated that they loved the program and had no issues with it.



# Exploring user experience

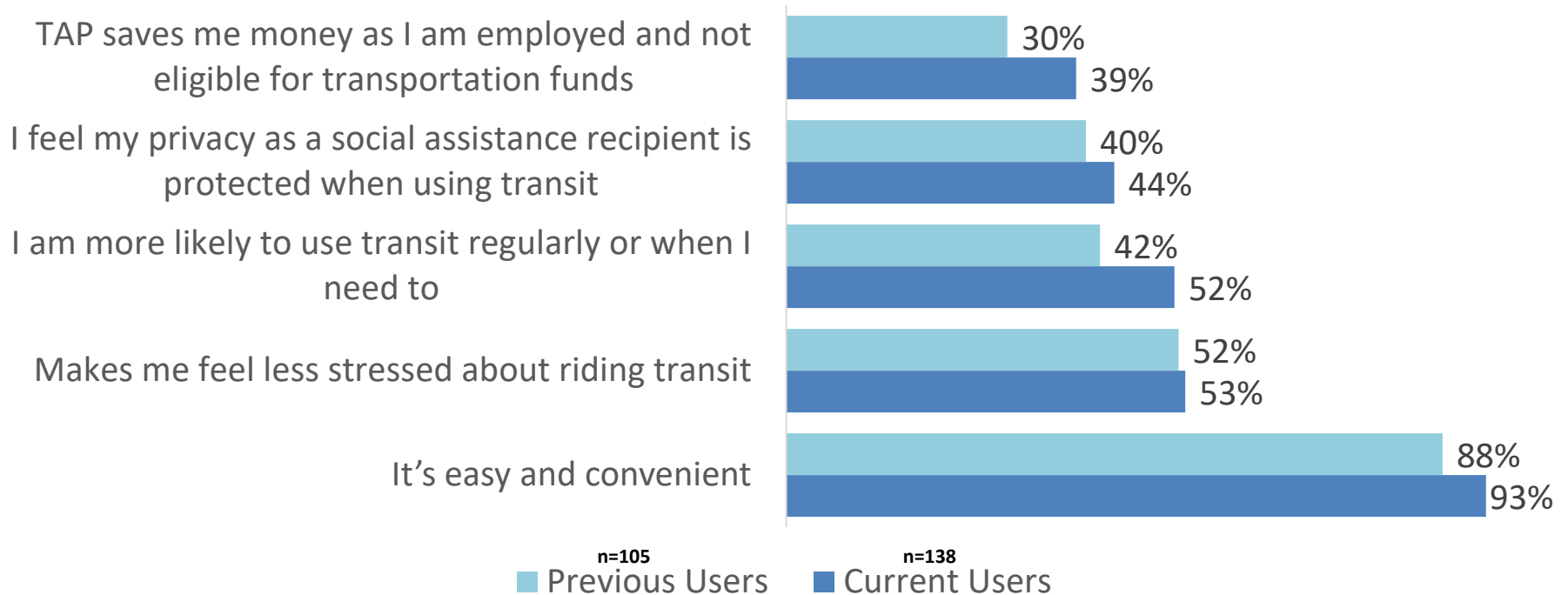
In general, how has your experience been with the TAP program? * Age Crosstabulation						
In general, how has your experience been with the TAP program?	Age					Total
	Under 18	Between 18-35	Between 36-55	Between 56-65	66 or older	
I love it! No issues	67%	80%	72%	100%	100%	109
It's useful, but I don't really need it	0%	6%	7%	0%	0%	7
It's useful, but there are many issues	0%	2%	4%	0%	0%	3
It's useful, but there are some issues	33%	13%	17%	0%	0%	17
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	136
Total	3	54	54	24	1	136

Of the current users, the majority of those aged 18 to 55 indicated that they “loved the TAP program and had no issues with it”. Almost one in five (17 per cent) of those aged 36 to 55 indicated that they found the TAP program “useful but with some issues”.

In general, how has your experience been with the TAP program? * Employment Status Crosstabulation					
In general, how has your experience been with the TAP program?	Employed full time	Employed part-time	Not currently employed	A student in an academic/training program	
I love it! No issues	86%	67%	80%	72%	3
It's useful, but I don't really need it	0%	0%	3%	11%	0
It's useful, but there are many issues	0%	0%	3%	0%	0
It's useful, but there are some issues	0%	25%	11%	11%	0
Other (Please specify)	0%	0%	1%	0%	0
Response	14%	8%	1%	6%	0
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	4
Total	7	12	96	18	133

When considering employment status, those who are currently not employed make up the majority of respondents and 80 per cent of that group who are current users of the TAP program indicate that they loved it and had no issues. In the student group, 72 per cent indicated the same.

# What users like about the TAP program



Most current users (93 per cent) and previous users (88 per cent) found the TAP program easy and convenient. More than half (53 per cent) liked the fact that using the TAP PRESTO card made them feel less stressed about riding transit.

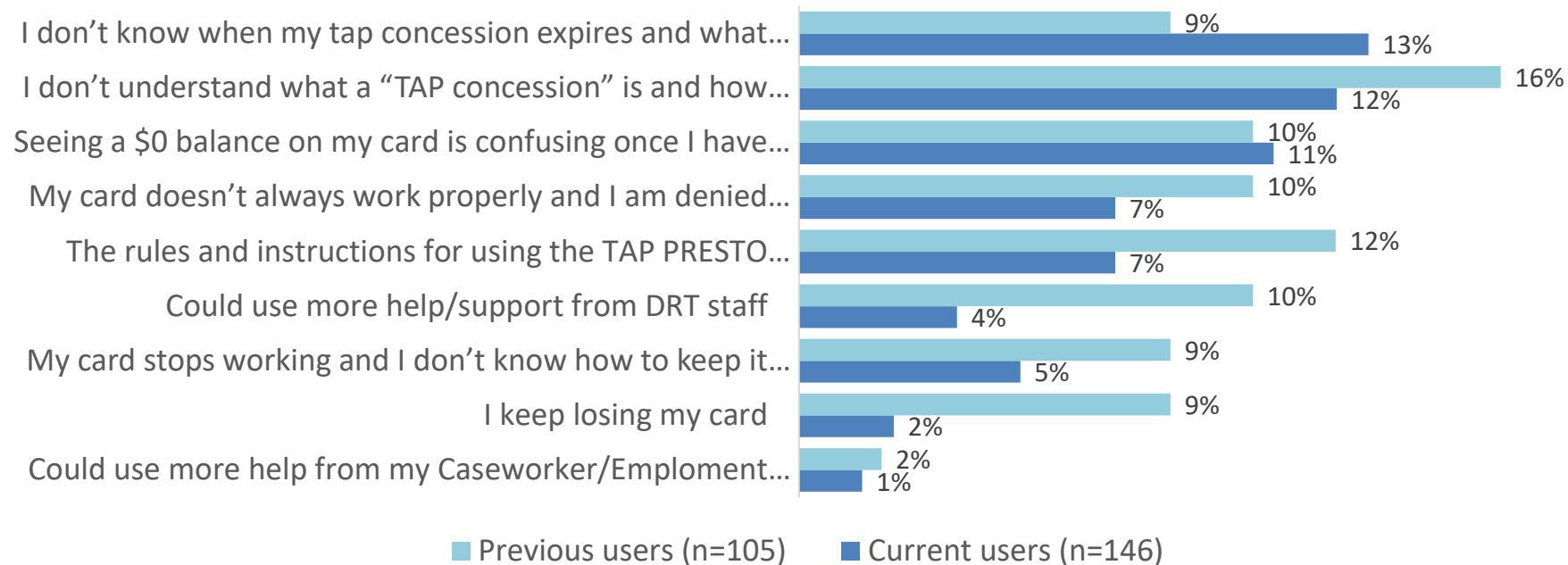
# What users like about the TAP program - staff perspective

Theme	Percentage represented
Cost effective/reduced costs and savings for transit	52%
PRESTO card is easy and convenient to use	35%
No need to confirm eligibility monthly	5%
Not having to carry cash/change	3%
Ability to load funds online	3%
Reduces stigma	1%
Provides freedom	1%

When staff were asked to comment about what their clients like most about the TAP program the two largest themes that emerged make up more than a third of responses in total:

1. The program is cost effective and reduced the cost for transit (52 per cent of the responses)
2. The TAP PRESTO cards were easy and convenient to use (35 per cent of the responses)

# What TAP users do not like about the program



A higher percentage of previous TAP users report not “understanding TAP concession” – (16 per cent); finding “the rules and instructions for using the TAP PRESTO card confusing” (12 per cent) or “seeing \$0 balance on their cards after 14 rides” (10 per cent). Current users struggle more with not knowing when their tap concession expires and what to do (13 per cent), not understating what a TAP concession is (12 per cent) and seeing a \$0 balance after 14 rides (11 per cent).



