

Overview






The first round of LAM consultation represented an opportunity for input and feedback on the results of the NTGS and associated financial strategy. The most common areas of feedback related to the financial strategy, composition of the board, and need for a more defined (high level) service plan, which have led to the revised strategies discussed in the main body of this report.

The purpose of this comment tracker is to connect these revised strategies back to the feedback received from each LAM, as well as additional areas of feedback that were identified outside the major themes. The LAM issues identified were first summarized as part of LNTC-C 1-2021 and LNTC-C 2-2021, and represent a combination of formal feedback received through recommendations adopted by Councils, commentary provided in local staff reports, and topics raised by Councils during question and answer periods.

Fort Erie

Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council adopted staff recommendations from [IS-04-2021](#), providing support-in-principle for the Commission, requesting Niagara Region further refine the governance and financial models in accordance with the recommendations contained in the report and in advance of the initiation of the triple-majority process.

Item	Status	Comment
Propose an alternative funding model to a levy based on property value assessment.		Revised financial model transitions from single-levy to twelve (12) special levies. Revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
Additional financial information - update financial baseline reporting to 2021, sources of transition cost funding, impact of COVID-19, and treatment of reserves.	 	The revised financial model includes additional discussion regarding the transfer and establishment of capital reserves. The timing of the Phase 3 Network Service Review discussed in the Service Strategy has been set in part-to allow for a better understanding of COVID-19 impacts on revenue and ridership. The GSC has confirmed as recommended the use of the Cummings Principle to guide asset transfer. The work of the GSC will continue towards the development of Municipal Transfer Agreements which will codify considerations specific to Fort Erie. The key terms and principles of the MTA will be presented in parallel with the future triple-majority report.
Permanent representative from Fort Erie on the Commission board.		Revised board model provides political representation for all Niagara municipalities.
Existing service levels be maintained indefinitely.		Service Strategy outlines short-term enhancements in advance of a future Network Review. Indefinite minimum service hours to be finalized as part of Municipal Transfer Agreement.

Grimsby

Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council adopted staff recommendations from [CAO 21-03](#), providing support-in-principle for the Commission, taking into account that Niagara Region will commit to and address the issues identified in the recommendations of that report.


Item	Status	Comment
Grimsby's current service levels are maintained and improved upon.	✓	Service Strategy outlines short-term enhancements in advance of a future Network Review. Maintenance of existing or minimum service levels will be confirmed as part of final triple-majority approval.
That the proposed financial model be amended to address concerns presented by the Town of Grimsby.	✓	Revised financial model transitions from single-levy to twelve (12) special levies. Revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
That Region Council consider geographical areas, such as Niagara West, when selecting two (2) additional Councillors for the Full Commission.	✓	Objective of enhanced representation for Grimsby achieved - revised board model provides political representation for all Niagara municipalities.
The ongoing NRT On-Demand pilot program and future opportunities for transit services in Grimsby.	✓	The Service Strategy anticipates the continuation and expansion of demand responsive service such as the NRT OnDemand pilot. Phase 1 improvements anticipate expanded operating hours. The Network Service Review will consider future community bus or conventional services as ridership grows, and as necessary to meet increased demand related to the introduction of GO Train service at Grimsby.

Lincoln

Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council adopted staff recommendations from [AD-02-21](#), providing support-in-principle for the Commission, taking into account that Niagara Region will commit to and address the issues identified in the recommendations of that report.



Item	Status	Comment
Town of Lincoln current service levels are maintained and improved upon.	✓	Service Strategy outlines short-term enhancements in advance of a future Network Review. Maintenance of existing or minimum service levels will be confirmed as part of final triple-majority approval.
That the proposed financial model be amended to address concerns presented by the Town of Lincoln.	✓	Revised financial model transitions from single-levy to twelve (12) special levies. Revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
That Region Council consider geographical areas, such as Niagara West, when selecting two (2) additional Councillors for the Full Commission.	✓	Objective of enhanced representation for Lincoln achieved - revised board model provides political representation for all Niagara municipalities.

