

Specialized Transit in Niagara

Recommendations *A Way Forward*



November 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-Link)
- Niagara-on-the-Lake Transit
- Pelham Transit

Transit systems under contract

- Thorold
- Port Colborne

No transit service

- Grimsby
- West Lincoln
- Wainfleet

Presentation Outline

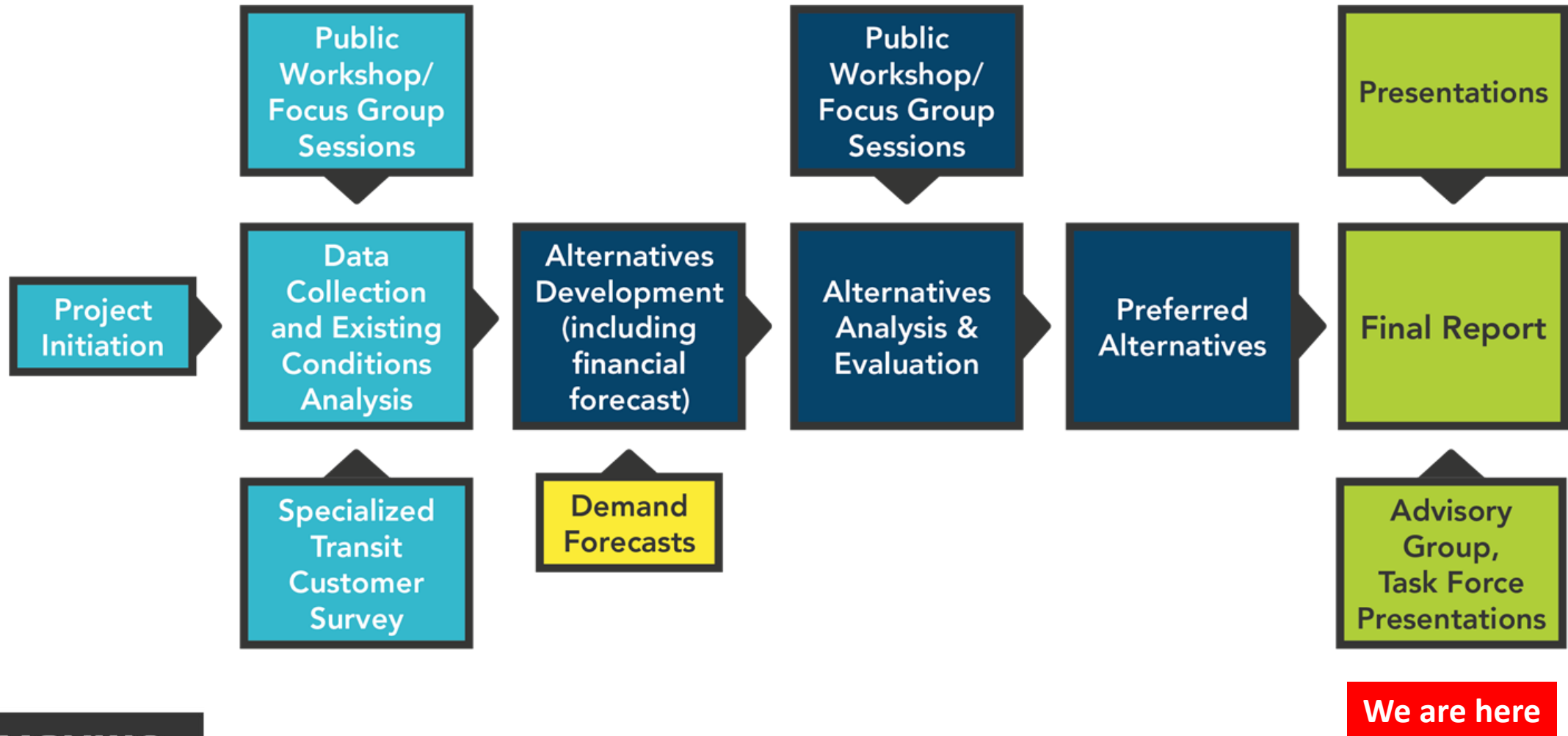
- Recap:
 - Study Objectives
 - Work Plan
 - *What We Heard* – Stakeholder Consultation & Survey Results
 - Common Industry Practices
 - Guiding Principles
 - *Imagine Possibilities* – Opportunities
- Recommendations – *A Way Forward*
- Next Steps