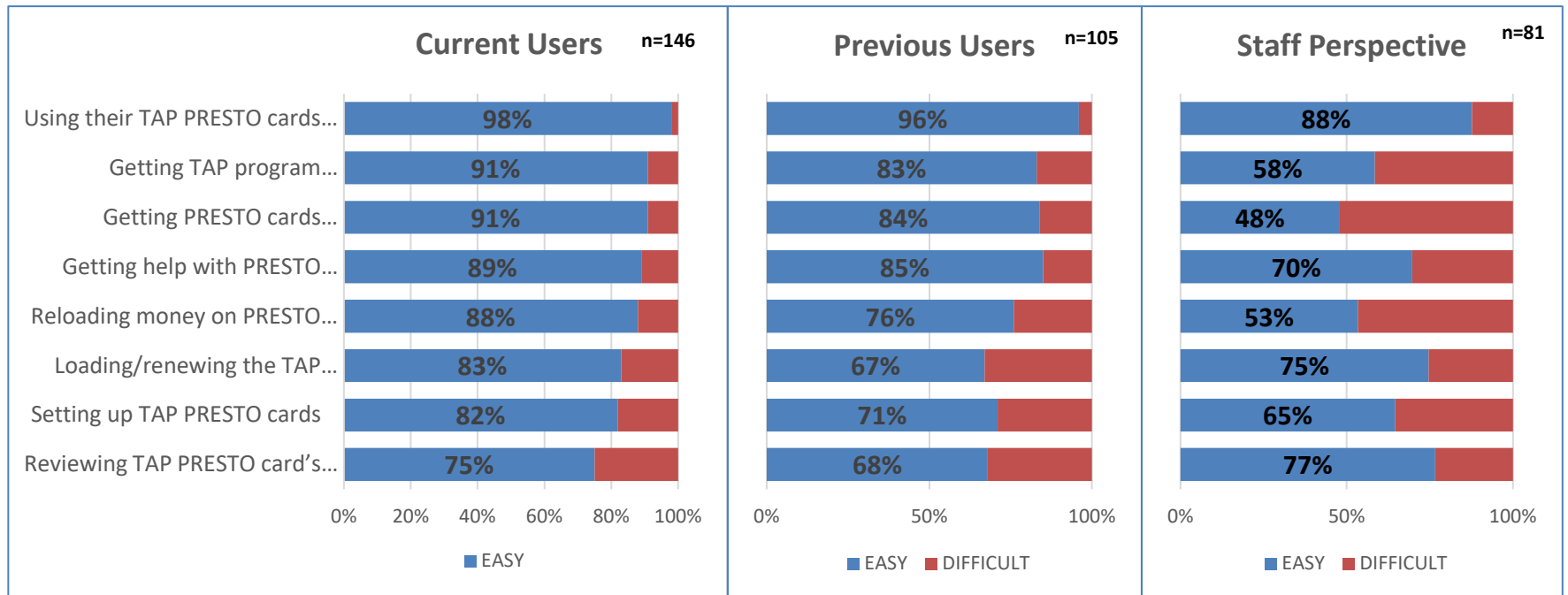
# What customers find challenging about the program - staff perspective

Theme	Percentage represented
Understanding how the program works	29
Renewing the concession/ Concession expired without realizing it	16
Loading funds onto the PRESTO card	14
Availability of POS locations	11
Registering the PRESTO card	9
Limited service/support in North Durham or North Durham-specific issues	5
Random or unexpected issues with PRESTO cards not working or being cancelled/hot listed	4
Losing and replacing the PRESTO card	3
TAP only applies to DRT travel	3
Checking remaining balance on the PRESTO card	2
Ran out of funds before the end of the month	2
Getting support from the program/DRT/PRESTO	2
Understanding the "14-ride rule"	1
Need to attend in person at Ajax POS to resolve PRESTO card issues	1

When staff were asked to comment on the challenges faced by their clients, four major themes emerged:

1. Understanding how the program works (29 per cent)
2. Reviewing the concession/expiring without realizing it (16 per cent)
3. Loading funds on the card (14 per cent)
4. Availability of point of sale (POS) locations (11 per cent)

# Level of ease vs difficulty



Overall, while current users found many of the elements of the program easy, they struggled most with PRESTO-related functionalities like setting up the card and reviewing transactions online. More previous users struggled with setting up their TAP PRESTO cards, reloading money on their PRESTO cards, and loading and renewing concessions. Staff felt that the areas where customers struggled the most were in getting information about the TAP program itself or about the TAP PRESTO cards.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- Overwhelmingly high proportions of TAP card users, both current and previous, indicate that they found the program to be easy and convenient (98% and 83% respectively) .
- Opportunities exist for improvement with elements of the program that involve technology and support

## WHAT ARE THE STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES OF THE PROGRAM?



# Strengths and opportunities

## STRENGTHS



- \* Easy and convenient (98% to 83%)
- \* Reduces stress about riding transit
- \* Increases likelihood of riding public transit
- \* Cost effective – cost savings for clients
- \* Increases ability to travel for essential purposes
- \* Found it easy to get information about the TAP program and the TAP PRESTO cards.

## OPPORTUNITIES

- \* PRESTO-specific technologies (loading cards, figuring out concession and viewing transaction online)
- \* Support – Loading cards, demystifying concession,
- \* Client education – some aspects of TAP are confusing to clients
- \* More options for staff





# Reported Program Strengths

## Supporting Life Stabilization\*

- Users are still able to maintain travel for essential needs and medical purposes in TAP
- Some users report being able to connect with the support they need
- Clients report being able to job search or attend interviews

## Reducing stigma

Some respondents indicate that they like how the program does not identify them as social assistance recipients

- 44 per cent of current
- 40 per cent previous users
- Staff also commented that they felt the program reduced client stigma

## Cost savings

Users of the TAP program report that the program saved them money as they are employed and/or not eligible for transportation funds

- 39 per cent of current users
- 30 per cent of previous users
- This was also one of the themes that emerged from the staff feedback: “reduced transit cost and some overall savings”

\*Life stabilization is a term used in Social Services. As defined by the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities, life stabilization focuses on **enabling individuals to gain self-sufficiency, addressing preparatory and / or urgent needs through referrals to health, legal, crisis response, social supports, family support and other human services.**

See more information at: <https://www.ontario.ca/page/recovery-renewal-ontarios-vision-social-assistance-transformation>

# Supporting life stabilization – staff feedback

Theme	Percentage represented
YES - better able to move around for life and work purposes	44%
YES - is more affordable for clients and provides savings for other necessities	23%
YES - in general	10%
YES - but only for some (eg. employed, in south Durham, non-transients) for employed clients	9%
YES - more clients can benefit/clients can benefit from transportation benefit even with less trips per month	7%
YES - reduces stigma	3%
YES - provides clients with more motivation to seek employment	2%
NO - no change, clients prefer a pass	2%
NO - didn't understand program to fully/properly utilize it	1%

"This is a great program for employed clients, they can get their reduced pass without confirming each month. It is more difficult to navigate for more impaired or delayed clients"

"Yes. Stronger ability to job search, take care of business, life , etc. "

"Absolutely especially for clients who need to visit the pharmacy and doctor on a regular basis, those who are job searching locally."

"Yes, access to transportation "

"Somewhat. Great in the south end of Durham."

"No, because they weren't able to grasp the TAP Program details even after being provided with as much information as possible. Many said, they weren't able to receive the benefit of the program unless they were a frequent transit user."

#### HIGHLIGHTS:

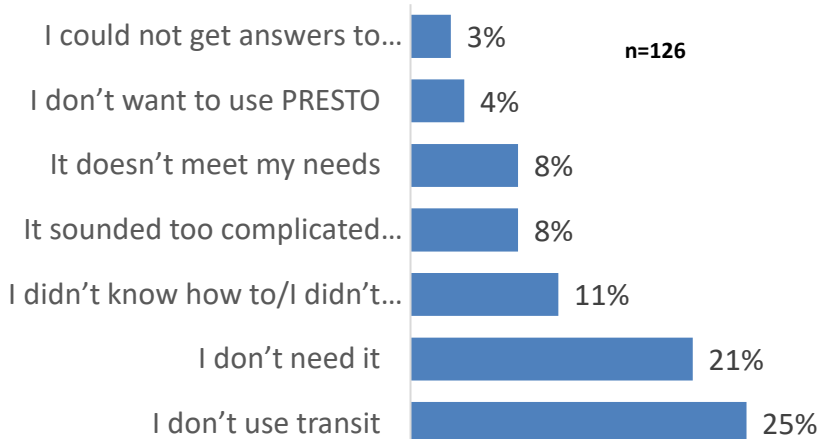
- People who have stopped participating in the program (previous users) indicated that this is either because they no longer qualify (44 per cent) due to the eligibility criteria or that they found the program complicated and confusing (40 per cent)
- Based on staff perspective, about half indicated that their clients seemed to prefer the TAP program (46 per cent) , while the other half indicated that their clients preferred other offerings like the Access Pass.
- Overall, staff felt that they were empowered to deliver the program as the majority reported feeling confident that they can provide needed information to their clients.

