



THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
LINKING NIAGARA TRANSIT COMMITTEE
AGENDA

LNTC 5-2019

Wednesday, September 25, 2019

2:00 p.m.

Council Chamber

Niagara Region Headquarters, Campbell West

1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold, ON

| | Pages |
|---|---------|
| 1. <u>CALL TO ORDER</u> | |
| 2. <u>DISCLOSURES OF PECUNIARY INTEREST</u> | |
| 3. <u>PRESENTATIONS</u> | |
| 3.1 <u>Specialized Transit Study - Concept Engagement</u> | 1 - 25 |
| Steve Wilks, IBI Group | |
| 4. <u>DELEGATIONS</u> | |
| 5. <u>ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION</u> | |
| 6. <u>CONSENT ITEMS FOR INFORMATION</u> | |
| 6.1 <u>LNTC-C 10-2019</u> | 26 - 32 |
| Fare Harmonization and Implementation Strategy | |
| 6.2 <u>LNTC-C 11-2019</u> | 33 - 36 |
| Service Enhancements - September 2019 | |
| 6.3 <u>LNTC-C 12-2019</u> | 37 - 38 |
| Transit Governance Study Update | |

| | | |
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| 6.4 | <u>LNTC-C 14-2019</u> | 39 - 43 |
| | Niagara Region Transit Public Opinion Survey Results | |
| 6.5 | <u>LNTC 4-2019</u> | 44 - 45 |
| | Linking Niagara Transit Committee Minutes June 26, 2019 | |

7. OTHER BUSINESS

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, October 23, 2019 at 2:00 p.m. in the Council Chamber.

9. ADJOURNMENT

If you require any accommodations for a disability in order to attend or participate in meetings or events, please contact the Accessibility Advisory Coordinator at 905-980-6000 (office), 289-929-8376 (cellphone) or accessibility@niagararegion.ca (email).

Specialized Transit in Niagara



September 2019

MOVING
TRANSIT
FORWARD

CONNECTING MORE PEOPLE TO MORE POSSIBILITIES



Niagara  Region

Specialized Transit Study Scope

Established Municipal Specialized Transit Systems



Transit systems (hybrid)

- Lincoln Transit (U-Linc)
- Niagara-on-the-Lake Transit
- Pelham Transit

Transit systems under contract

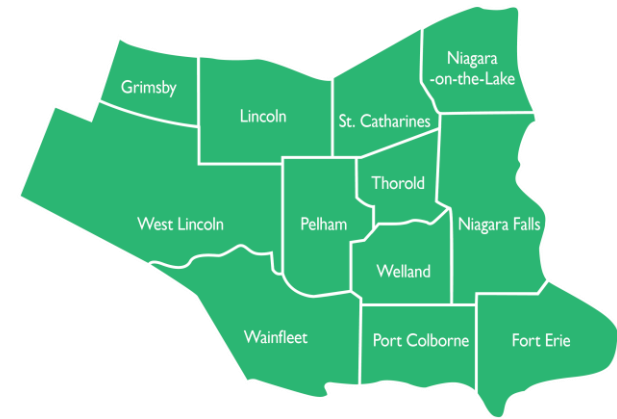
- Thorold
- Port Colborne

No transit service

- Grimsby
- West Lincoln
- Wainfleet

Presentation Outline

- Work Plan – Status/Update
- Specialized Transit in Niagara Region – Existing Conditions
- *What We Heard* – Stakeholder Consultation & Survey Results
- Travel Demand Estimates
- Key Issues & Challenges
- *Imagine Possibilities* – Opportunities
- Guiding Principles
- Concepts - A Preferred Approach - *An Eye on the Future*

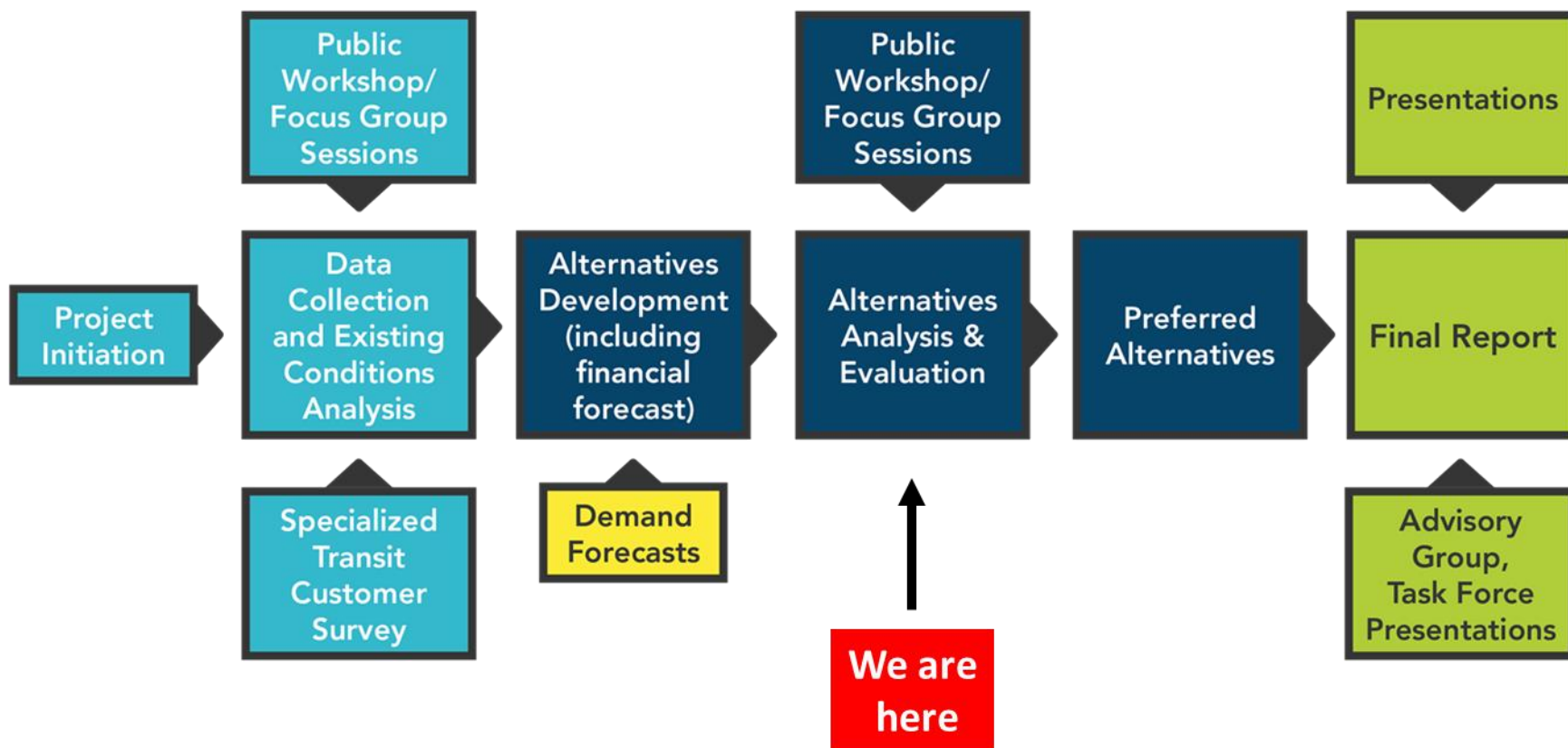


Study Objectives

- Opportunities to maximize use of existing resources
- Increase efficiencies in service delivery through policy review and development
- Project future specialized transit travel demand
- Develop options to best meet community's mobility needs - *Action Plan*