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 a recommended approach to best meet community's mobility needs – *A Way Forward*



Work Plan



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

Extensive Outreach/ Consultation/Survey Research:

- AAC
- IMTWG
- LNTC
- Niagara Health
- PICs
- Agencies/organizations representing older adults/disability community
- Specialized Transit Customer Survey

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)

Common Industry Practices

- Key Functional Areas

Funding & Oversight

- determines budget & other resource levels
- planning & service monitoring

Eligibility & Certification

- centralized, others left to service provider
- standardized criteria, range of processes

Reservations & Scheduling

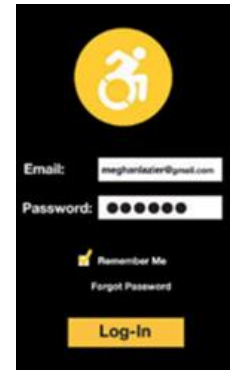
- takes trip requests
- allocates drivers & vehicles to meet needs
- common use of computerized scheduling

Service Delivery

- core service - buses & vans & use of supplemental services (sedans, vans)
- in-house & contract operations

Common Industry Practices

- Next-Generation Mobility:
 - **Supplemental services** – taxis, transportation network companies (TNCs), microtransit
 - Address peaking, late evenings & weekends
 - **Technology**
 - Computerized scheduling & dispatch
 - Vehicle locating & communication (AVL/ MDTs)
 - IVR – broadcast vehicle arrivals, etc.
 - App +/-or web portal – registration, trip planning, reservations, confirmations, cancellations
 - Mobile payment



Common Industry Practices

- **Community Collaboratives / Entrepreneurial Partnerships:** Coordinated Human/Social Service Transportation (& other community-based agencies & organizations)
- **Greater link/integration with fixed-route transit services**
 - Range of incentives & policies address demand/mobility management opportunities.
 - Accessible paths of travel.
 - Integrated trip planning & fare payment.



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Niagara Region

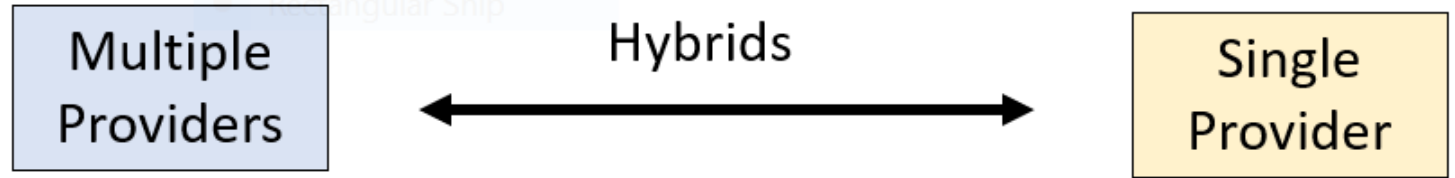
Guiding Principles – *An Eye on the Future*

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

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

Recommendations – Eligibility and Certification

1. Process be centralized under a single entity.
2. A single application form be used by all specialized transit operators.
3. Application form - available on-line and ability to complete & submit.
4. Remove the requirement for validation by a health care professional.

DRAFT – for discussion

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NIAGARA SPECIALIZED TRANSIT APPLICATION FORM

Specialized Transit is a pre-booked, shared-ride, origin to destination service for persons with a permanent or temporary physical disability and/or intellectual challenge/cognitive disability.

If you have any questions or need assistance, please call
<insert contact>
<insert phone number>

HOW TO APPLY FOR THE SPECIALIZED TRANSIT PROGRAM:

- Please return the completed application to <insert agency - TBD>.
- <insert agency - TBD> will notify you of your eligibility. If we require additional information, you may be requested to come in for an interview and/or an in-person assessment to provide us with more information about your disability and the reason(s) you require this service.
- All information on this application form will be kept confidential.
- Failure to completely fill out the application will delay the application process.