Item	Status	Comment
Discussion at Council also included how transit would support future growth in Lincoln, the ongoing NRT On-Demand Pilot, and the anticipated timing of return to pre-COVID-19 transit ridership levels.		The Service Strategy anticipates the continuation and expansion of demand responsive service such as the NRT OnDemand pilot. Phase 1 improvements anticipate expanded operating hours. The Network Service Review will consider future community bus or conventional services as ridership grows, and as necessary to meet increased demand related to the introduction of GO Train service. The timing of the Network Service Review has been recommended in part to allow transit ridership impacts from COVID-19 to be better understood.

Niagara Falls

Phase 1 Consultation Summary





Council jointly considered the presentation from Region staff and the Niagara Falls staff report [CAO-2021-01](#), supporting a motion to endorse, in principle, the Full Commission as the recommended governance model for the consolidation of Niagara's public transit system.

Item	Status	Comment
Reconsider 2021 as the baseline year for operational service levels, given ridership impacts from COVID-19		Achieved. The revised financial strategy updates the baseline service year to 2020 budgeted service hours – which represents a pre-COVID estimate. All figures would be adjusted prior to consolidation in 2023 to reflect most recent financials.
Consider the option of offering free or reduced fares for seniors as part of [the] transition process		The revised financial strategy anticipates a move to a single regional fare, but does not include the provision of free or reduced fares for Seniors. Decisions regarding fare discounts has been reserved as a future decision that should be made by the Commission.

Niagara-on-the-Lake

Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council adopted staff recommendations from [CAO-21-002](#), providing support-in-principle for the Commission, taking into account that Niagara Region will commit to and address the issues identified in the recommendations of that report.

Item	Status	Comment
Maintaining and improving upon the current service levels provided to the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.		Service Strategy outlines short-term enhancements in advance of a future Network Review. Maintenance of existing or minimum service levels will be confirmed as part of final triple-majority approval.
Amending the proposed financial model to address concerns identified by the Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake.		Revised financial model transitions from single-levy to twelve (12) special levies. Revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
Considering geographical areas when selecting two (2) additional Councillors for the Full Commission.		Objective of enhanced representation for Niagara-on-the-Lake achieved - revised board model provides political representation for all Niagara municipalities.
Further feedback centred on the critical role transit plays in supporting economic development and tourism in Niagara-on-the-Lake, the appropriate point in time for potential integration of WEGO with the Commission, and the role of the Cummings Principle in asset transfer.		The importance of tourism to the Town and the role that transit can play in connecting tourists and employees to destinations will be a focus for the Commission. WEGO will remain an important service in achieving this objective, but remains outside the scope of the initial consolidation. Decisions regarding potential future integration will be made collectively by the City of Niagara Falls, Niagara Parks Commission, future transit Commission and Town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. The GSC has confirmed as recommended the use of the Cummings Principle to guide asset transfer.

Pelham

Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council considered staff report [202-0044-Recreation](#), and adopted a series of resolutions indicating the Town of Pelham does not support the Full Transit Commission Model as presented by Niagara Region due to the issues noted below.

Item	Status	Comment
The Town of Pelham will not be sufficiently represented on the Commission Board as it pertains to governance of the Commission.	✓	Revised board model provides political representation for all Niagara municipalities.
The Regional levy as proposed (based on MPAC assessment) does not take into consideration population size or ridership, and that an approximately 500% increase to the Town of Pelham is not acceptable, and is not supported by the Council for the Town of Pelham.	✓	Revised financial model transitions from single-levy to twelve (12) special levies. Revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
Additional discussion referenced the anticipated timing of return to pre-COVID-19 transit ridership levels and alternative micro-transit service delivery models such as those used in Calgary and Innisfil.	✓	The Service Standards Strategy considers a future harmonization of demand-responsive and specialized services in Niagara. This future harmonization will examine a wide range of operational models for demand responsive transit. The timing of the Phase 3 Network Service Review has been set in part to allow for a better understanding of COVID-19 impacts on revenue and ridership.

As part of the consideration of this item, Pelham Council gave further direction to staff related to the ongoing NRT OnDemand pilot program.

Port Colborne

Phase 1 Consultation Summary


Council adopted staff recommendations from [2021-39](#), providing support-in-principle for the Commission, taking into account that Niagara Region will commit to and address the issues identified in the recommendations of that report.