## IS THE TAP PROGRAM SUSTAINABLE?

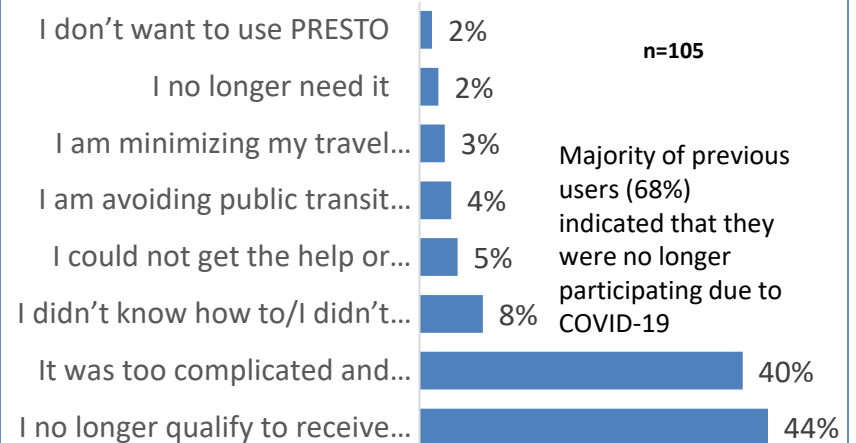


# Reasons for not participating in TAP

## Reason for not participating in TAP – non-users

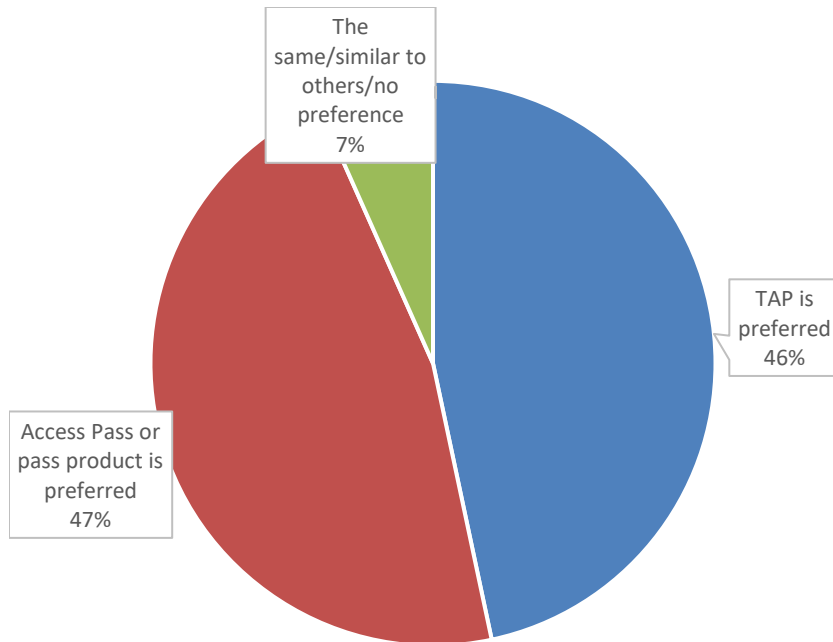


## Why no longer participating in the TAP program



The top two reasons why previous users stopped participating in TAP are no longer being qualified to receive transit assistance and finding the program too complicated and confusing. Non-users never participated in the program either because they do not use transit or felt that they did not need the program. A further 11 per cent did not participate because they did not know how to/ didn't understand what to do.

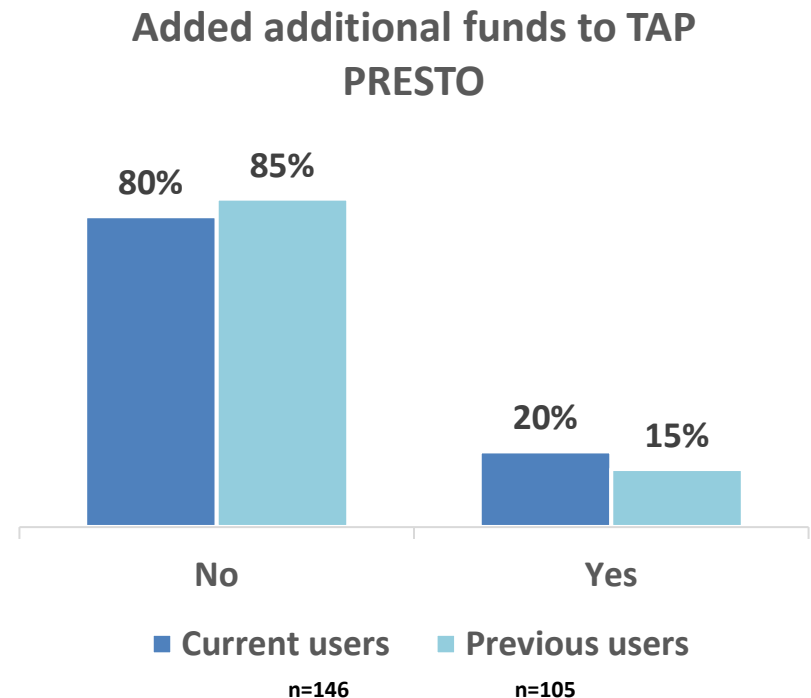
# Comparing TAP to other program options



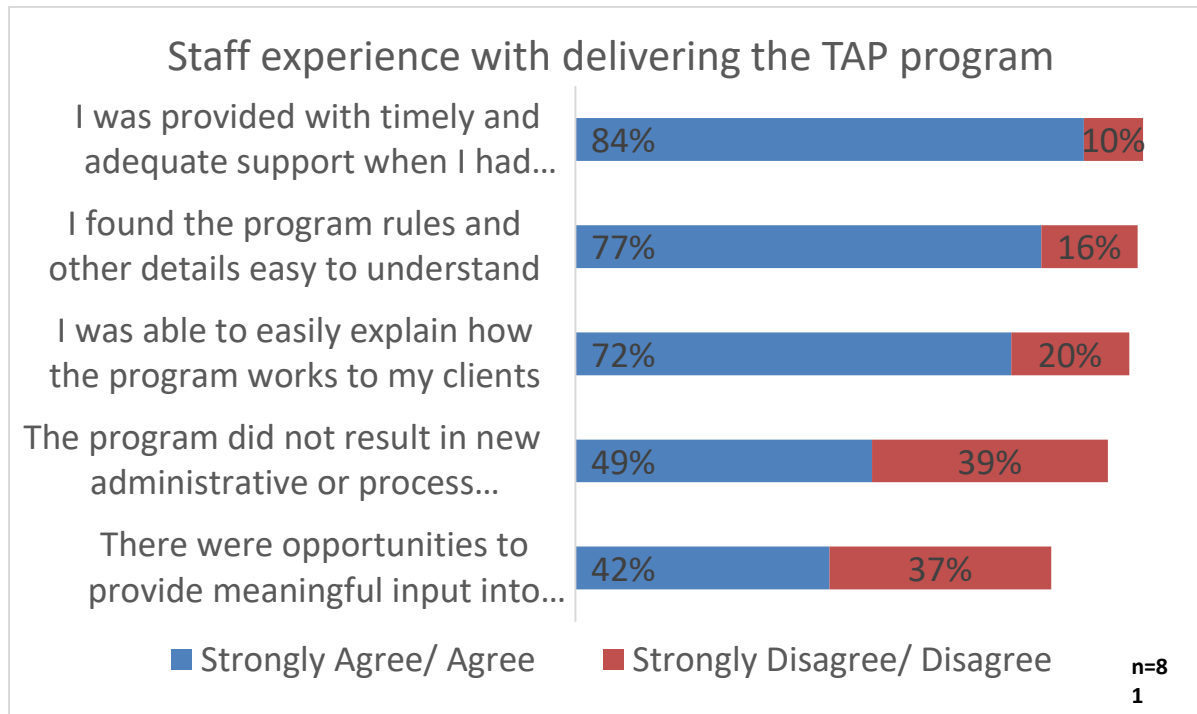
- Based on the responses by staff, an equal number showed that clients either preferred the Access Pass or similar pass products (47 per cent), or preferred the TAP PRESTO card (46 per cent)
- An additional seven per cent of the comments indicated that clients either found them all similar or had no preference.