Work Plan



Specialized Transit in Niagara Region

- Total Operating Cost: \$5.27m
- 3,435 registrants
- Cost/Trip: \$45.17
- Total Trips: 105,800
- Cost/Capita: \$11.68
- Trips/Capita: 0.236

| Service | Population Served | # Registrants | Total Trips | Operating Cost | Cost/Trip | Operating Cost/Capita | Trips/Capita |
|------------------------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------|----------------|-----------|-----------------------|--------------|
| Niagara Region (NST) | 447,900 | 1,153 | 30,100 | \$2.37m | \$78.96 | \$5.31 | 0.067 |
| Niagara Falls (Chair-A-Van) | 88,100 | 734 | 24,900 | \$0.76m | \$30.67 | \$8.66 | 0.283 |
| Fort Erie (FAST) | 30,700 | 182 | 8,000 | \$0.30m | \$37.83 | \$9.87 | 0.261 |
| St. Catharines (Paratransit) | 151,900 | 1,117 | 30,200 | \$1.44m | \$46.76 | \$9.30 | 0.199 |
| Welland (WellTrans) | 52,300 | 249 | 12,600 | \$0.40m | \$32.08 | \$7.88 | 0.241 |
| TOTAL | 447,900 | 3,435 | 105,800 | \$5.27m | \$45.17 | \$11.68 | 0.236 |

Outreach & Consultation

- **Customer Survey** - online and paper, 250 completed surveys
- **Public Information Centres** - Welland and St. Catharines, approx. 45 attendees;
- **Discussion Groups** - Accessibility Advisory Committee & other key stakeholders (community organizations)
- **Focus Group Session** - Niagara Health Services

What We Heard

- Favourable view of drivers & staff
- Difficulty booking a trip – tedious including need to call multiple agencies (municipal & regional travel)
- Poor on time performance (or don't show up)
- Excessive travel times
- Inconsistent eligibility criteria & processes
- Residents of communities without specialized transit (West Niagara) – feel disadvantaged

What We Heard (cont.)

- Need for accessible paths of travel to use accessible fixed route transit

Most Requested Improvements

- Online trip booking and payment
- Extended service hours
- Phone alert upon vehicle arrival
- Ride-hailing/same day service (may be prepared to pay premium fare)

Forecasting Future Demand

- Provides a baseline for planning for future needs
- Need to know overall specialized transit demand and origins/destinations of trips
- Forecasts span years 2021 – 2031

Forecasting Approach

Current Context

- Shifting demand from locals to NST
- About 40% of trips are for dialysis and medical

Drivers of Change

- Aging & disability in Niagara Region
- Location of healthcare facilities

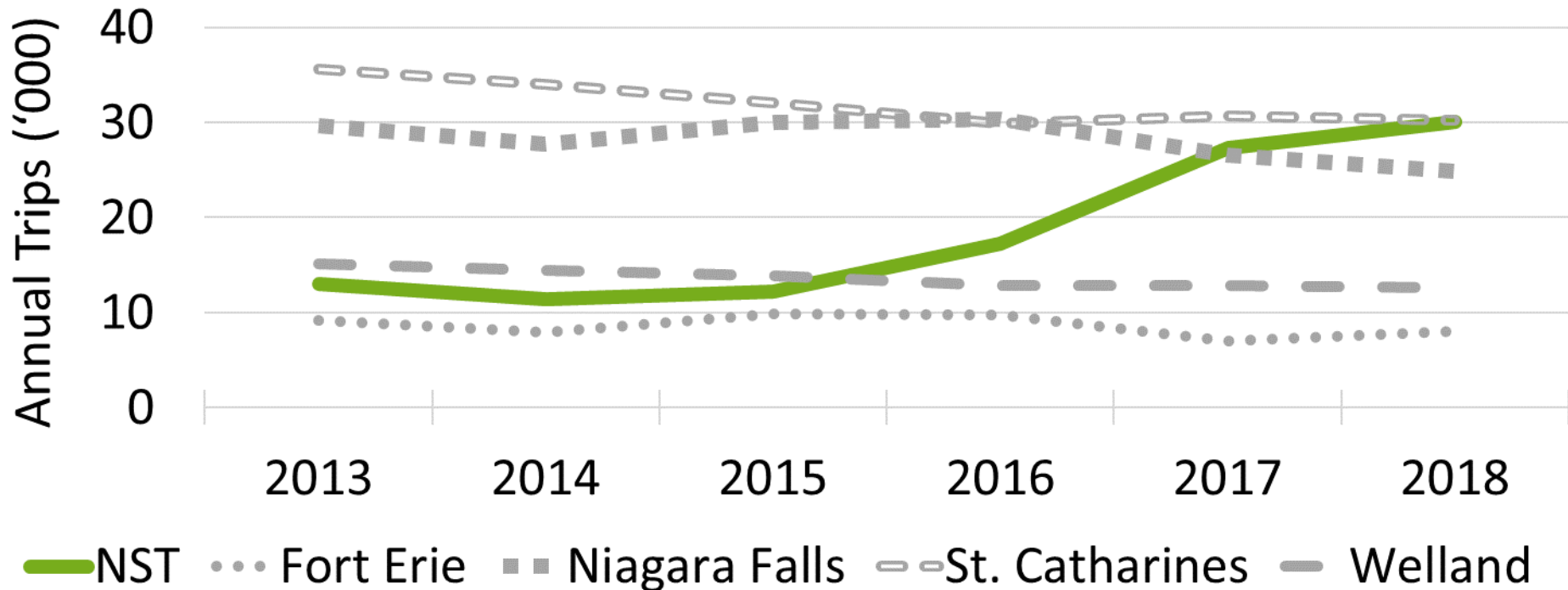
Future Demand

- Business-as-usual forecast
- High-growth forecast with higher rate of disability

Current Context

- Total demand up 3%, in line with population growth
- 14% of trips are for dialysis, over half of that on NST

Specialized Transit Trips, 2013-2018



Drivers of Change

Aging Population

- One in four residents will be over 65yrs by 2031

Rising Medical Needs

- 20% rise in residents with severe disability by 2031¹
- 25% rise in Region's dialysis needs by 2028²

Facility Locations

- South Niagara Hospital will shift healthcare facilities to Niagara Falls in 2026

Future Demand (BAU Case)

- Total demand hits 130,000 in 2021, 150,000 by 2031
- Inter-municipal trips grow to 27% of demand

| | 2018 | 2031 | Percentage Change |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Regional Trips | 30,000 | 40,100 | 34% |
| Trips by Municipal Agencies | 71,700 | 83,500 | 16% |
| Trips by Other Organizations | 22,600 | 26,300 | 16% |
| Total Trips | 124,000 | 149,900 | 21% |

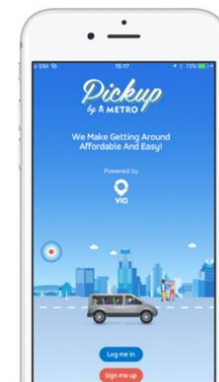
Future Demand (High Growth)

- Double growth rate of pop. with disability to 2.8% p.a.
- 12% more trips in 2026, 20% more by 2031 vs BAU

| | 2018 | 2031 | Percentage Change |
|-------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Regional Trips | 30,000 | 48,000 | 60% |
| Trips by Municipal Agencies | 71,700 | 100,000 | 40% |
| Trips by Other Organizations | 22,600 | 31,600 | 40% |
| Total Trips | 124,000 | 179,600 | 45% |

Challenges & Opportunities

- Effectively manage demographics / travel demand
- Address governance, program administration & trip management considerations to address:
 - Increasing costs
 - Program & fiscal accountability
 - Service & scheduling efficiencies (enhancements)
- Address range of functional disabilities
- Address compliance with AODA
- First/last 'mile' connections
- Integration with conventional transit
- Alternative delivery solutions – NextGen Mobility