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT CLEARLY

1. Name: _____
(Last) (First) (Middle)

2. Address: _____
(Apt) (Street)

(City or Town) (Postal Code)

3. Daytime Phone: () _____ Evening Phone: () _____
TTY/TDD Number: () _____ (For Hearing Impaired)

4. Date of Birth: _____
YY/MM/DD

Niagara Specialized Transit Application Form

IBI

Recommendations – Eligibility and Certification (cont.)

5. In-person assessments be introduced as part of this process.
6. Applicants certification reflect categories of: *unconditional*, *temporary*, and *conditional (trip-by-trip)*.
7. Re-certification every 5-years



Unconditional: disability prevents use of conventional transit

Temporary: temporary disability

Conditional: disability where environmental or physical barriers limit their ability to consistently use conventional transit

May be denied requests to persons who have temporary or conditional eligibility if conventional transit is accessible and the person has the ability to use it.

Recommendations – Reservations & Scheduling

1. The reservations/trip request and scheduling functions be centralized under a single entity.
2. Enable registrants to make reservations/trip requests by telephone, app and/or web-portal (*One-Call/One-Click* capability).
3. Scheduling (route optimization, allocation of resources) to use state-of-the-art, commercially available software with a robust scheduling algorithm.

Recommendations – Policies, Procedures, and Performance Metrics

1. Governing entity develop a robust set of policies, procedures and performance metrics.

Policies and procedures to include but not be restricted to:

- Advance booking requirements
- Cancellations and no-shows
- Scheduling windows
- Fare policy

Advance discussions focused on community collaboratives (e.g., Niagara Health)

Performance metrics to reflect industry norms regarding key performance indicators (KPIs) including requirements for service monitoring, contract compliance and CUTA reporting.

Recommendations – Service Delivery

1. Core specialized transit services – comparable to level of service as currently provided by the aggregate of the municipal and regional specialized transit providers.
2. Use of supplemental taxis and/or transportation network companies (TNCs) - during times of day, days of week, areas of service, or ‘overflow’ capacity (when the deployment of hourly service would not meet prescribed performance metrics).
3. Supplemental services, as described above, be used to accommodate future travel demand/expansion of specialized transit services.

Supplemental services to be contracted on a per trip bases and hence, only pay for services consumed and may include subsidized same-day service.

Recommendations – Greater Link/Integration with Fixed-Route Transit Services

1. Apply *conditional/trip-by-trip* eligibility

Conditional - where conditions can be determined (e.g., seasonal, climate/weather, topography, accessible paths of travel, proximity of trip origin/destination to fixed-route service, transit hubs, etc.).

2. Develop incentives and policies to address travel/mobility demand management strategies

Strategies include: travel/mobility training, fare policy, trip discovery/planning capabilities, etc.

Recommendations – Same-Day Pilot Program

1. Through partnerships with taxi and/or transportation network companies (TNCs) provide subsidized, app-based (including trip request, tracking, and mobile payment) trips to specialized transit registrants.
 - Establish parameters including maximum per trip subsidy/distance and use of fare policy to influence travel behaviour.
 - For those who may not have a Smart device and/or the unbanked, ensure the provision of a call-centre and ability for trip payment by alternate means.

Recommendations – Technology

1. Technology enhancement that include:
 - a. Real-time passenger information including the broadcast (text message or telephone call) of vehicle arrivals.
 - b. Self-service capabilities through an app and/or web portal to address registration, trip planning, reservations, confirmations and cancellations.
 - c. Mobile (cashless) payment.

Implementation Plan

Within context of *Transit Governance Study*

Near-Term (0 - 2 years)

- Harmonizing application form
- Centralized eligibility & certification process
- Development of policies, procedures, and performance metrics
- Centralized scheduling
- Expanded use of supplemental services
- Same-Day Pilot Program

Mid-Term (2 - 5 years)

- Technology – real-time info., self-serve capabilities, cashless payment
- Greater integration with fixed-route transit

Next Steps

- Finalize financial forecasts
- Presentation of Recommendations to LNTC (Linking Niagara Transit Committee)
- Draft & Final Report – November/December 2019

Key Contacts



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A network diagram background consisting of a series of interconnected nodes and lines, forming a complex web-like structure. The nodes are represented by small circles, and the lines are thin, connecting the nodes in a non-linear fashion. The background is dark gray, and the network diagram is composed of light gray lines and nodes.

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