# Additional funds and use

- More than a third of current (80 per cent) and previous (85 per cent) TAP users indicate that they have not had to add additional funds to their cards in order to use the cards.
- When users added additional funds (20 per cent), they reported that it was used for travel on connecting services like the GO bus and trains and the TTC.



# Staff experience with TAP program delivery



When asked to comment about their experience with delivery of the TAP program, staff:

## Strongly agreed/agreed that...

- "Provided with timely and adequate support for questions or challenges" – 84 per cent
- "Program rules and other details easy to understand" – 77 per cent
- "Able to easily explain how the program works to clients" - 72 per cent

## Were not too confident about...

- "Program did not result in new administrative or process burdens that impacted their work" – 49 per cent strongly agreed or agreed
- "Meaningful opportunities to provide input into the program design and roll out – 42 per cent strongly agreed or agreed.

# Staff experience - themes

It was hard for clients to fully understand the program (29 per cent)

Better/more documentation and training would be helpful for staff/clients (five per cent)

It was easy to explain the program to clients (five per cent)

Program is affordable and cost effective for clients (four per cent)

Program is helpful and beneficial to clients (16 per cent)

Program processes were easy/simple (five per cent)

Clients in North Durham lack support and service (five per cent)

There were not enough DRT POS locations (three per cent)

Many extra administrative processes/work was required (14 per cent)

There was a learning curve, but things got better with time (five per cent)

Promoting/supporting program during pandemic is challenging (five per cent)

Program reduces client stigma (one per cent)





# Suggestions for improving the program

Current Users: Theme	Percentage represented
Improve a PRESTO-specific functionality (eg. Real time loading of funds)	25%
Enable/Allow caseworker to add funds directly on PRESTO card for customers	8%
Allow acceptance of MyBenefits letter	8%
Enable program on an app instead of PRESTO card	8%
Better information/communications about program details	8%
Train drivers better/More supportive drivers with regards to program/PRESTO card knowledge	4%
Provide notification for low funds on card	4%
Provide more information on POS locations	4%
Provide alternative payment option for customer that is not at customer's expense if card fails	4%
Better information/communications about POS locations	4%
Provide a yearly pass product	4%
Provide more POS locations	4%
Open up program eligibility to everyone	4%
Provide a way to provide proof of eligibility online	4%
Enable easier concession renewals	4%
Extend renewal period to 12 months	4%
Provide user friendly computer access for PRESTO card setup and management	2%

Previous Users: Theme	Percentage represented
More/Easier reload card options/locations	26%
Enable/Allow caseworker to add funds directly on PRESTO card for customers	9%
Provide better card registration instructions	9%
Transportation funds should be provided as part of the program	9%
Broaden program eligibility to other low income or special circumstance groups	4%
Make TAP "available all the time"	4%
"Have more contact with people rather than automated systems)	4%
Ensure communications/information from all sources/parties are consistent/the same	4%
Provide different media options instead of just the PRESTO card	4%
Improve a PRESTO-specific functionality (eg. make mobile website more user friendly)	4%
Ensure GO Station/Transit staff are trained and aware of the program	4%
Provide notification for low funds on card	4%
Provide monthly DRT fare updates or new information	4%
Provide "ID card" that entitles the holder to unlimited free rides	4%
Provide training for online PRESTO functions	4%

Top themes that emerged from current users and previous users for program improvement relate to PRESTO-specific functionalities and the provision of more and easier card reload options and locations.

# Conclusion

## **Ridership patterns:**

- Ridership by TAP users has followed a similar pattern as overall DRT ridership throughout the COVID-19 pandemic
- Majority of current users have been with the TAP program for more than six months

## **Accessibility & Convenience:**

- Majority of users, both current and previous, find the TAP easy and convenient and have liked the program

## **Reported benefits & challenges:**

- Benefits – cost savings; life stabilization; reduced stigma
- Challenges – PRESTO related challenges (e.g., technology, support, access, confusion)

## **Program sustainability:**

- DRT – though overall ridership reduced significantly during COVID-19, TAP ridership has been noted to increase rapidly after each lockdown as evidenced by the total value of free rides per month.
- Social Services – decisions about eligibility is driven by available funds and the needs identified by clients and their caseworkers/ counsellors. This has led to the eligibility criteria being updated regularly. Clients who qualify will have the cost (\$45.50) paid for by the OW or ODSP program. Other OW/ODSP recipients can opt to pay the fee (\$45.50) to get themselves set up on the TAP PRESTO card.
- Program Outcomes - reasons for not participating, staff experience, suggestions for improvement



**Evaluation Champions** – Jamie Austin (DRT), Kelly O’Brien (Durham Social Services)

**Evaluation Working Group** – Pei Chin Teoh, Linda McColm (DRT), Sandra Allen, Laurie Larcombe, Sahar Foroutani (Durham Social Services), Gloria Duke-Aluko (CAO’s Office)

**Evaluation Lead** – Gloria Duke-Aluko (CAO’s Office)

**THANK YOU!**

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 3702



## Durham Region Transit Report

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To: Durham Region Transit Executive Committee  
From: General Manager, Durham Region Transit  
Report: #2021-DRT-07  
Date: April 7, 2021

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**Subject:**

Secondary student transportation

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**Recommendation:**

That the Transit Executive Committee recommends:

- A) That effective September 1, 2021, the Y10 pass be discounted by a further \$10.00 per month, from \$73.50 to \$63.50, providing youth with a monthly pass cost \$30.00 lower than the regular Youth pass (\$93.50 per month), with revenue impacts anticipated to be offset through increased sales volumes;
  - B) That a pilot bulk Youth pass purchase program be established for the 2021/2022 school year, with the program to be available to school boards within the Region of Durham including Durham Student Transportation Services, and the bulk purchase rate for Youth passes to be discounted by \$20.00 per month, from \$93.50 to \$73.50, when collectively at least 570 monthly passes are purchased for a given month; and
  - C) That staff report back to Transit Executive Committee in June 2022 summarizing the results of the Y10 pass program and the pilot bulk Youth pass purchase program.
- 

**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to identify the capacity for Durham Region Transit (DRT) to increase the modal share of secondary students within existing service capacity (2019 service level), and to present the estimated financial impacts to onboard secondary students in the urban areas of the Durham Region.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 Between 2006 and 2013, in addition to the regular unrestricted pass, DRT provided two restricted, Monday to Friday only student monthly passes.
- a. A student monthly pass was available from DRT points of sale at a cost of \$70.50 (2012-2013 rate).
  - b. A bulk purchasing program was available to the Durham District School Board (DDSB), Durham Catholic District School Board (DCDSB), and the Student Transportation Services of Central Ontario (representing Kawartha Pine Ridge District School Board and the Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington District School Board), at a cost of \$49.50 per pass (2012-2013 rate).
- 2.2 Between 2006 and 2013 Durham Student Transportation Services (DSTS) provided student transportation through a combination of bulk purchased restricted DRT student passes, and regular restricted student passes.
- 2.3 On February 13, 2013, Regional Council approved the elimination of the restricted student monthly passes effective June 30, 2013. Due to limited PRESTO functionality, fare collection based on a restricted time of day could not be accommodated. New unrestricted monthly student passes were implemented September 1, 2013, including the \$86.50 student monthly pass, and the bulk purchase student pass program offered to the Boards of Education that provided a 15 per cent discount (\$73.50 per pass).

The Superintendent of Business and Chief Financial Officer, and a Trustee for the DCDSB appeared before Regional Council on February 13, 2013, to advise that at the regular Board meeting of February 11, 2013, the Board of Trustees and the DCDSB unanimously agreed to express concerns to Regional Council of the impact on students and parents with the increase in the cost of the student passes to \$86.50. It was further noted that the School Boards are funded on a fixed per pupil amount basis and that approval of the rate increase to the bulk pass program to \$73.50 would leave their Board with no other fiscally responsible option than to end the long-standing partnership with Durham Region Transit.

On June 12, 2013, DRT staff reported to the TEC that school Board officials confirmed that they would be moving to the use of yellow school buses in the fall of 2013.