Our goal is to provide shared ride public transit for those unable to use accessible fixed route transit

Guiding Principles – *An Eye on the Future*

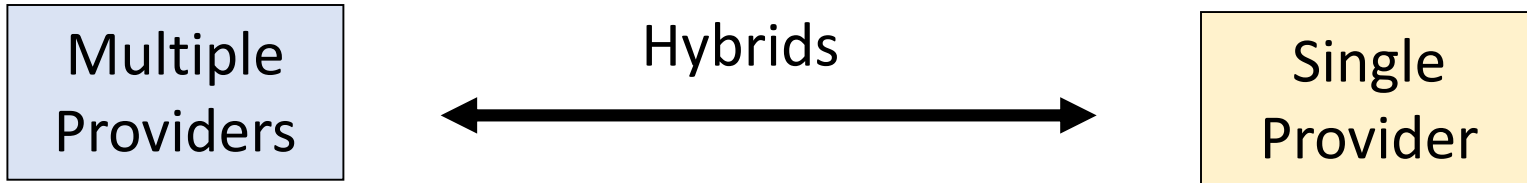
A Preferred Approach Designed To:

- **Preserve the integrity** of the Region's specialized transit services for those with no alternative
 - **Maximize benefits from investments** made in accessible fixed route transit & provide flexible mobility options
 - **Compliance with AODA** (& universal design)
 - **Be fiscally responsible and accountable**
- Maximize use of existing resources
 - Increase efficiencies in service delivery
 - Enhance the customer experience
 - Leverage use of technology

Our goal is to provide shared ride public transit for those unable to use accessible fixed route transit

Imagine Possibilities – Opportunities

Delivery Models



Models – to address core functional areas:

1. Eligibility & Certification
2. Trip Reservation & Scheduling
3. Dispatch/Trip Management
4. Service Delivery

Concepts – *A Preferred Approach*

Eligibility & Certification

- Centralized
- Application available on-line/web portal
- Consideration of use of In-person assessment & periodic re-certification

Reservations

- Centralized (One-Call / One-Click)

Scheduling (route optimization, allocation of resources)

- Extension of the reservation process

Concepts – *A Preferred Approach*

Service Delivery (Dispatch / Trip Management)

- Core service – buses & vans and/or use of supplemental services
- Alternate scenarios:
 - Multiple “service areas” (for example - Municipal boundaries or zones)
 - Demand management strategies – prescribed availability of service (days of week, times of day, etc.)

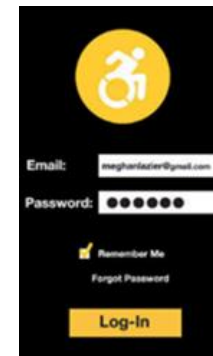
Next-Gen Mobility / Leverage Technology

- **Supplemental services** – taxis, TNCs, microtransit
 - Address peaking, late evenings & weekends
 - e-Hailing (same day) service

Concepts – *A Preferred Approach*

■ Technology

- Computerized scheduling & dispatch (route optimization)
- Real-time passenger information, IVR – broadcast vehicle arrivals
- Self-service: App +/- web portal – registration, trip planning, reservations, confirmations, cancellations
- Mobile payment (advanced fare systems)



■ Greater link/integration with fixed-route transit services

- Extent may meet mobility needs – current & future?
- Incentives & policies address demand/ mobility management opportunities?



Next Steps

- Based on input received and analysis, translate *Preferred Approach* into **Recommendations**
- Assess potential impact on demand of operational & service delivery *interventions*
- Develop financial forecasts
- Draft & Final Report – November/December 2019

Key Contacts



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A background network diagram consisting of dark grey circular nodes connected by thin grey lines, forming a complex web-like structure. The top half of the image has a dark grey background, while the bottom half is a solid teal color.

MOVING TRANSIT FORWARD



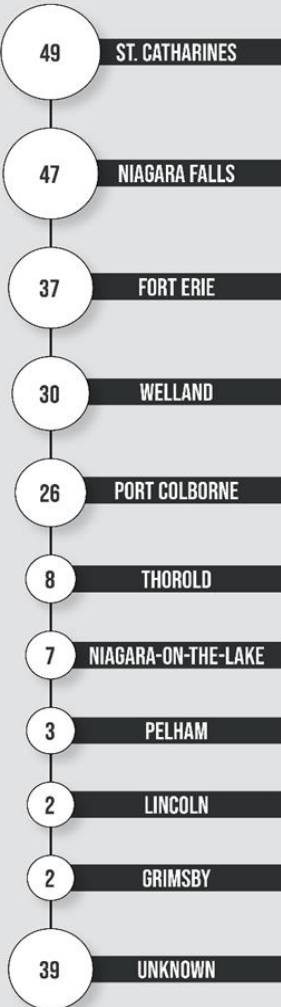
September 2019

CONNECTING MORE PEOPLE TO MORE POSSIBILITIES

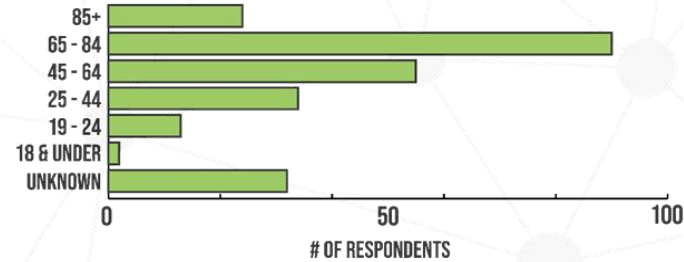
WHAT WE HEARD



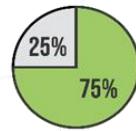
WHO RESPONDED?



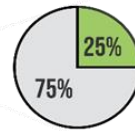
AGE OF RESPONDENTS



MOBILITY DEVICES



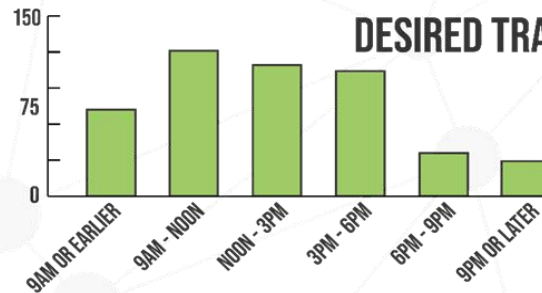
SUPPORT PERSONS



RESPONDENT NEEDS

REQUIRED BY RESPONDENTS
 NOT REQUIRED BY RESPONDENTS

DESIRED TRAVEL TIMES



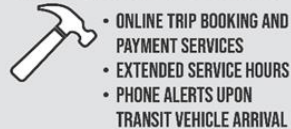
MOST COMPLIMENTS



MOST COMPLAINTS



MOST REQUESTED IMPROVEMENTS



**MOVING
TRANSIT
FORWARD**

CONNECTING MORE PEOPLE TO MORE POSSIBILITIES

Subject: Fare Harmonization and Implementation Strategy

Report to: Linking Niagara Transit Committee

From: Rob Salewysch, Program Manager, Transit Services

Report date: Wednesday, September 25, 2019

Recommendations

That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update LNTC on the common transit fare strategy that was identified by the Inter-municipal Transit Working Group (IMTWG) in its 2018-2019 workplan.
- The Niagara Transit Service Delivery and Governance Strategy (Dillon 2017), identified the shortfalls of the overall fare systems currently being used, and recommended that harmonizing the fare structure as well as payment technology would serve as a key enabler to a more connective and integrated transit system in Niagara.
- The IMTWG has identified a two-phased approach to this overall fare strategy where the fare media, fare structure, and payment technology would be aligned across each of Niagara's transit systems.
- The preferred common fare strategy is being recommended to the governing bodies of Niagara's transit systems by the respective members of the IMTWG with a target implementation date of January 1, 2021. This will be supported by, a yet to be determined, fare-payment technology solution.
- Staff have chosen to defer recommending a strategy for the alignment of NRT's fares until the 2021 budget deliberation process. This is due to the impacts that the upcoming governance discussion will have on items such as revenue sharing agreements, fare alignment on link routes, and opportunities relating to on-demand and potential support for low income residents.

