



Staff Report

Community Services

Report To: Council
Meeting Date: February 20, 2019
Report Number: CSPW.19.026
Subject: Collingwood/The Blue Mountains Transit Link Update
Prepared by: Ryan Gibbons, Acting Director of Community Services

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report CSPW.19.026 entitled “Collingwood/The Blue Mountains Transit Link Update” for information purposes.

B. Overview

This report provides an update to Council regarding the Collingwood/Blue Mountains Transit Link for consideration of service enhancement.

C. Background

This report is being provided to Council for information purposes as requested at the February 12th Special Committee of the Whole Meeting.

In early 2018, as part of the recommendations from the Labour Supply Task Force, individuals representing public and private organizations within Southern Georgian Bay, began active efforts to analyze and determine the local transportation needs through the development of a Regional Transportation Task Force.

The goal of the Task Force is to look at transportation on a large scale while increasing cooperation and regional contribution. Their mission is to:

Analyze, Plan and Advance regional efforts to improve public & workforce transportation needs.

The development of this Task Force is positive. Representation from a wide variety of disciplines provides an immense information network unlike anything we have seen in the development of transit services previously in the area. The three 2018 pilot projects that were identified are as follows:

1. Improving access to public transportation with extended hours of service that better meet employer shift needs

2. A private sector 'ride sharing' employee shuttle/transit that would operate solely for employment purposes, meeting specific requirements of individual businesses.
3. A regional digital map of regional transportation options for employers to share with summer employees.

The first project the group found as immediate need was to fill the service gaps in the existing service schedules to provide consistent transit service across municipalities. The transit task force approached all three Municipal Councils and recommended a nine (9) month trial to extend service throughout the areas in the existing schedule to aid in assisting transportation needs mainly for the workforce within the Southern Georgian Bay region. As part of the approvals from each of the Municipal Councils, the Transportation Task Force would provide updates on the performance of the extension of service throughout the trial period. This report will serve as the second update to Council on the status of the performance of the trial in the first sixth months, as well as the status of the additional projects the task force has identified as a priority.

All three municipalities will be presenting this report to their respective councils prior/during budget deliberations with the intent of gaining a commitment from all Municipal Councils to proceed with the permanent service increase beyond March 31, 2019. It is understood that some budget deliberations may not be complete prior to the trial deadline, therefore a pre-approval or commitment would continue the trial service on a permanent basis.

D. Analysis

Project #1 – Extended Hours of Service

As a recap from the memorandum in October 2018 the extension of the hours of service was intended to provide a consistent means of transit service hours across all local transit systems within Southern Georgian Bay for a trial period of six (6) months, with the optional extension of three (3) months to March 31, 2019 if the service met the suggested criteria for each municipality (table 1.2).

The extended hours of service are illustrated in table 1.1 (Extended Hours of Service). All times highlighted in yellow represent the gaps in service which existed prior to the extension of hours.

		MONDAY-FRIDAY														
		6:00-7:00	7:00-8:00	8:00-9:00	9:00-10:00	10:00-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-1:00	1:00-2:00	2:00-3:00	3:00-4:00	4:00-5:00	5:00-6:00	6:00-7:00	7:00-8:00	8:00-9:00
Colltrans		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Wasaga Transit		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Wasaga Beach Link		Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Blue Mountain Link		Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
		SATURDAY														
		6:00-7:00	7:00-8:00	8:00-9:00	9:00-10:00	10:00-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-1:00	1:00-2:00	2:00-3:00	3:00-4:00	4:00-5:00	5:00-6:00	6:00-7:00	7:00-8:00	8:00-9:00
Colltrans		Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Wasaga Transit		Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Wasaga Beach Link		Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Blue Mountain Link		Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
		SUNDAY														
		6:00-7:00	7:00-8:00	8:00-9:00	9:00-10:00	10:00-11:00	11:00-12:00	12:00-1:00	1:00-2:00	2:00-3:00	3:00-4:00	4:00-5:00	5:00-6:00	6:00-7:00	7:00-8:00	8:00-9:00
Colltrans		Red	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Wasaga Transit		Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Wasaga Beach Link		Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow
Blue Mountain Link		Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow
		LEGEND														
		Green Regular Operating Hours														
		Yellow Extended Operating Hours														
		Red Non-Operating Hours														

Table 1.1 Extended Hours of Service

The majority of the extended hours are made up in the Blue Mountain Link, closing the mid-day gap between 10:00am and 3:00pm seven (7) days a week. Although the majority of the costs associated with the trial are based on the Blue Mountain link, the need for service was identified by all three Municipalities and therefore all municipalities contributed equally to the entirety of the trial period.