- 2.4 DSTS provides transportation to students in the DDSB and DCDSB. DSTS is a consortium formed by agreement between the DDBS and DCDSB for the purpose of providing a common administration of student transportation services for Durham Region. DSTS is one of more than 30 student transportation consortia within Ontario which have been mandated by the Ministry of Education.
- 2.5 The Education Act places no mandatory responsibility for School Boards to provide transportation services. Accordingly, it is understood that transportation is a privilege, not a right. As outlined in the DSTS policy document, the Durham District and the Durham Catholic District School Boards believe there are conditions that may warrant the provision of transportation services for students in accordance with approved Board Transportation Policy. As such, school bus vehicles are an extension of the classroom, and students are responsible to the Principal for their conduct in accordance with all applicable Board policies and procedures.
- 2.6 DSTS operate on a run sharing principle, where bus routes are shared to avoid duplication of costs. To optimize operations, DSTS tier with one bus having multiple routes to more than one school or students from partner School Boards may be transported on the same vehicle.
- 2.7 On January 27, 2020, the Government of Ontario announced a review of the student transportation funding formula, with the goal of achieving a more efficient and accountable student transportation system and improving the transportation experience for students. It's DRT's understanding that there have been delays in advancing the review due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 2.8 Youth ridership has been declining annually and currently accounts for approximately ten per cent of DRT ridership (2019). To incentivize children and youth to travel using public transit, several fare incentives were introduced in 2019, including:
- a. Children (12 years of age and younger) travel for free.
  - b. Y10 program, with youth (13-19 years of age) saving \$20 per month when purchasing a monthly youth pass each consecutive month from September through June.
  - c. Summer 2 for 1 program, where youth receive a July and August pass for the price of one monthly pass.
- 2.9 Currently, one school in the DDSB and two schools in the DCDSB continue to regularly purchase DRT monthly Youth passes. DSTS regularly purchases Youth

passes that are provided to another school in the DCDSB. In March 2020, DRT sold 446 Youth passes (rate of \$93.50) directly to schools and DSTS, and the schools provided the passes to their students at no cost to the students.

- 2.10 The Y10 fare incentive was launched in September 2019, offering students a discount of up to \$200.00, or \$20.00 per month, when they purchase a youth pass every month between September and June. When combined with the Two for One Summer youth pass program, families can currently save \$293.50 annually per youth.

In January 2020, 360 Y10 passes were sold. The COVID-19 pandemic began approximately five months after the launch of the Y10 program in September 2019 and a thorough evaluation of the program has not yet been completed.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 Report #2013-DRT-05 Servicing and Financing Study outlines the recommendations to eliminate the restricted student monthly pass and the restricted student monthly bulk rate pass program provided to the school boards, effective June 30, 2013. Council adopted the recommendations on February 3, 2013.

### **4. Discussion**

- 4.1 Ninety-eight per cent of all dwellings within the urban area of the Region are 800 metres or less from a DRT bus stop. DSTS policy specifies a maximum walking distance of 800 metres to school bus stops, with the actual walking distance being approximately 400 metres. The average walking distance from a dwelling to a DRT bus stop is 300 metres, or less than five minutes. The applicable DDSB and DCDSB secondary schools are within 600 metres to a DRT bus stop, or a seven-minute walk.

#### **4.2 Feasibility review**

The criteria and assumptions used for this review are summarized in Attachment #1.

- a. Approximately 6,700 students live between two and 3.2 kilometres from their designated school and are not eligible for DSTS bus services. This demographic represents an opportunity to increase DRT's modal share from the current nine per cent (603 students) to 42 per cent (2,814

students) using existing DRT resources (residual capacity), generating up to \$2 million additional annual fare revenue.

- b. Approximately 5,800 secondary students live more than 3.2 km from their designated school and are eligible for DSTS bus services.

Beyond 3.2 kilometres from schools there is limited service and residual capacity on the DRT network (such as route 110 serving Dunbarton High School in Pickering) based on the catchment area of the school. Generally, there is less student density and less scheduled transit service the farther the distance from the school. Population density and transit service levels and capacity are highest in areas closer to schools.

For example, students attending Notre Dame Catholic Secondary School (Ajax) and living more than 3.2 kilometres from the school primarily live south of the 401. There are no students attending the school from areas beyond 3.2 kilometres to the east and west, and any residual capacity on routes in these areas would not be used by students attending this school. The residual capacity on routes originating in the area south of the 401 would be inadequate to meet demand, and additional revenue service hours and buses would be required.

## **5. Financial Considerations**

- 5.1 Operational or capital investments are not required to significantly increase the transit market share of students living between two and 3.2 kilometres from their school and who are not currently eligible for school busing; residual capacity within the DRT network can accommodate up to 42 per cent of these students (2,814 additional students), generating up to approximately \$2 million in additional annual fare revenue.

To fully onboard secondary students currently eligible for busing by DSTS, significant operating and capital investments would be required. The necessary increase in DRT's annual revenue service hours and related fleet and expansion facility requirements would imply considerable budget pressures in future years.

- 5.2 Based on the 2013 decision of the school boards to cancel the partnership with DRT when the restricted monthly student pass was increased from \$49.50, DRT is unable to offer a competitive alternative to existing school bus transportation for all secondary school students.
- 5.3 Onboarding all secondary students by DRT would also impact DSTS current service delivery logistics and require a full review of bus routes and bell times,



likely impacting elementary student pickup and drop-off times, with corresponding impacts to family schedules. Further, a transition between yellow school bus and transit services would require alignment to address contractual implications for DSTS and a ramp-up of DRT activities: operator hiring, bus purchases and facility design, build and commissioning. DRT would require at least five years to procure and construct facility requirements pending approval of an updated ten-year capital plan.

- 5.4 Further incentivizing the Y10 program (Table 2) and implementing a pilot incentivized bulk youth pass purchasing program for school boards (Table 3), including DSTS, may contribute to increasing student and youth ridership, supporting travel to school, work or other commitments and activities.

Table 2: Based on average Y10 passes sold September 2019 – March 2020 (400 passes), additional number of monthly passes required to break even for various additional discounts to the Y10 monthly pass.

Current Y10 Cost	Additional Discount	Revised Pass Cost	Lost Revenue (400 passes)	Additional passes to break even	Total Passes
\$73.50	\$5	\$68.50	\$2,000.00	29	429
	<b>\$10</b>	<b>\$63.50</b>	<b>\$4,000.00</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>463</b>
	\$15	\$58.50	\$6,000.00	103	503
	\$20	\$53.50	\$8,000.00	150	550

Reducing the Y10 fare by an additional \$10.00 per month will require an additional 63 Y10 passes to be purchased, or a minimum of 463 Y10 passes per month, to generate the same fare revenue recorded during the period September 2019 – March 2020. The total financial risk associated would be \$40,000 (\$10.00 per pass per month for 10 months) should the Y10 discount be provided and no additional sales materialize.

Table 3: Based on Youth passes sold to school Boards March 2020 (450 passes), additional number of monthly bulk pass purchases required to break even for various discounts to the Youth monthly pass.

Youth Fare (per month)	Discount	Revised Pass Cost	Lost Monthly Revenue (450 passes)	Additional passes to break even	Total Passes
\$93.50	\$5	\$88.50	\$2,250.00	25	475
	\$10	\$83.50	\$4,500.00	54	504
	\$15	\$78.50	\$6,750.00	86	536

Youth Fare (per month)	Discount	Revised Pass Cost	Lost Monthly Revenue (450 passes)	Additional passes to break even	Total Passes
	\$20	\$73.50	\$9,000.00	122	572
	\$25	\$68.50	\$11,250.00	164	614
	\$30	\$63.50	\$13,500.00	213	663
	\$35	\$58.50	\$15,750.00	269	719
	\$40	\$53.50	\$18,000.00	336	786

Setting a minimum purchase volume ensures the pilot program is at least revenue neutral for DRT. For example, the school boards and DSTS would be required to collectively purchase 572 Youth month passes, or 122 more passes than the average monthly passes purchased during the 2019-2020 school year, to be eligible for the discount of \$20.00 per monthly pass; otherwise regular Youth pass rates (\$93.50) would apply.

## 6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Environmental Sustainability: Expand sustainable and active transportation
  - b. Service Excellence: Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value

## 7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Onboarding all post-secondary students onto the DRT network would result in an annual pressure of approximately \$7 million with the potential to significantly disrupt school and family schedules. Based on the 2013 decision of the school boards to cancel the partnership with DRT when the restricted student pass was increased from the rate of \$49.50, DRT is unable to offer a competitive alternative to fully replace existing school bus transportation for all secondary school students.
- 7.2 There is an opportunity to improve youth ridership without additional costs to DRT. Residual capacity within the existing network can accommodate up an additional 2,800 students, generating up to \$2 million in additional fare revenue.
- 7.3 It is recommended that the Y10 monthly pass rate be discounted by an additional \$10.00 (\$63.50) for the 2021-2022 school year, effective September 2021. The

financial risk of lower revenues, up to \$16,000 for 2020, will be funded through the approved 2021 budget.