Financial Considerations

Fare harmonization across all transit operators within Niagara begins with a common fare strategy at the local level and requires the creation of a consistent fare structure for travel within municipal boundaries. St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland are currently working towards a common fare strategy, while Fort Erie, Port Colborne, Pelham and Lincoln are investigating the impacts the proposed transit fare structure would have on existing service contracts and customer demand.

In 2010, Niagara Region entered into a Pilot Project Agreement with the City of Niagara Falls, the City of Welland, and the St. Catharines Transit Commission to facilitate an inter-municipal transit pilot project. In July 2017, Niagara Region obtained jurisdiction to operate conventional, inter-municipal transit services on a non-exclusive basis through a triple majority process. The current fare structure for NRT and cross boundary service was established in 2010 and ranges from 1.7 - 2.0 *times* the cost of a cash fare on a municipal transit service under the proposed common fare strategy (refer to Table 1 below).

Table 1: Proposed Common Fare Strategy Local Transit

| | Niagara Falls | St. Catharines | Welland | Average Fare | Proposed Fares Effective on or before January 1 2021 | % Change (of Proposed Price Over Average) | Current NRT Fare Structure | % of Proposed Local Fare |
|---|---------------|----------------|----------|--------------|--|---|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Cash Fare - Adult | \$ 3.00 | \$ 3.00 | \$ 3.00 | \$ 3.00 | \$ 3.00 | 0% | \$ 6.00 | 200% |
| Cash Fare - Senior | \$ 2.75 | \$ 3.00 | \$ 3.00 | \$ 2.92 | \$ 3.00 | 3% | \$ 5.00 | 167% |
| Cash Fare - Student | \$ 2.75 | \$ 2.50 | \$ 3.00 | \$ 2.75 | \$ 3.00 | 9% | \$ 5.00 | 167% |
| Cash Fare - Child | \$ 1.75 | \$ 2.50 | \$ 1.50 | \$ 1.92 | \$ 3.00 | | n/a | n/a |
| Day Pass | \$ 7.00 | \$ 8.00 | n/a | \$ 7.50 | \$ 8.00 | 7% | n/a | n/a |
| 10 Ride - Adult | \$ 28.00 | \$ 26.00 | \$ 25.00 | \$ 26.33 | \$ 27.00 | 3% | \$ 45.00 | 167% |
| 10 Ride - Senior | \$ 25.00 | \$ 20.00 | \$ 21.00 | \$ 22.00 | \$ 22.50 | 2% | \$ 40.00 | 178% |
| 10 Ride - Student | \$ 25.00 | \$ 22.50 | \$ 22.00 | \$ 23.17 | \$ 22.50 | -3% | \$ 40.00 | 178% |
| Monthly Pass - Adult | \$ 80.00 | \$ 92.00 | \$ 85.00 | \$ 85.67 | \$ 90.00 | 5% | \$ 160.00 | 178% |
| Monthly Pass - Senior | \$ 65.00 | \$ 57.00 | \$ 65.00 | \$ 62.33 | \$ 65.00 | 4% | \$ 130.00 | 200% |
| Monthly Pass - Student | \$ 65.00 | \$ 62.00 | \$ 75.00 | \$ 67.33 | \$ 65.00 | -3% | \$ 130.00 | 200% |
| Community Living / ODSP | \$ 65.00 | \$ 72.00 | \$ 76.00 | \$ 71.00 | \$ 65.00 | -8% | n/a | n/a |
| Family Pass | n/a | \$ 8.00 | n/a | | | | n/a | n/a |
| Semester Pass (based on adult) | \$ 260.00 | \$ 290.00 | n/a | \$ 275.00 | \$ 275.00 | 0% | n/a | n/a |
| Average Increase Across All Fare Categories | | | | | | 1.5% | | |

During the initial creation of the NRT pilot project, a revenue sharing agreement was facilitated with Niagara Falls, St. Catharines and Welland to grant individuals boarding an NRT bus the privilege of transferring onto the three respective municipal transit systems. Under this agreement, the cash fare paid to Niagara Region (\$6.00 adult) is shared in \$2.00 increments depending on which municipal system riders' transfer to. For example, if a rider that boarded a municipal bus in St. Catharines transferred to an inter-municipal bus (NRT) which brought them to Welland, and then boarded a municipal bus in Welland, the Region would retain \$2.00 with both St. Catharines and Welland also receiving \$2.00. Where NRT pass sales (e.g. 10-Ride cards, monthly passes) are concerned, revenue is shared among the four operators through a funding formula of 55% to Niagara Region and 45% allocated amongst the three local operators at a rate of 15% each.

The Port Colborne and Fort Erie Link routes were established under a cost sharing model with a distinct fare structure. Currently individuals boarding the Fort Erie Link

(Route 22) pay \$3.50 cash fare. Those boarding the Port Colborne Link (Route 25) pay \$4.00 cash fare and are permitted a transfer to Welland Transit only. The expansion of Link service into Niagara West and the potential introduction of new on-demand services creates an opportunity to re-evaluate all of the previously established individual fares and determine a strategic fare structure which will encourage higher demand and revenue/cost (R/C) target ratios.

Options for IMT fare harmonization for conventional transit services are presented in Table 2.a and 2.b below. Similar to the approach taken to align local transit fares, the initial options presented below target a strategy which minimizes the revenue impact and encourages ridership. Fare setting for on-demand services may be considered in addition to the fare strategy below since the parameters relative to cost, distance, responsiveness and pick-up drop off locations are currently being examined. Similar to establishing target R/C ratios on conventional service, efficient and effective R/C ratios must also be targets for on-demand services.

Table 2.a: Options for Inter-Municipal Transit Fare Alignment

| Niagara Region | Proposed Local Fare Structure (Jan. 1 '21) | Current NRT Fare Structure | Option 1 % change | Option 2 % change | Option 3 % change |
|---|--|----------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| Adults Cash Fare | \$ 3.00 | \$ 6.00 | \$ 6.00 0% | \$ 5.00 -17% | \$ 5.50 -8% |
| Seniors (65+) Cash Fare | \$ 3.00 | \$ 5.00 | \$ 6.00 20% | \$ 5.00 0% | \$ 5.50 10% |
| Elementary (6+) / High School Students Cash Fare | \$ 3.00 | \$ 5.00 | \$ 6.00 20% | \$ 5.00 0% | \$ 5.50 10% |
| Cash Fare - Child | \$ 3.00 | n/a | \$ 6.00 | \$ 5.00 | \$ 5.50 |
| Day Pass | \$ 8.00 | n/a | \$ 16.00 | \$ 13.25 | \$ 14.75 |
| Adults 10-ride Card | \$ 27.00 | \$ 45.00 | \$ 54.00 20% | \$ 45.00 0% | \$ 50.00 11% |
| Seniors (65+) 10-ride Card | \$ 22.50 | \$ 40.00 | \$ 45.00 13% | \$ 38.00 -5% | \$ 41.00 2% |
| Elementary (6+) / High School Students 10-ride Card | \$ 22.50 | \$ 40.00 | \$ 45.00 13% | \$ 38.00 -5% | \$ 41.00 2% |
| Adults Monthly Pass | \$ 90.00 | \$ 160.00 | \$ 160.00 0% | \$ 150.00 -6% | \$ 165.00 3% |
| Seniors (65+) Monthly Pass | \$ 65.00 | \$ 130.00 | \$ 130.00 0% | \$ 110.00 -15% | \$ 120.00 -8% |
| Elementary (6+) / High School Students Monthly Pass | \$ 65.00 | \$ 130.00 | \$ 130.00 0% | \$ 110.00 -15% | \$ 120.00 -8% |
| Community Living / ODSP | \$ 65.00 | n/a | \$ 130.00 | \$ 110.00 | \$ 120.00 |
| Family Pass | | | | | |
| Semester Pass (based on adult) | \$ 275.00 | n/a | \$ 550.00 | \$ 460.00 | \$ 505.00 |
| Overall Fare Structure Alignment Adjustment | | | 9% | -7% | 2% |