Item	Status	Comment
That the City of Port Colborne service levels set out in the report Transit Enhancement Opportunity (Report 2021-15) dated January 11, 2021 are maintained and improved upon;	✓	The Service Strategy outlines short-term enhancements in service in advance of a future Network Review. Maintenance of existing or minimum service levels will be confirmed as part of final triple-majority approval.
That the proposed financial model be amended to address concerns presented by the City of Port Colborne.	✓	Revised financial model transitions from single-levy to twelve (12) special levies. Revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
That Regional Council consider geographical areas, such as Niagara South, when selecting two additional Councillors for the Full Commission.	✓	Objective of enhanced representation for Port Colborne achieved - revised board model provides political representation for all Niagara municipalities.
A request was made to further examine the option for municipalities to purchase enhanced transit services as part of the revised financial model.	✓	There will be two opportunities for enhanced services to be provided in a municipality – through requests made from local Councils to the Board for that would be included in future service planning and through a direct ‘purchase’ of additional services based on a municipal contribution or rate.

St. Catharines




Phase 1 Consultation Summary





Council considered staff report [CAO-007-2021](#) and adopted amended recommendations, providing support-in-principle for the Commission. The recommendations of that report included:

Item	Status	Comment
That...staff [forward the] report, including comments detailed by the St. Catharines Transit Commission in Appendix 3, to the Region and requests the additional information identified in [the] report be received prior to the approval of a new Intermunicipal Transit System and operating model;		<p>The purpose of this report is to present revised financial, governance, and service strategies that reflect and address feedback received from all local Councils.</p> <p>The GSC has recommended that a second round of consultation take place to provide LAMs an opportunity to review these strategies and provide additional input prior to seeking triple-majority approval.</p>

Item	Status	Comment
<p>[Requesting] the formation of a Municipal Transit Transition Group that includes the CAOs of St. Catharines, Niagara Falls, Niagara Region and Welland, the St. Catharines Transit General Manager and any other transit staff or senior staff members required in order to develop draft Municipal Transfer Agreements that include (but are not limited to) the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rider fare structure; • Service plan detail including improvement guarantees; • Asset transfer agreements; • Growth forecasting model, including expansion costs and revenue opportunities; 	<p>✓</p> <p>🕒</p>	<p>The previous CAO Working Group was expanded and reconstituted as the Governance Steering Committee (GSC) to provide a wider range of perspectives from across Niagara. Project teams working under the direction of the GSC included both Regional and local staff, including those from St. Catharines and the St. Catharines Transit Commission.</p> <p>The revised financial model presents information and detail related to the move to a single regional fare, a capital reserve strategy, and funding for growth consistent with the conservative growth strategy first outlined in the NTGS. The service standards developed identify three phases of future improvements, including service hour enhancements in St. Catharines in advance of a future Network Service Review.</p> <p>The work of the GSC will continue towards the development of Municipal Transfer Agreements which will codify these considerations, including any additional feedback received from St. Catharines. The key terms and principles of the MTA will be presented in parallel with the future triple-majority report.</p>
<p>That prior to...triple majority and receiving a complete package of information of the impact of the proposal, that Engage STC be utilized to receive public feedback.</p>	<p>🕒</p>	<p>The communications and engagement strategy referenced in this report was developed by an integrated team of Regional and local staff, including those from St. Catharines. The strategy plans for a series of public feedback initiatives including surveys and stakeholder consultation sessions take place over the summer of 2021 in advance of triple-majority. The results of this consultation will be included in future reporting both to the City and the final triple-majority report.</p>

Areas of additional feedback identified through the staff report and commentary provided by the St. Catharines Transit Commission via Appendix 3, and discussion at Council included:

Item	Status	Comment
A service plan detailing existing future service expansion, including integration with the forthcoming St. Catharines Transportation Master Plan update		The Service Standards Strategy was developed to provide additional information and detail regarding how short, medium, and long-term enhancements could be implemented by the Commission. The St. Catharines TMP and the identified expansion priorities were reviewed in the development of these standards. There will be two opportunities for the Commission to review and implement these priorities: during Phase 1 and 2 through the annual service review the new Commission will undertake; and ultimately through the Network Service Review to be completed in Phase 3.
Proposed composition of the Board and concern that St. Catharines would be underrepresented		The revised board composition model proposes three St. Catharines members, reflecting its greater share of ridership and investment, and represents an increase in the proportional share of representation being provided to St. Catharines relative to that provided from the NTGS model.
Transfer of 2012 First Street Louth facility (current SCTC garage) and a request that it revert to the City should it not be used for transit purposes in the future		The principle of facilities returning to municipalities should they not be used specifically for transit purposes in the future is acknowledged, and anticipated to be formalized as part of Municipal Transfer Agreements.