- 7.4 It is also recommended that DRT re-establish a bulk purchase pilot program for the 2021/22 school year to be at least revenue neutral for DRT compared to the average monthly pass sales during the 2019/2020 school year. The school boards and DSTS would be required to collectively purchase 572 Youth month passes to be eligible for a discount of \$20.00 per monthly pass; otherwise regular Youth pass rates (\$93.50) apply.

## 8. **Attachments**

Attachment #1: Methodology, assumptions, and criteria

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Bill Holmes

General Manager, DRT

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair

Chief Administrative Officer

**Attachment #1: Methodology, assumptions, and criteria**

1. 2019 data was used to model the feasibility to onboard students based on the pre pandemic DRT route network.

- Secondary students only
- Number of students walking or taking school bus service to and from their designated school (DSTS data from 2019-2020)
- Students living more than 3.2 kilometres from their designated area school are eligible for school bus services (DSTS policy)
- Bell times for the 2019-2020 school year
- DRT boarding data from September and October 2019 (period of highest use of transit services in Durham)
- Fall 2019 DRT service levels and route network

2. Assumptions and criteria

- Modelling restricted to urban area of the Region
- DRT bus capacity is 54 passengers
- Students living less than two kilometres from school excluded because they are likely to walk
- Revenue calculations based on the Y10 monthly pass program (Y10 offers \$20.00 discount on the regular youth monthly pass of \$93.50)
- Students board DRT at existing transit stops (current school bus routing is customized and eliminates need for students to cross streets or roads)
- For students eligible for school buses and where DSTS do not provide transportation, School Boards purchase, administer, and distribute to their students.

3. Students living between two and 3.2 kilometres from their school

Based on 2019 route level data staff approximated the 2019 student ridership mode share and the residual bus capacity available to accommodate additional students. Residual bus capacity refers to the unused capacity on routes servicing the secondary schools approximately 30 minutes before the start of the first bell, and 30 minutes after the final bell time.

4. Students living more than 3.2 kilometres from school (eligible for DSTS services)

Based on 2019 route level data staff approximated the 2019 student ridership mode share and the residual bus capacity available to accommodate additional students.

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 3702



## Durham Region Transit Report

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To: Durham Region Transit Executive Committee  
From: General Manager, Durham Region Transit  
Report: #2021-DRT-08  
Date: April 7, 2021

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**Subject:**

Paper transfers

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**Recommendation:**

That the Durham Region Transit Executive Committee approve:

- A) That staff review and report back to TEC in December 2021 summarizing Durham Region Transit's (DRT) current fare payment processes, including direct and indirect costs of electronic, cash and ticket fares, including barriers and recommended solutions for considering a fully electronic fare payment process.
  - B) That paper transfers be reintroduced on a trial basis starting May 3, 2021, and that should there be a change in employee COVID-19 cases, DRT stop issuing paper transfers for cash and ticket fares; and
  - C) That during the trial period and effective June 1, 2021, DRT no longer issue free PRESTO cards, unless approved otherwise, and should DRT cease issuing paper transfers, PRESTO cards be issued at no cost to a customer if \$6.50 is loaded when purchasing the card at a Durham Region Transit point of sale location.
- 

**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the Transit Executive Committee (TEC) an overview of current fare payment options during the COVID-19 pandemic in response to Transit Advisory Committee (TAC) recommendation that Durham

Region Transit (DRT) resume the use of paper transfers when a fare is paid with cash or ticket.

## **2. Background**

- 2.1 At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic DRT implemented several safety measures to ensure public transit could continue to safely operate, including rear door boarding and the suspension of fare collection, maximum bus loads, and maintaining physical distance between the bus operator and passengers. These measures were crucial to ensuring the safety of customers and employees.
- 2.2 Before resuming fare collection in July 2020, the risks of COVID-19 transmission were reviewed when fare is paid using cash or paper fare media.
- a. Lack of hand washing facilities for customers handling cash or tickets
  - b. Operator handing transfer to each customer who pays by cash or ticket
  - c. Additional time a customer stand at the front of the bus to pay and wait for their transfer
  - d. Disputes regarding cash fares and expired paper transfers
  - e. Employees empty fare boxes and staff handle cash to prepare for pick-up by contracted security services
  - f. Additional people (contracted service provider) in DRT's workplace
  - g. Recommendation from the Province and Public Health to adopt contactless fare payment when possible

The Durham Region Health Department fact sheet data April 9, 2020, title COVID-19 and Physical Distancing, highlighted the use of tap to pay rather than handling money as a way to practice physical (social) distancing.

The June 11, 2020 Ministry of Transportation document "Guidance for Public Transit Agencies and Passengers in Response to COVID-19", highlighted that whenever possible transit agencies and transit passengers should avoid exchanging paper products such as cash for fare collection and receipts, and to favour contactless payment such as tapping credit or debit cards.

- 2.3 Consistent with the recommendations issued by the Provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health on May 20, temporary "bio-shield" barriers were installed between the bus driver and boarding customers. The bio-barrier mitigated the risk

of exposure to the COVID-19 virus (droplets from coughing, sneezing and talking) from boarding customers.

- 2.4 Customers who pay using cash or tickets are provided a paper transfer printed by the bus operator using the driver control unit; the bus operator hands the transfer to the customer. DRT transfers are valid for a period of two hours. When using contactless fare payment, there is no contact between the operator and customer and the transfer is automatically applied to the card when the customer taps their card on the reader when boarding the bus.
- 2.5 The electronic fare payment system was implemented in 2008 offering passengers, operators and DRT several benefits including seamless travel between transit systems, on-line account management and electronic purse protection, and accurate ridership data. Customers load value or passes onto their cards on-line or in-person at points of sale (POS) locations and can board participating transit services by tapping their card on the fare transaction device at entrance points. In 2019, 39 per cent of DRT customers paid their fare using the PRESTO fare payment system.
- 2.6 Electronic fare payment affords customers the opportunity for significant savings; DRT PRESTO fare is cheaper than cash fares. The \$6.00 PRESTO card fee is recovered by the eighth trip. For every trip thereafter, the customer saves \$0.75 a trip, or approximately \$10.00 for every 14 bus trips.
- 2.7 It's beneficial for customers to register their PRESTO card and protect their balance if their card is lost or stolen, however, registration is voluntary, and customers can remain anonymous while taking advantage of lower PRESTO fares.
- 2.8 Several options are available to customers to load value onto their PRESTO card.
  - a. prestocard.ca (credit card only currently)
  - b. DRT POS (cash, debit, or credit card)
  - c. any of the 28 Shoppers Drug Mart locations in the Region (cash, debit or credit card)
  - d. GO Transit stations in Pickering, Ajax, Whitby, Oshawa (cash, debit or credit card)
- 2.9 It has long been DRT's policy, consistent with the transit industry, that for the safety and security of staff and customers, bus operators don't carry change and exact cash fares are required.

- 2.10 Based on a review of best practices, a paper transfer for cash paying customers is the only applicable approach currently used in the transit industry.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

- 3.1 On December 4, 2019, TEC endorsed the principles and timelines outlined in DRT's fare strategy (#2019-DRT-25 Durham Region Transit Fare Strategy).

The fare strategy will achieve a fare structure that is simple, seamless and fair, provides incentives to loyal customers, and offers additional assistance to customers through social services.

The fare strategy is based on six principles:

- a. Recognize fare pricing influences services use.
- b. Apply fare increases to the standard (adult) single-ride fare and translate increases to other concessions and products.
- c. Provide choice for customers through loyalty incentives offering value for frequent use.
- d. Incentivize and prioritize electronic fare payment functionalities that provide value for customers and DRT.
- e. Minimize interaction/oversight of fares by bus operators.
- f. Ensure sustainability of discounted fare programs while minimizing impacts on DRT service delivery.

The fare strategy consists of three stages:

- a. Short term (2020): Incentivizing PRESTO by creating a significant price differential between single ride and cash fares.
  - b. Medium term (2021-2024): Fare harmonization and acceleration of PRESTO adoption.
  - c. Long term (2025 and beyond): Simplified, needs-based fare structure that promotes easier travel beyond Durham Region boundaries.
- 3.2 On June 3, 2020, TEC adopted three recommendations (#2020-DRT-11 Resumption of Fare Collection) supporting fare resumption on July 2, 2020.
- a. Eliminate monthly passes (excluding Access Pass) and paper transfers and limit availability of paper tickets.
  - b. Provide 4,000 PRESTO cards at no cost to customers.