Table 2.b: Options for Link Fare Alignment

| Niagara Region | Proposed Local Cash Fare | Current Link Fare Structure | Total System Cost (if transferred to Another System) | Alignment Cost (under Option 1 structure) | Alignment Cost (under Option 2 structure) |
|---|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--|---|---|
| Fares Do Not include Local Transit Connections | | | | | |
| Adults Cash Fare Fort Erie to Niagara Falls Link Service | \$ 3.00 | \$ 3.50 | \$ 6.50 | \$ 6.00 | \$ 5.00 |
| Adults Cash Fare Port Colborne to Welland Link Service | \$ 3.00 | \$ 4.00 | \$ 7.00 | \$ 6.00 | \$ 5.00 |
| Seniors (65+) Cash Fare Fort Erie to Niagara Falls Link Service | \$ 3.00 | \$ 3.50 | \$ 6.50 | \$ 6.00 | \$ 5.00 |
| Seniors (65+) Cash Fare Port Colborne to Welland Link Service | \$ 3.00 | \$ 4.00 | \$ 7.00 | \$ 6.00 | \$ 5.00 |
| Elementary (6+) / High School Students Cash Fare Fort Erie to Niagara Falls Link Service | \$ 3.00 | \$ 3.50 | \$ 6.50 | \$ 6.00 | \$ 5.00 |
| Elementary (6+) / High School Students Cash Fare Port Colborne to Welland Link Service | \$ 3.00 | \$ 4.00 | \$ 7.00 | \$ 6.00 | \$ 5.00 |
| Overall Fare Structure Alignment Adjustment | | | | -11% | -26% |

The options presented above are not for consideration during the 2020 Budget process. A proposed fare harmonization strategy for Niagara Region will be brought forward for consideration during the 2021 Budget process after the determination of a new governance model.

Analysis

Systems across Niagara currently have a number of distinct rates, criteria for transit fares, and fare media products. To continue towards the objective of bringing consistency for riders and transferability between all systems to fruition as outlined in the IMTWG's 2018-2019 workplan, the IMTWG has identified a 2-phase approach to implementing a common fare strategy. The initial harmonization of the fare structures will be supported by the implementation of new fare payment technology in Phase 2 which will enable seamless travel for riders.

As part of Phase 1, the IMTWG is focused on the objective of bringing consistency across the existing systems regarding fare media (i.e. monthly passes, 10-ride cards, etc.). This also means systems would define their fare media and rider segments using the same categories (i.e. adult (18-64), senior (65+), student (12-18), child (12-under) etc.).

Aligning the fare charged in each category would result in consistency among the local systems. There is also the consideration that local Councils may still elect to allow for unique municipal exemptions, although these exemptions would minimize the benefits realized by aligning the fare categories. Irrespective of this, a significant opportunity exists to enable most fare media products and the associated fare structure to be fully aligned.

This alignment and associated operational and financial impacts are being advanced by the IMTWG to calculate the impact of these policy decisions on the respective local

transit authorities. Ultimately these decisions to adopt align and deploy any fare structure or product changes all require the full consent of the respective local Councils or transit authorities to implement.

Regarding fare payment technology, the IMTWG has been working within the parameters of the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) to align requests. Although not precisely defined at this time, the premise is that all systems would acquire and adopt the same fare payment technology using these external ICIP funding sources to assist in the harmonization of an integrated fare payment option. This could include mobile ticketing, on-board fare payment technology, smartcard fare payment, and /or other related hardware and software supports for next generation fare payment technology. This would accelerate the improved rider experience of a common fare payment technology and assist with the seamless movement of riders across Niagara. Additionally, the IMTWG is engaging with PRESTO (the fare payment solution used by Metrolinx) to learn more about the capital, operational and process requirements of that program and will look to bring a report to LNTC in the future examining all aspects of the PRESTO program.

Assuming all of the necessary approvals and funding mechanisms are achieved, the proposed harmonized fare structure and fare payment technology solution could be ready for deployment in 2021. This ambitious timeframe would include requisite Council/Commission approvals, public notification, selection, acquisition, installation and deployment. This would represent a significant achievement in the operational integration of transit systems in Niagara.

While the proposed common fare structure considers all of the major fare categories, there are other fare policies that still must be agreed upon and there is understanding among the group that there may be municipalities that have concession fare options that are outside of the common fare structure. Although the majority of fare structure alignment has been agreed to in principle amongst the IMTWG, the following fares remain outstanding in terms of consistency:

- Transfer Policies
- Children 12 & under ride free
- Veteran's Pass
- Family Pass (St Catharines Transit fare promotion)
- Monthly Pass (30 day versus 31 day)

The IMTWG shall continue its discussions on these items. Once consensus is reached, they will be brought to LNTC/Council(s) for review and approval.

Alternatives Reviewed

The IMTWG considered deferring the entirety of the fare harmonization effort until the governance review has been completed. This was deemed to be counter-productive to the group's overall mandate of integrating and aligning the services to create a more seamless experience for transit riders in Niagara.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

A future NRT common fare strategy directly aligns with several Council strategic priorities: Economic Growth and Development through the enforcement of strategic planning and leveraging partnerships with post secondary institutions; Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning through advancing regional transit and GO rail services and facilitating the movement of people and goods.

Other Pertinent Reports

- LNTC-C 09-2019 Niagara Transit Governance Review
- CSD 01-2019 2019 Capital Budget
- CSD 22-2019 2019 Levy Operating Budget
- LNTC-C 21-2018 - IMT Service Implementation Strategy
- LNTC-C 22-2018 - IMT Financial Impact Analysis
- LNTC-C 23-2018 - IMT Capital Plan, 2019
- CAO 8-2017 - Niagara Region's Transit Service Delivery and Governance Strategy

Prepared by:

Robert Salewytch
Program Manager, Transit Services
GO Implementation Office
Public Works Department

Recommended by:

Catherine Habermehl
Acting Commissioner
Public Works Department

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with the Inter-Municipal Transit Working Group; Heather Talbot, Financial and Special Project Consultant, Financial Management and Planning; and reviewed by Matt Robinson, Director, GO Implementation Office.

Subject: Service Enhancements - September 2019

Report to: Linking Niagara Transit Committee

Report date: Wednesday, September 25, 2019

Recommendations

That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to provide Committee members with an update on the transit service enhancements which began in September 2019.
- The Niagara Region Transit enhancements are a result of the continued collaboration between Niagara Region and the local municipalities through the Inter-Municipal Transit Working Group (IMTWG).
- The Niagara Specialized Transit enhancements are the result of client feedback combined with collaboration with the current service provider.
- Each of the enhancements identified within align with the 2019 Operating Budget.