The first 6 months of the trial period have proven very successful. The trial period target vs actual ridership increases are shown in table 1.2.

Service	Target Increase	Average Actual Increase
Colltrans	10%	13.4%
WB Link	15%	34.7%
BM Link	50%	64.6%

Table 1.2 Ridership Increases

Actual ridership figures are shown in table 1.3.

Pink cells indicate a decline in ridership between 2017 and 2018, Green cells indicate an increase in ridership between 2017 and 2018.

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	%+/-**
COLLTRANS								
JUL	11221	12060	11448	11610	11003	10329	10197	-1.3%
AUG	11806	11939	10882	9953	9885	10025	9587	-4.4%
SEP	11567	11711	11352	9948	9936	10096	10996	8.9%
OCT	12790	14289	12521	10804	11051	10059	12557	24.8%
NOV	14173	15513	11980	11131	11051	11541	14056	21.8%
DEC	12422	13327	12196	11521	11224	10587	13810	30.4%
WASAGA BEACH LINK								
JUL	2104	3407	4194	4541	4355	4562	4975	9.1%
AUG	2023	3266	4357	3935	4365	4740	5410	14.1%
SEP	2017	3198	5101	3902	4225	3430	5212	52.0%
OCT	2771	3664	5072	4200	4103	3344	5275	57.7%
NOV	3051	3290	4204	3831	4542	4196	5299	26.3%
DEC	2616	3302	3937	3790	4363	3565	5321	49.3%

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	%+/-**
BLUE	MTN	LINK						
JUL			1886	2255	2746	2039	3828	87.7%
AUG			1860	2162	2740	2348	3253	38.5%
SEP			1431	1652	1970	1983	2771	39.7%
OCT			1606	1859	1919	1903	3038	59.6%
NOV		281	1742	1819	2117	2094	3386	61.7%
DEC		2055	2743	2688	3149	2471	4955	100.5%

Table 1.3 Actual Ridership Figures

****2018 Percentage increase for Blue Mountain Link is 64.6%**

Over the past three years ridership on Colltrans has seen a steady decline in ridership, which is typical of the trends throughout Ontario. Additionally, riders are also using the other inter-municipal links in place of the Colltrans routes, as there has been an increase amongst the inter- municipal routes in the past three years. Over the past six months there has been an increase of approximately 13% on the Colltrans routes, which has largely attributed to the new international students attending Georgian College this semester. In November of 2018, Colltrans saw its fourth highest month of ridership ever, and in December both the Wasaga Beach Link and Blue Mountain Link had their highest ridership month on record.

With regards to the extended hours of each of the systems, the additional weekend hours from the trial period on Colltrans make up less than 1% of the total ridership. On the Wasaga Beach Link the extended hours have increased 34.6% and have been directly reflective of the increase of service during the mid-day hours on the Blue Mountain Link. The hours between 10:00-3:00 on the Wasaga Beach Link have seen a 40% ridership increase during the 6 month trial, and the Blue Mountain Link has nearly doubled its ridership from December 2017 to December 2018.

It is clearly evident that the extended hours of service have met the targets approved by all three councils, and on all three systems the targets have been exceeded. Feedback from the stakeholders on the Regional Transit Task Force has been outstanding, with nothing but positive feedback from riders, business owners, and members of the task force.