- c. Investigate additional contactless fare payment technology strategies such as mobile ticketing.
- 3.3 On September 9, 2020, TEC adopted a recommendation (#2020-DRT-18 PRESTO Card Incentive) to continue incentives to support customer adoption of PRESTO contactless fare payment. TEC approved that the \$6.00 PRESTO card fee be waived when a customer loads a minimum of \$6.50, the equivalent of two adult trips. These free PRESTO cards were available at DRT Point of Sale (POS) locations through December 31, 2020.
- 3.4 On January 7, 2021, TEC directed staff to review alternatives to paper transfers, to report back at the April meeting, and to continue to provide free PRESTO cards to customers when they load a minimum of \$6.50.

#### **4. Current Status**

- 4.1 Approximately 7,700 free PRESTO cards have been distributed to customers since June 2020.
- 4.2 E-Tickets were implemented in September 2020 and customers can purchase their DRT E-Ticket single ride tickets or monthly pass from their smartphone. For the week March 7-14, 2021, less than one per cent of ridership paid their fare using an E-Ticket. The weekly use of E-Tickets, however, is trending higher.
- 4.3 An average of 78 per cent of customers paid their fare using PRESTO during the period September-December 2020. The high PRESTO adoption rate is due to the pause of the U-Pass agreement. For January and February 2020, 38 per cent of ridership paid using PRESTO, with 35 per cent of ridership using the U-Pass.
- 4.4 Monthly ridership paying a cash fare has remained consistent with pre-pandemic levels, ranging between nine and 11 per cent, currently between 1,500 – 1,800 riders per day.
- 4.5 Based on the PRESTO operating agreement, DRT is required to attain a PRESTO adoption rate of 70 per cent by approximately July 2022, with the required adoption rate increasing to 80 per cent 12 months after Open Payment is launched.
- 4.6 PRESTO devices installed on conventional buses were replaced in 2020 as part of the device refresh program. The updated PRESTO devices enable new functionality including reduced card loading delays and electronic validation of E-

Tickets when boarding. The devices also support open payment which is expected to be piloted at DRT later in 2021. The Open Payment option will enable customers to pay their fare with their credit or debit card and provide an automatic two-hour transfer.

The design and placement of the new PRESTO devices were engineered before the pandemic; approximately 35 per cent of buses still require bus operators to hand the transfer to the customer.

PRESTO devices can be repositioned but requires additional engineering design by Metrolinx at a cost of up to \$43,000. This work will be completed later in 2021 following the installation design of the new permanent bus operator safety shields.

- 4.7 Several prevention measures have been implemented on buses to mitigate the risk of virus transmission between customers and bus operators.
- a. Installed operator bio-shields
  - b. Although customers are expected to supply their own hand sanitizer, hand sanitization stations are installed at the front and rear doors of the buses and solutions are replenished nightly during daily servicing activities
  - c. Provincial legislation mandates that face coverings or masks be worn by everyone on the bus, with exceptions
  - d. Posted required Public Health information, including customer pre-screening expectations
  - e. Limited the number of passengers (seated load)
  - f. Required customer boarding through front door, exit through back door, except customer who require ramp to be deployed
  - g. Buses are cleaned and disinfected daily

Currently, approximately 99.5 per cent of customers wear a face covering or mask when boarding a DRT bus.

- 4.8 Public Health has advised that as long as all the recommended public health measures are taken (physical distance, hand hygiene, masking, flow of patrons, etc), handling transfers would be a low risk activity for COVID transmission. Further, based on available information the risk of COVID-19 virus transmission

on a public transit vehicle is similar to the risk of transmission within the general community.

- 4.9 DRT is unaware of any confirmed incidents of COVID-19 transmission on a DRT bus involving customers or employees.
- 4.10 DRT is currently hosting a virtual Public Information Centre (PIC) to engage residents and customers on DRT's customer-facing policies, draft social equity policy, and contactless fare payment. Residents are being asked three fare-related questions.
- What are the barriers that prevent you from switching to automated fare payment, such as PRESTO E-tickets or PRESTO card?
  - Did you know that you save money when using PRESTO instead of cash?
  - For customers using PRESTO, what are the challenges you are currently experiencing with the system?

The PIC remains open through April 3, 2021, however at the time of preparing this report no feedback has been provided.

## **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 Since June 2020, an average of 855 free PRESTO cards have been issued each month, at a cost of approximately \$5,130 per month. Should DRT resume issuing PRESTO cards at no cost to customers, the total associated financial risk for the remainder of 2021 (April through December) would be \$46,170, and eligible for funding through the Safe Restart Agreement.
- 5.2 Engineering work required to reposition 35 per cent of the PRESTO devices to eliminate the need for the operator to handle the transfer to the customer will cost approximately \$43,000; implementation costs are unknown at this time. Associated costs that cannot be funded from within DRT's 2021 budget will be considered for DRT's 2022 Business Plans and Budget.

## **6. Next Steps**

- 6.1 Consistent with DRT's fare strategy, specifically to minimize interaction and oversight of fares by bus operators, DRT will coordinate with PRESTO to identify alternative installations that enable customers to independently access paper transfers once the driver safety shields are installed.

- 6.2 Staff will also complete a fulsome study of current fare payment processes, including direct and indirect costs associated with DRT's electronic fare payment system and cash fares, and barriers to customers adopting electronic fare payment. Staff will report back to TEC in December 2021 highlighting barriers and recommended solutions for considering a fully electronic fare payment process.

## **7. Relationship to Strategic Plan**

- 7.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Community Vitality: Enhance community safety and well-being.
  - b. Service Excellence: Collaborate for a seamless service experience.

## **8. Conclusions**

- 8.1 Paper transfers were temporarily removed in June 2020 as part of DRT's safety measures to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 virus transmission during the cash and ticket fare payment process. Public Health has since advised that the transfer handling process is considered a low risk process related to the transmission of the COVID-19 virus.
- 8.2 At the January 2021 meeting, the Transit Advisor Committee expressed disappointment that their strong support for cash and paper transfers were dismissed, and that the transfer decision was delayed until the April TEC meeting.
- 8.3 Social equity and safety are important considerations for residents and public transit, and DRT has recently engaged residents to fully understand their barriers to adopting electronic fare payment options that offer residents and DRT many benefits over legacy cash and paper fare media, including customers saving money.
- 8.4 It's recommended that paper transfers be reintroduced on a trial basis starting May 3, 2021. Recognizing that:
- a. the provincial vaccination program is advancing;
  - b. it will be some time before most Ontarians are able to be vaccinated;
  - c. the cases of COVID-19 and variants of concern are currently increasing in our communities;
  - d. DRT is not aware of any confirmed cases of COVID-19 transmission on a DRT bus; and

- e. bus operators and transit staff must feel confident in the precautions implemented for their safety and the safety of their customers,

should there be a change in employee COVID-19 cases, DRT may cease issuing paper transfers for cash fares and customers paying by cash will pay a fare when boarding each bus.

- 8.5 It is also recommended that during the trial period, and effective June 1, 2021, DRT no longer provide free PRESTO cards, unless approved otherwise by TEC, and that if DRT cease issuing paper transfers, free PRESTO cards will resume when a customers loads at least \$6.50 when purchasing the card at a DRT point of sale location.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Bill Holmes  
General Manager, DRT

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer



## The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

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To: Durham Region Transit Executive Committee  
From: General Manager, Durham Region Transit  
Report: #2021-DRT-09  
Date: April 7, 2021

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**Subject:**

On Demand outcomes and next steps

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**Recommendation:**

That the Transit Executive Committee recommends

That this report be received for information.

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**Report:**

**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an update for On Demand services launched September 28, 2020.

**2. Background**

- 2.1 In Ontario, various forms of demand responsive service have operated over the past 40 years. The advancement of mobile data platforms has modernized the service to meet customer demands for real-time trip planning and communication of trip information such as real-time vehicle location and arrival times.

a. Dial-a-bus

Dial-a-bus was launched in the 1970s to service low density suburban areas often using smaller transit vehicles. Customers in established zones telephoned a reservation number to request a trip to a transit station.

In Ontario, dial-a-bus trials were first conducted by GO Transit in the York Mills area of Metropolitan Toronto, in the Bramalea area of Brampton, and in

Pickering. Service in these communities transitioned to scheduled bus routes as demand grew.

b. Transcab

Similar to dial-a-bus, Transcab service was introduced in several communities in Ontario and Quebec (known as Taxibus). Transit agencies partnered with local taxi providers to link low demand areas to the closest scheduled bus route, similar to the integrated service process many Specialized Transit customers utilize today. Customers telephoned a reservation number to request a trip.