Financial Considerations

The service enhancements outlined in this report were approved as part of the total 2019 Transit Operating Budget increase of \$7.9 million, therefore there are no incremental impacts.

Analysis

Niagara Region Transit (NRT)

Starting on September 3, 2019, NRT expanded service on many of its routes and added a connection to the Town of Pelham. As a result of these changes, almost all NRT routes have standardized service hours available Monday to Saturday from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. The only exceptions being Route 25 (Port Colborne Link) which runs from 6:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. in order to prioritize connections in Welland, and Route 22 (Fort Erie Link) due to resourcing challenges at Niagara Falls Transit. This is in keeping with the focus and principles laid out in the IMT Service Plan LNTC-C 21-2018.

A specific operational deliverable of the Inter-Municipal Transit Working Group (IMTWG) on its 2018-2019 workplan was to consolidate routes which provided duplicate services in a given corridor. This iterative process began in 2017 and has now concluded with the following changes:

- 40B/45B – Effectively an upload of the St. Catharines Transit Route #26, this express route connects the St. Catharines Bus Terminal to the Niagara College Glendale Campus, now providing 15 minute peak service through the corridor
- 70A/75A – This new Route connects Niagara College Welland Campus, Pelham's Meridian Community Centre and Brock University and replaces the Brock Link

In addition to the route consolidations, a number of enhancements were made to the following routes:

- 25 (Port Colborne to Welland) – Eliminated midday breaks in service and extended the service hours
- 40A/45A (Express Niagara Falls to Niagara College Glendale Campus) – Extended service hours to eliminate the service break in the middle of the day
- 50/55 (Niagara Falls to St. Catharines) – Standardized and extended the operating hours Monday to Saturday
- 60/65 (Niagara Falls to Welland) – 30 min service all day (Monday to Friday) and added two additional hours of service on Saturdays
- 60A/65A (Express Niagara Falls to Welland) – Morning and afternoon Express service every 15 minutes (Approximately 7:00 a.m. – 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. – 7:00 p.m.)
- 70/75 (St. Catharines to Welland) – Increased the frequency of service to 30 minute intervals all day (Monday to Friday only) and increased service hours by two hours (Monday to Saturday)

Niagara Specialized Transit (NST)

As of September 1, 2019, NST formalized the use of the transfer hub in Stoney Creek off Highway 8, as outlined in PW 40-2019. The hub will connect NST riders from Niagara with D.A.R.T.S. who will then take riders to their desired location in Hamilton. In order to implement the new Hamilton transfer hub, NST is discontinuing its current practice of only providing medically-related trips to Hamilton via a direct trip. Instead, riders will be able to book all types of trips to the hub, including work, social and medical, but are now required to make use of the transfer hub. This enhances the convenience of the service, especially for the NST clients residing in West Niagara.

An additional benefit of implementing the new Hamilton transfer hub is the reduction of the Hamilton trip fare from \$15 to \$6. With the D.A.R.T.S. cash fare being roughly \$3, a NST rider's trip total to Hamilton will be approximately \$9.

One of the recommendations from the ongoing Specialized Transit Study, as approved by Niagara Regional Council through PW 39-2019 and PW 40-2019, is that riders will now be able to book their trip just 24 hours in advance (rather than 48 hours) with this new updated booking window. It is anticipated that this will provide NST riders with more flexibility in booking their trips and help reduce trip cancellation rates which are some of the highest in the industry. Staff is continuing to review available data and will work with the service provider to look for opportunities to further reduce the cancellation rate.

The pickup window for scheduled rides has been adjusted from 25 minutes to 30 minutes for the sake of consistency and ease of scheduling. When riders attempt to book a specific pickup time, they are now advised of their pickup window and that they are required to be ready during that period as the vehicle will only wait for 5 minutes. While this policy is actually an existing policy, our service provider had previously desired to be more flexible. This flexibility resulted in their inability to meet the on-time performance requirements of their contract; hence the need to begin enforcing the policy more consistently.

In addition to these changes, the Universal Support Person Pass has now been implemented. This pass makes transit more accessible for people who require assistance while travelling by allowing their Support Person to accompany them on transit at no additional cost. This program is another deliverable of the IMTWG 2018-2019 workplan and was discussed in additional detail in LNTC 4-2018 and LNTC 20-2018. It should also be noted that this pass can be used on all transit services, conventional and specialized, in Niagara and is a standard pass for all systems.

Additionally, NRT, working with its partners from the IMTWG, has implemented real-time departure and arrival data into the Transit App – another IMTWG 2018-2019 workplan deliverable. In addition to the app, digital screens at a number of key transit locations now enable riders to access the real-time route and bus information. These locations currently include:

- St. Catharines Bus Terminal
- Morrison/Dorchester Hub in Niagara Falls
- Brock University
- Niagara College

Staff will continue to work with its transit partners and local agencies to identify opportunities to expand the deployment of this amenity where feasible.

Alternatives Reviewed

As this report is for information purposes only, there were no alternatives reviewed.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Advancing Regional Transit is an objective under Priority 3: Responsible Growth and Infrastructure Planning and is one of the six (6) implementation projects identified. The enhancements outlined in this report represent significant service improvements for residents, students and tourists alike. NRT provides inter-municipal connections and supports equitable access to a variety of educational, medical and employment opportunities.

Other Pertinent Reports

LNTC 4-2018
LNTC 20-2018
PW 39-2019
PW 40-2019

Prepared by:

Robert Salewytch
Program Manager, Transit Services
GO Implementation Office
Public Works Department

Recommended by:

Catherine Habermehl
Acting Commissioner
Public Works Department

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Heather Talbot, Financial and Special Projects Consultant, Financial Management and Planning, and reviewed by Matt Robinson, Director, GO Implementation Office.

MEMORANDUM

LNTC-C 12-2019

Subject: Transit Governance Study Update

Date: September 25, 2019

To: Linking Niagara Transit Committee

From: Kumar Ranjan, Transportation Lead GO Implementation

This memo is to update Committee on the status of the Transit Governance Study further to the overview provided in LNTC-C 09-2019.

2019-RFP-194 Niagara Transit Governance Study was issued on June 24, 2019 and closed July 23, 2019 resulting in four (4) proposals being submitted. Following a rigorous technical evaluation process, two proponents met the minimum technical threshold and proceeded to the final technical evaluation stage of an oral presentation/interview. At the conclusion of the technical and price evaluation, a successful proponent was identified for award and, at the time of writing this memo, Niagara Region's Procurement is finalizing the agreements and once completed, the successful proponent's name will be made available.

The successful proponent has a number of highly qualified professionals on the project team including a Transit Lead who has a number of years of direct experience in planning and executing a comprehensive and customer-focused integration of multiple transit services for a large Region in western Ontario.

Based on LNTC's direction regarding leadership for the governance work, the CAO Transit Governance Committee (CAO Committee) provided strategic oversight during the development of the RFP with some members participating on the evaluation committee. As the project enters the next phase, the CAO Committee is anticipated to be actively engaged with the consultants, playing a key role in the kick-off and shaping the vision and outcome of this assignment.

Based on the proposal by the successful proponent, updated timelines with key tasks are outlined below in Table 1.

Table 1: Updated Timelines for Governance Review Study

| Timeline | Key Tasks |
|-----------------------|--|
| September 2019 | Project kick-off (anticipated) |
| Sept 2019 – Feb 2020 | Project Planning and Guiding Principles Refresh |
| | Current System Assessment |
| | Peer Systems and Best Practices Scan |
| | Projected 10 Year High-Level Demand Analysis |
| | Identification of Anticipated Transit Service Levels, Capital, and Operating Costs |
| | Consolidated Model Options Development |
| | Consolidated Model Options Evaluation |
| | Presentations and interim reports |
| March 2020 | Final Report |

LNTC-C 09-2019 noted the Provincial review of the upper-tier governments as a key external influencing factor to this study. Provision has been made in the RFP to revisit the project scope should the recommendations from the Provincial review of upper tier governments affect Niagara.