Item	Status	Comment
Anticipated timing of return to pre-COVID-19 transit ridership levels, applicability of provincial Safe Restart funding, and detail pertaining to external funding sources.		Since the original report and as referenced in the Financial strategy, the Province has introduced Phase 3 of the provincial Safe Restart Funding program which specifically incorporates new governance structures as an eligible category. This inclusion is the result of advocacy from across Niagara.
Required consolidation of Union labour agreements;		Niagara's three ATU Locals responsible for delivering current conventional service in Niagara remain a primary stakeholder, as they have throughout. Additional outreach and engagement with the ATU Locals and their leadership will take place over the summer and in advance of the triple-majority discussion in partnership with the respective leadership at the Transit Agencies.
The need to consider an alternative to 2021 as the baseline year for operational service levels, given ridership impacts from COVID-19.		Achieved - the revised financial strategy updates the baseline service year to 2020 budgeted service hours, which represents a pre-COVID estimate. All figures would be adjusted prior to consolidation in 2023 to reflect most recent financials.
Consider 'unconventional' or alternative governance structures to the presented Commission model, including: benefit area rating, appointment of representatives by municipalities, options for municipalities to directly determine or fund service directly, and alternative legal structures.		The Financial strategy has been revised as (12) special levies that ties services received to costs. The revised governance strategy provides an opportunity for municipalities to recommend local representatives to Regional Council for appointment to Board. The Service Strategy discusses methods by which local municipalities can request or purchase services beyond the service standards identified or set by the Commission.

Thorold

Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council adopted staff recommendations from report [PWCS2021-13](#), providing support-in-principle for the Commission, with final approval subject to the satisfactory resolution of the issues identified in that report.

Item	Status	Comment
Clarification of the City's required contribution during transition and beyond;	✓	The financial strategy outlines revised approach to funding a consolidated system based on a twelve (12) special levy approach. This strategy outlines anticipated transition costs totaling \$3.85 - \$4.96M that would be funded through a combination of existing budgets and Provincial/ Federal transit funding programs.
Confirmation that the Service Plan will maintain existing service and include service expansion to the high growth areas of the community as identified in the Thorold Transportation Master Plan (June 2020)	✓	The service strategy outlines two opportunities for service expansion into new areas such as Allanburg, Port Robinson East, or the Rolling Meadows development. Through the annual Service Review that the Commission will undertake during Phase 1 and 2 of the plan and then through the Phase 3 comprehensive Network Service Review. Maintenance of existing or minimum service levels will be confirmed as part of final Municipal Transfer Agreements.
Council further discussed the process for engagement with Brock University and associated financial contributions.	✓	Brock University will continue to be valued stakeholder as part of the communications and engagement strategy, and will be consulted directly.

Wainfleet

Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council considered, but did not support, [Resolution No. C-2021-014](#), derived from the motion contained in Appendix 1 to LNTC-C 4-2020.

Item	Status	Comment
Discussion at Council centred on the proposed assessment-based financial model and its significant impact on the residents of Wainfleet.	✓	The revised financial model transitions from a single-levy to twelve (12) special levies for local service, with the existing Regional NRT levy remaining in place. The revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
The future role of (and need for) transit in rural municipalities such as Wainfleet through enhancement of on-demand services such as the NRT OnDemand pilot.	For Consideration	The service strategy and financial strategy collectively assume a relative 'status quo' level of service in Wainfleet immediately post-consolidation (expanded inter-municipal demand responsive hours of operation only). Future enhancements, including the potential introduction of local demand responsive trips, would be made in consultation with the Town of Wainfleet and through annual service reviews or the Phase 3 Network Service Review. Under the revised financial model, service costs are linked to the where service is being added.