In Ontario, communities which currently offer transcab services as part of their public transit service include Hamilton, Milton, Niagara Falls, Peterborough, St. Catharines, Sudbury, and Welland.

c. Advanced Technology Platforms

Advanced Technology Platforms, such as the Spare Labs currently used by DRT for its on-demand services, have gained popularity over the last five years. Similar to dial-a-bus and transcab, the service uses a mobile application that customers use to plan, request and book a trip. Most systems also offer a call-in option for customers who do not have access to a smartphone.

Advanced Technology Platforms leverage modern backend software to optimize real-time trip assignments to vehicles. The customer experience is similar to that of transportation network companies (TNC), such as Uber and Lyft, and elevates the customer experience by providing more detailed information on pick-up and drop off locations, vehicle arrival, and pre-booking options.

Application based services have been launched in several Ontario communities, including Barrie, Belleville, Durham Region, Innisfil, Niagara Region, North Bay, Oakville, Sault Ste. Marie, Stratford, Waterloo Region and York Region. Other communities considering this service delivery, include Cobourg, Fort Erie, Guelph, Hamilton, Manitoulin Island, and Milton.

d. Specialized transit

Specialized transit operates similar to dial-a-bus and the service is available only to eligible customers for all or part of their trip. Registered customers must dial into a reservation number to book a trip, and some systems now offer online booking through a mobile application.

2.2 Demand responsive service in Durham Region

a. Prior to 2016

- Dial-a-bus

Dial-a-bus operated in Ajax, Pickering, and Whitby during off peak hours to maintain customer access to transit service during periods of low demand. As ridership grew, dial-a-bus services were replaced with scheduled bus service.

- Late night shuttle

Late night shuttles provided drop off only service for customers boarding at GO train stations and the PULSE 900 Highway 2 bus route in Ajax, Pickering, and Whitby. Trips departed GO stations at designated times and customers would board the bus and advise the bus operator of their destination. The bus did not follow a defined route, rather, the bus operator followed the most efficient routing based on customer drop off locations.

As ridership demand increased the shuttles were replaced with scheduled service to offer more travel options during the late-night hours.

- Scugog dial-a-bus

In 2007, Durham Region Transit (DRT) trialed a dial-a-bus service in Scugog Township enabling customers to travel within the Township.

b. Five Year Service Strategy and Rural-North Service Strategy: 2016-2020

- Rural On Demand

As part of DRT's Rural-North Service Strategy, On Demand service was implemented in 2017 within the townships of Brock, Scugog, and Uxbridge. DRT delivered the service through Specialized Services and



customers were required to call into the reservation line to book a trip at least two hours in advance.

The 2020 Rural Transit Review included recommendations to expand On Demand to all rural areas within Durham Region, including rural areas of the urban Lakeshore municipalities.

To support the increasing customer value of On Demand with areas of low ridership, an advanced technology platform was launched in 2020 as part of the Ridership Recovery Plan. The platform allowed customers to travel at their convenience by scheduling and booking On Demand trips with a mobile application, or by telephoning a reservation line.

- Urban On Demand

With the successful launch of On Demand service in the rural areas, On Demand service was planned to be expanded in 2020 within some low ridership areas of some urban areas of the lakeshore municipalities. Initial plans focused on two low demand areas; the south Rosebank area of Pickering and the Port Whitby industrial area of Whitby.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, DRT pivoted to provide customer access to On Demand service in low area ridership areas as part of the Ridership Recovery Strategy. A weekly ridership framework was developed to actively monitor On Demand zones to support the transition back to scheduled service when reasonable.

### **3. Previous Reports and Decisions**

#### **3.1 #2020-DRT-12, Review of transit services in rural Durham**

In June 2020 TEC approved the implementation of the recommendations and strategy outlined in Report #2020-DRT-12.

- a. Replace scheduled services in low demand areas of rural areas with On Demand service.
- b. Adopt a scalable advanced technology platform that is complementary with and has the capability to schedule and dispatch both Specialized Services and On Demand trips in coordination with the scheduled service network to provide efficiencies through integration of services.

#### **3.2 Ridership Recovery Framework Presentation, July 8, 2020, Transit Executive Committee**

During the COVID-19 pandemic ridership demand declined by more than 70 per cent, primarily a result of commuter markets such as downtown Toronto and post secondary institutions implementing remote work and learning. Boardings on many bus routes was low, with many local routes experiencing two or fewer customers per trip. As a cost containment measure service on many routes was reduced to an hourly daytime service, and some routes were temporarily cancelled.

DRT's Ridership Recovery Plan introduced On Demand in the urban area as part of the Phase A service plan for September 2020 as part of several service changes to adapt the transit network to the realities of the COVID-19 pandemic and establish a sustainable and scalable network to support economic recovery and increasing ridership.

The Phase A service plan enabled DRT to re-assign operating staff to important bus cleaning and sanitization tasks and ensure appropriate levels of operating staff to maintain service while responding to potential increases in pandemic-related absences. All remaining part-time employees that were laid off returned to work in March 2021.

### 3.3 #2021-DRT-03 General Manager's Report – February 3, 2021

Specific to zones of low ridership, the current On Demand service is frequent, available and accessible regardless of where residents live or travel in the Region, and a cost-effective way to deliver transit service during the pandemic. Replacing On Demand with an equivalent level of scheduled service in low ridership zones would cost an additional \$14.5 million. Replacing On Demand with scheduled service that operates every 60 minutes between the hours of 7 am and 7 pm, with weekend services not available in some areas, would cost an additional \$3.4 million.

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1 Service Design

As of September 2020, DRT operates one of the largest On Demand services in Canada with area coverage of more than 2,500 square kilometres, including 18 urban On Demand zones. With a combination of scheduled and On Demand service, Durham Region is one of the few municipalities in Canada that provides 100 per cent transit area coverage including both rural and urban areas of the Region and operating seven days per week from early morning to late at night.

#### a. Ridership Monitoring Framework

As the Region begins to recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, transit ridership will gradually increase supporting travel to offices, school and other key destinations.

Scheduled service will replace On Demand services within a zone when ridership reaches 20 boardings per hour within a three-hour period.

## 4.2 Customer Experience

The On Demand service implemented in September 2020 included several new enhancements that improved the customer experience.

### a. Transit (application)

Transit is a mobile application supporting customers to plan their transit trip. Transit is integrated with the Spare application, allowing customers to plan and seamlessly book their On Demand trip. Transit also supports customers to plan inter-regional trips across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton area (GTHA).

### b. Spare

- DRT On Demand application

The Spare DRT On Demand mobile application is the interface customers use to book their On Demand trip with their mobile phones. The application provides customer with detailed trip information and real-time location of their assigned vehicle.

Customers can also telephone a book agent who will schedule their trip.

- Vehicle dispatching

The Spare technology platform delivers efficient scheduling of On Demand vehicles minimizing customer wait times. Current wait times are less than 15 minutes within urban areas, and less than 30 minutes in rural areas.

#### 4.3 Short-term enhancements

DRT continues to enhance On Demand service based on customer and operator feedback.

##### a. PRESTO availability

The PRESTO electronic payment system is widely available on scheduled services across the GTHA. Mobile PRESTO devices are currently used for DRT's internal fleet, but PRESTO payment has not always been available to the contracted service providers.

In September 2020, PRESTO E-tickets was launched to provide contactless mobile payments across all services. DRT will deploy PRESTO mobile devices to the contracted service provider in April 2021.

##### b. Child passengers

The Ministry of Transportation of Ontario (MTO) regulates vehicle child restraint systems through the Highway Traffic Act. The smaller vehicle type used for On Demand are equipped with seat belts and as such children and toddlers are required to use the safety equipment, including requirements such as booster and child seats.

In order to accommodate children and infants, customers are currently required to telephone a book agent and DRT deploys a full-sized transit bus to complete the trip. This process is similar to other transit systems operating On Demand, such as York Region Transit.

DRT is examining opportunities to provide a more seamless process to support families travelling with children requiring booster and child seats.

### 5. Relationship to Strategic Plan

5.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Expand sustainable and active transportation
- b. Enhance communication and transportation networks to better connect people and move goods more effectively
- c. Optimize resources and partnerships to deliver exceptional quality services and value

## **6. Conclusion**

- 6.1 In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, deploying On Demand services within urban areas has enabled DRT to enhance the mobility of residents across the Region by increasing access, availability, and the frequency of transit service.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

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Bill Holmes  
General Manager, DRT

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

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Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair  
Chief Administrative Officer