It is important to note that the timelines could be affected due to matters beyond control of the project team such as a protracted consultation process, or the need to revisit the study scope due to outcome of the above mentioned Provincial review.

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

Kumar Ranjan, P. Eng.
Transportation Lead
GO Implementation Office
Public Works Department

MEMORANDUM

LNTC-C 14-2019

Subject: Niagara Region Transit Public Opinion Survey Results

Date: September 25, 2019

To: Linking Niagara Transit Committee

From: Rob Salewytch, Program Manager, Transit Services

This memorandum is to provide Committee with an update on the results of the recent Niagara Region Transit (NRT) Public Opinion survey. Niagara Region's goal of moving transit forward seeks to connect people to neighbouring municipalities and greater opportunities. A key aspect of this goal is to improve the service of NRT in order to meet the needs of both current and future transit users. To facilitate this goal, staff conducted a public opinion survey from July 26 to August 16, 2019. As the majority of NRT ridership throughout the school year is students, completing the survey during the summer months helped to reduce bias in the data and ensure a wider sample size. The purpose of the survey was to gather feedback from the community and use it to identify who is, and who is not using the service; to highlight successful areas of the business; and to highlight opportunities for improvement.

This survey was designed to encourage feedback from both riders and non-riders. Riders were classified as those who had been on an NRT bus in the last month and non-riders were classified as those who had not. Furthermore, it asked the participants questions regarding service levels, why they did or did not use transit, transit-related features or amenities that they might like added to the service, and their overall satisfaction with the service.

In addition to targeted web advertisements on social media, niagararegion.ca/transit, and municipal websites, transit-supported co-operative education students also went to various locations around the region to conduct surveys in person in order to reach a broader audience (Refer to Figure 1 below).

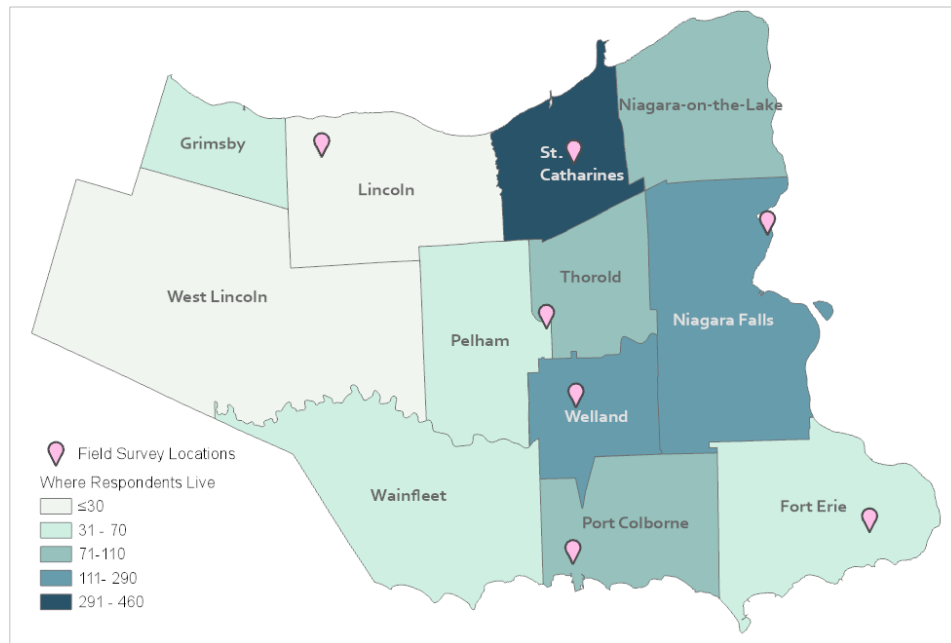


Figure 1: Map of Survey Response Locations

Overall, the data showed that 1532 surveys were completed with the majority of participants residing in St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland and using transit to commute to work as well as run errands. Although the gender and age categories were relatively balanced, more responses were completed by females (58%). The highest response rate was among those aged 25-34 (18%). Figure 2 below provides additional details of the gender and age distribution of the respondents.

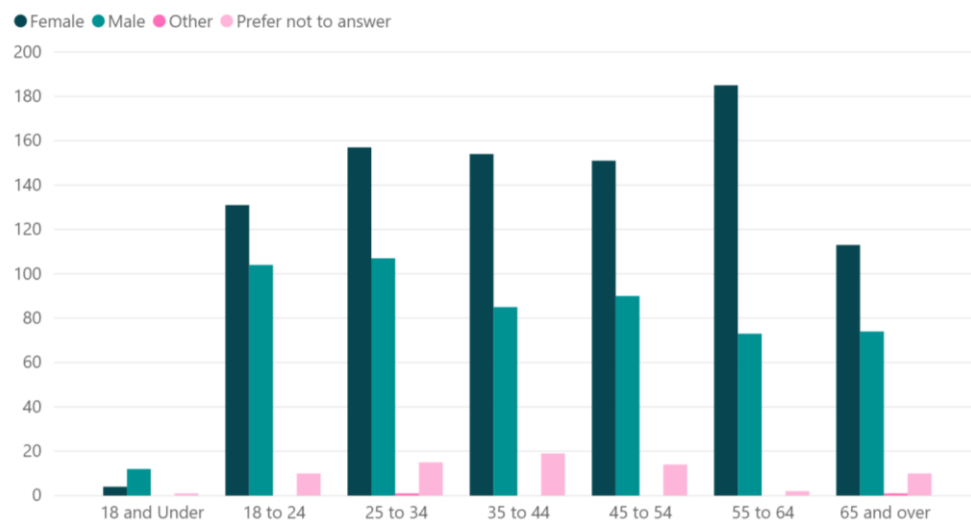


Figure 2: Gender Distribution (Categorized by Age)

The survey results highlighted that the majority of NRT riders are satisfied with the service, with only 15% of respondents noting that they are unlikely to recommend it to others. More importantly, safety and cost were not seen as barriers to the service among both males and females of all ages. However, real-time information was viewed as very important to the rider (refer to Figure 3) and without it, riders found that there were barriers that included missing connections and long wait times. With the September 2019 deployment of real-time information for NRT in the Transit App, riders can now view departure and arrival times, possible delays and receive push notifications. As this was not available for the riders during the survey, NRT views this as a notable success in driving rider satisfaction.

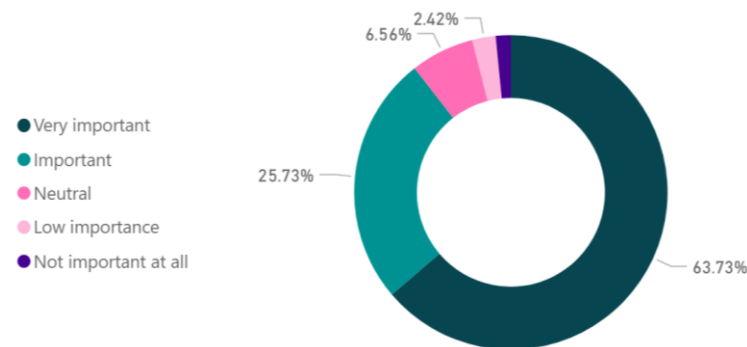


Figure 3: Importance of real-time information to riders

Although the satisfaction rates are high, the respondents also noted areas of the business that could be improved. The main areas of improvement noted by the respondents were: regional coverage (service area), extended hours of service, and increased frequency. Of those three areas, extended hours of service and increased frequency were requested substantially more often than regional coverage (Refer to Figure 4). Specifically, 37% of people that responded to 'How can we improve service for you?' said that they would like to see the buses run earlier and later in the day, seven days a week including holidays. Several respondents specifically noted that service on Sundays and holidays would be extremely beneficial. For example, the lack of services on Sundays and holidays are seen as a barrier to those who would utilize transit to get to/from work because either the service hours do not align with their start and/or end times; or, they work on Sundays when transit is not an option. Fortunately, staff had previously identified this opportunity for improvement and has already received budget support to initiate service on both Sundays and holidays (LNTC-C 21-2018). Staff is currently working with the Inter-municipal Transit Working Group (IMTWG) to identify when in 2020 these improvements can be implemented.