With the extension of the hours on a permanent basis, 2019 projections for ridership are anticipated to be in line with the following figures:

	2017 Ridership	2018 Increase	2018 Ridership	2019 Projection
COLLTRANS	129,809	4,916	134,725	139,641
WASAGA BEACH LINK	49,848	10,381	60,229	70,610
BLUE MOUNTAIN LINK	34,507	6,722	41,229	47,951
TOTAL	214,164	22,019	236,183	258,202

Project #2 Private Sector Ride Sharing

As an additional need to compliment public transit service, private sector businesses have been diligently working towards implementing a service that operates outside the transit operating hours to compliment the transit within the region. The original intent was to have a service in operation before attracting workers for the winter season. However, due to delays in cross border licensing, the coordination between the private sector partners did not meet the required deadline.

The Transit working group has aided in the coordination of efforts, however the majority of the work has been done through the private sector to achieve the goal of a service to address this need. Currently, the private sector businesses are working to establish cost sharing measures and timetables to have this service established in 2019.

The regional task force will continue to support the initiative of the private partners and will provide updates as the project progresses.

Project #3 Awareness of Public Transit/Digital Maps and Signage

Several baseline awareness action items have already been completed, including:

- Creating a simple poster promoting the better bus hours and distributed digitally, as handouts and as laminated information bulletins for staff rooms
- Registering and publishing a dedicated regional URL and web-page with easy hyperlinks to the various regional transportation resources. www.SouthGeorgianBayTransit.ca.
- Social media posts promoting the better bus hours by www.facebook.com/ExperienceCollingwood as well as Blue Mountain Village as well as other regional municipalities.
- Updating large signs in bus shelters with new schedule and regional route map

- Promoting free bus service connected with key events, including Collingwood Elvis Festival, Apple Harvest Festival, Hometown Hockey, and Audi FIS World Cup.
- Coordinated regional radio campaign to promote better bus hours and regional connections between municipalities.
 - 72 ads in the Peak Fm
 - 60 ads on 97.7 The Beach
- Collaboration with Blue Mountain Resort for transit information in employee orientation packages.
- Media release of new Transit terminal and news spot on CTV news, and local news outlets.

Further promotional efforts are being planned:

- Updated transit map brochure
- Collaboration with high schools
- Continued social media support including new promotional videos

Overall, the performance of the trial service is encouraging. The anticipated targets exceeding projections. With aid from the Regional Transit Task Force to promote awareness of the regional transit service, the hope is to strengthen the rider base and attract more user groups to use transit in 2019.

E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan

Goal #1: Create Opportunities for Sustainability

Objective #1 Retain Existing Business

Objective #2 Attract New Business

Goal #2: Engage Our Communities & Partners

Objective #3 Strengthen Partnerships

Goal #4: Promote a Culture of Organizational & Operational Excellence

Objective #5 Constantly Identify Opportunities to Improve Efficiencies and Effectiveness

Goal #5: Ensure Our Infrastructure is Sustainable

Objective #4 Ensure that Infrastructure is Available to Support Development

F. Environmental Impacts

Staff are working with the Transit partners to provide this information.

G. Financial Impact

The table below illustrates the 2019 net Town costs associated with the new extended hours:

	2019 Trial Period Net Town Cost	2019 Permanent Extension Net Town Cost	Estimated Operating Costs
Colltrans	\$8,795	\$20,387	\$29,182
Wasaga Beach Link	\$3,705	\$1,490	\$5,195
Blue Mtn. Link	\$17,815	\$48,748	\$66,563
COST	\$30,315	\$70,625	\$100,940

These costs have been accounted for in the 2019 budget with a total permanent increase of \$100,940. This is a net cost that is derived from an estimated \$241,000 in expenses and \$140,000 in new revenues from tickets, passes and our municipal partners.

H. In consultation with

Sam Dinsmore, Deputy Treasurer/Manager of Accounting and Budgets

Tim Hendry, Economic Development and Communications Coordinator

Town of Collingwood

Town of Wasaga Beach

I. Public Engagement

The topic of this Staff Report has not been subject to a Public Meeting and/or a Public Information Centre as neither a Public Meeting nor a Public Information Centre are required. Comments regarding this report should be submitted to Ryan Gibbons, Acting Director of Community Services, directorcs@thebluemountains.ca.

J. Attached

1. None

Ryan Gibbons
Acting Director of Community Services

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