Welland


Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council considered report [TRANS-2021-01](#), adopting local staff recommendations relating to the issues detailed below and deferring approval for the proposed Niagara Transit Governance Strategy until 2023. Welland City Council requested new financial impact options, land would not be transferred to new entity, an updated governance model and deferring the decision to consolidate to September 2023. This report identifies a series of eleven (11) issues and concerns:

Item	Status	Comment
COVID-19 impacts on revenue and ridership (1) and Government Funding (11)	✓	<p>The timing of the Phase 3 Network Service Review discussed in the Service Strategy has been set in part-to allow for a better understanding of COVID-19 impacts on revenue and ridership.</p> <p>Since the original report and as referenced in the Financial strategy, the Province has introduced Phase 3 of the provincial Safe Restart Funding program which specifically incorporates new governance structures as an eligible category. This inclusion is the result of advocacy from across Niagara.</p> <p>While the City of Welland has indicated that municipal SRA funding will be used to address operational funding requirements, any remaining or unspent funds from across Niagara may be used to support consolidation</p>

Item	Status	Comment
Service Plan (2) and Ridership Growth (3)	✓	The Service Standards Strategy was developed to provide additional information and detail regarding how short, medium, and long-term enhancements could be implemented by the Commission. The Service and financial strategies collectively outline the resources required to implement these standards, incorporating the conservative growth projections from the NTGS.
Single Fare (4)	✓	The revised financial strategy incorporates a move to a single-regional fare.
Consolidation of Union Agreements (5)	🕒	Niagara's three ATU Locals responsible for delivering current conventional service in Niagara remain a primary stakeholder, as they have throughout. Additional outreach and engagement with the ATU Locals and their leadership will take place over the summer and in advance of the triple-majority discussion in partnership with the respective leadership at the Transit Agencies.
Representation on the Commission (6)	For Consideration	The revised board composition model recommends a fifteen (15) member board, with political representation for all Niagara Municipalities.

Item	Status	Comment
Asset Transfer (7)	For Consideration	<p>The GSC has confirmed as recommended the use of the Cummings Principle to guide asset transfer. The work of the GSC will continue towards the development of Municipal Transfer Agreements which will codify considerations specific to Welland, including existing operating facilities, land ownership/transfer, and the proposed future transit facility. The principle of facilities returning to municipalities should they not be used specifically for transit purposes in the future is acknowledged, and anticipated to be formalized as part of the MTAs.</p> <p>The key terms and principles of the MTA will be presented in parallel with the future triple-majority report.</p>
Funding Model (8) and Regional Tax Levy (9)		The revised financial model transitions from a single-levy to twelve (12) special levy approach. The revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
Five-Year Service Guarantee (10)		The revised financial strategy updates the baseline service year to 2020 budgeted service hours, which represents a pre-COVID estimate. Indefinite minimum service hours to be confirmed as part of Municipal Transfer Agreement.

Item	Status	Comment
Government Funding (11)		Since the original report and as referenced in the Financial strategy, the Province has introduced Phase 3 of the provincial Safe Restart Funding program which specifically incorporates new governance structures as an eligible category. This inclusion is the result of advocacy from across Niagara.

West Lincoln

Phase 1 Consultation Summary

Council considered, but did not support, the motion contained in Appendix 1 to LNTC-C 4-2020. A series of concerns and a record of questions raised by Council were included in the [official minutes](#) from the January, 25, 2021 meeting.

Item	Status	Comment
Discussion related to impacts to West Lincoln residents arising from the proposed assessment-based financial model.	✓	The revised financial model transitions from a single-levy to twelve (12) special levies for local service, with the existing Regional NRT levy remaining in place. The revised model reduces the redistribution of costs from larger to smaller municipalities and links future growth costs to where the service is being added.
The limited time transit has been provided in West Lincoln (via the NRT On-Demand pilot) and making decisions with impacts beyond the current term of Council.	For Consideration	The service strategy and financial strategy collectively assume a relative 'status quo' level of service in West Lincoln immediately post-consolidation (expanded inter-municipal demand responsive hours of operation only). Future enhancements, including the potential introduction of local demand responsive trips, would be made in consultation with the Town of West Lincoln and through annual service reviews or the Phase 3 Network Service Review. Under the revised financial model, service costs are linked to the where service is being added.