Similarly, 35% of participants noted that increased frequency would help to improve their satisfaction with transit services. Several of the participants that responded as

neutral, unsatisfied or very unsatisfied noted that wait times between buses was too long and that more buses and/or increased frequency would improve the service for them. Since September 2018, NRT has made a number of updates to the transit schedule with a noticeable increase in service hours and frequency. Service time has increased from approximately 71,000 hours for 2018/2019 to approximately 136,000 for 2019/2020, which represents an increase of approximately 52% in one year. At the time of the survey the new service hours for 2019/2020 were not in place, therefore riders should now see a significant improvement to service hours and frequency (LNTC-C 11-2019).

Regional coverage was, marginally, the third most noted opportunity of improvement. Currently, NRT is successfully providing connections between St. Catharines, Niagara Falls and Welland. However, the data shows that residents of Niagara's western municipalities, plus Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and Port Colborne all feel that coverage needs to be implemented or increased in order to better serve these municipalities. As committed to Council during the 2019 budget, NRT staff is working with the IMTWG on a pilot project to evaluate potential micro-transit opportunities in Niagara's western municipalities to help connect people in more rural areas of Niagara to transit hubs and increase ridership and accessibility. In addition, Niagara Region has recently uploaded the Port Colborne Link (Route 25) and the Fort Erie Link (Route 22) routes. These uploads provide more flexibility for the local transit services in those respective municipalities to expand their services to connect with inter-municipal transit with the aim to meet the needs of its community.

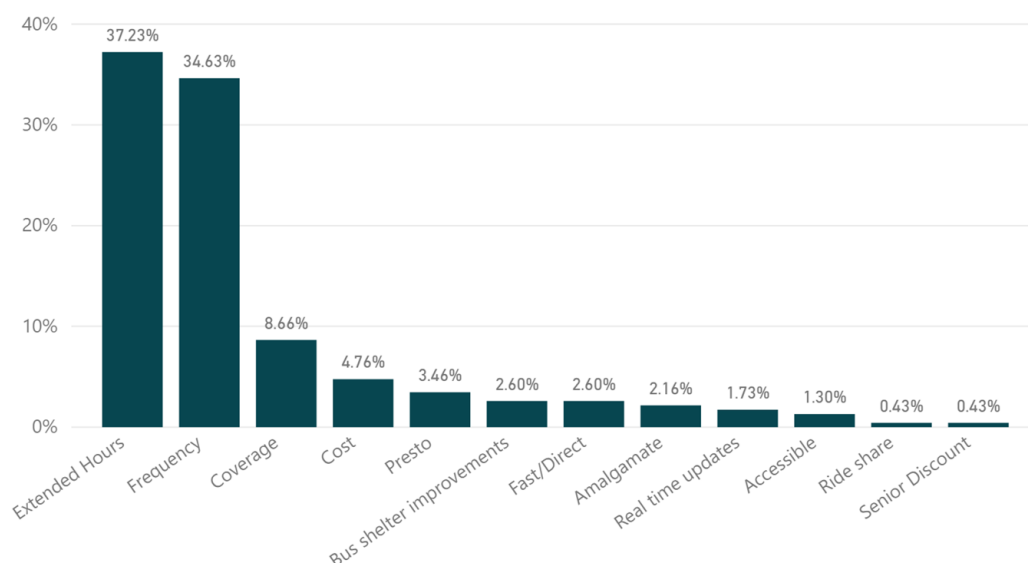


Figure 4: Opportunities for Improvement

Other areas of improvement that were touched upon by participants were: express services, amalgamation and fare integration. Participants suggested that amalgamating transit across Niagara would improve transit synchronization which would increase efficiencies and create opportunities to link municipalities via express routes thus better connecting riders to local transit systems to reach their desired destination. Participants also believe that creating a more integrated service would allow for better connection times, faster service between municipalities and the ability to use the same transit pass for all transit. Staff is happy to report that these elements are already under review and that the IMTWG is currently working on a fare integration strategy which includes a common fare technology platform (LNTC-C 10-2019).

In summary, the survey's goal was to gather insight into the rider and non-rider experience to help improve the service. Upon completion and review, the survey highlighted that although most participants are satisfied with NRT, they would like to see region-wide coverage, extended hours of service and increased frequency. It also highlighted that improvement opportunities exist with respect to micro-transit, fare integration, and real-time data, all of which are currently under evaluation as part of the IMTWG's 2018-2019 workplan. Therefore, the survey was successful in providing staff with insight and feedback that will help guide future decisions aimed at improving transit services region wide.

Respectfully submitted and signed by,

Robert Salewytch,
Program Manager, Transit Services
GO Implementation Office
Public Works Department

**THE REGIONAL MUNICIPALITY OF NIAGARA
LINKING NIAGARA TRANSIT COMMITTEE
MINUTES**

LNTC 04-2019

Wednesday, June 26, 2019

Council Chamber

**Niagara Region Headquarters, Campbell West
1815 Sir Isaac Brock Way, Thorold, ON**

Committee: Fertich (Regional Councillor), Ip (Regional Councillor), Sendzik (Mayor – St. Catharines), M. Siscoe (Municipal Councillor – St. Catharines) (Committee Chair), K. Todd, Chief Administrative Officer (City of Niagara Falls)

Absent/Regrets: Campion (Mayor – Welland), Diodati (Mayor – Niagara Falls), Redekop (Mayor – Fort Erie), C. Dabrowski (Municipal Councillor – Niagara Falls), G. Miller (Municipal Councillor – St. Catharines), L. Van Vilet (Municipal Councillor – Welland), S. Chemnitz, Chief Administrative Officer (St. Catharines), G. Long, Chief Administrative Officer (Welland)

Staff: M. Robinson, Director, GO Implementation Office, K. Ranjan, Transportation Lead, GO Implementation Office, H. Talbot, Financial & Special Projects Consultant, M. Trennum, Deputy Regional Clerk

Others Present: G. Morrison, St. Catharines Transit

1. CALL TO ORDER

At 2:30 p.m., Committee Chair M. Siscoe advised Committee members that pursuant to Section 22.11 of the Procedural By-law 120-2010, as amended, that as quorum was not present within thirty (30) minutes after the time set for the meeting, therefore the names of those Members present would be recorded and the meeting would stand adjourned.

Committee Chair M. Siscoe thanked those members and staff for their time and advised that the next meeting of the Linking Niagara Transit Committee would be held on Wednesday, September 25, 2019, at 2 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Regional Headquarters.

8. NEXT MEETING

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, September 25, 2019 at 2 p.m. in the Council Chamber, Regional Headquarters.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Due to lack of quorum, the meeting adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

Matt Siscoe
Committee Chair

Matthew Trennum
Deputy Regional Clerk

Ann-Marie Norio
Regional Clerk