



Staff Report

Community Services

Report To: Committee of the Whole
Meeting Date: May 14, 2018
Report Number: CSPW.18.045
Subject: Extension of Transit Service Hours – Pilot Project
Prepared by: Ryan Gibbons, Acting Director of Community Services

A. Recommendations

THAT Council receive Staff Report CSPW.18.045, entitled “Extension of Transit Service Hours – Pilot Project”; and

THAT Council approve the amount of \$35,000 to increase the extension of hours of service on a trial basis between July 1 and December 31, 2018; and

THAT Council approve funding the \$35,000 from the Working Capital Reserve; and

THAT the approval of such funds is contingent on the participation of all three municipalities in the proposed trial.

B. Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide the necessary information to Council to approve a budget increase of \$35,000 for the expansion of transit service hours for a trial period of 6 months.

C. Background

As part of the findings from [The South Georgian Bay Labour Supply \(SGBLS\) Task Force](#), the need for regional transportation to support the local regional labour pool has been identified as an immediate need within the region, along with attainable accommodation and several other opportunities. SGBLS is lead by Andrew Siegwart, President, Blue Mountain Village Association, and includes representatives from: 5 municipalities, Grey and Simcoe counties, Georgian College, the Business Development Centre and more.

With aid from the Labour Supply Task Force, a work session was initiated in early February with members from across the region from all disciplines including, Municipal and County Government, small businesses, education, Hospitality and Tourism, Retail and Healthcare to look at transportation and transit. Through an interactive work session led by a moderator, the group drilled down to identify issues, barriers and general concerns with the structure of Public

Transit within the region. A consistent theme that was echoed amongst the group was the need to look at the local area's transportation needs on a "regional level." This was complimented by a regional employer transportation survey, which identified key gaps employees face in terms of affordable transportation options.

From this meeting of nearly 35 individuals representing public and private organizations, a smaller working group was derived to begin active efforts to analyze and determine the local transportation needs of not only our employment sector, but also transportation needs for local riders.

The goal of the Task Force is to look at transportation on a large scale which 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. Three 2018 pilot projects have been identified:

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 Transit working group has met each month since the original meeting in February, and has been diligently working towards meeting its goals that have been set out to meet the immediate needs. The GIS departments at all 3 Municipalities have collaborated on the creation of an overall regional transit system map, that the group anticipates will go to print in the early part of June.

The private sector members have been actively seeking out support from local business and industry; polling their interests for transportation requirements and potential partnerships and funding arrangements to meet employers' specific individual needs. The proposed function of a service for the private sector members would see early morning and late night transportation needs for employees only, with the potential of expanded service areas to reach industry and larger scale employers that are not currently being serviced via public transit.

Municipal staff have been working with the adjacent Municipalities (Town of Wasaga Beach and the Town of Collingwood) developing a plan to initiate a trial service that would see consistent service across the entire systems from Wasaga Beach to The Blue Mountains, which has initiated the submission of this report.

D. Analysis

Current Needs

As an initial step at improving regional based transit needs, the Transit working group mutually agreed that filling transit service gaps within individual systems would be a primary starting point at providing consistent and reliable transit service within the area. This was supported by the Employer Survey results which indicated in particular that transportation to Blue Mountain Resort after 7:00 p.m. was very important.

Table 1.1 illustrates the current gaps within the different systems and provides the base point for determining the budgeting requirements to meet the proposed service extension. Areas highlighted in yellow show times in which the respective service does not operate. Green shading indicates current service levels, and red is where no service extension is to take place.

Table 1.1

	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	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
Wasaga Tranist	Red	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	Yellow
Blue Mountain Link	Red	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow	Green	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 Tranist	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 Tranist	Red	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green	Green
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

It is evident that there are services that require more increase than others, and that those services may not be within one of the partnered municipalities' service area. The intent of the transportation working group, and the South Georgian Bay Labour Supply (SGBLS) task force is to begin looking at solving issues on a regional level. Whereas, Wasaga Beach has much of their transit service operating within their current schedule, employees who may live in Wasaga Beach may not be able to get to a job in The Blue Mountains due to The Blue Mountain link schedule. Or, alternatively, riders may be able to get to work and not get home or vice versa. Given that travel time across all three municipalities could take up to 1.25 hours, the need for consistent service throughout the day enables employees to have some security and dependence that they can get home once they are at work.

The regional task force also identified that employees may be hesitant to take a new job due to the schedule gaps. In the event that an employee was ill and had to leave, or a child was sick at school there would be no way for an employee to return home via transit. These are existing barriers that do exist and barriers which the working group has identified as transportation requirements.

Proposed Trial Service

The major component of the trial service will be extending the mid day gap of the Blue Mountain Link service between 10:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. This service is very similar to the trial operating period of the Wasaga Beach Link in 2011. Once the mid day gap was filled the ridership numbers nearly doubled. The trial service will also see the Collingwood Wasaga Beach link extended one hour in the evening, and additional Colltrans service on weekend evenings.

The intent of the service operating in a trial basis is to gain some knowledge as to the use of the services within the proposed extensions. The most frequent requests from employers and riders are to have service extended in the evening and consistent service throughout the day. The establishment of the trial service will allow a 14 hour window of transportation between three municipalities, which the working group feels as a strong improvement from the current level of service.

The trial service will not only serve to cater to employers and employees, but to local residents and tourists as well. With the timing of this trial extension happening at the beginning of summer, the members of the transportation workgroup will also propose doing a media blitz to ensure that our residents are aware that this service is available.

To date, the other component of the trial service within the private sector has not completed its full scale research amongst the businesses and industry stakeholders. Members of the working group are still gathering information from employers and working with local transportation providers to establish a proposed plan. Given that the private sector does not require the procedural and procurement guidelines which the municipalities face, the timeline for this component is not under the same time constraints as the Municipal transit portion of the plan.

Potential Challenges/Issues

With the proposed extension of the hours of service for six months, the ending of the trial period falls in the middle of winter. This poses some concern, as riders/employees who have taken jobs in other municipalities may find themselves in circumstances where they have no transportation to and from work, if the trial service is not committed to for an extension or made permanent.

In addition, the conclusion of the trial period will be at the beginning of the year, where new councils will be taking their seats at some of the first municipal council meetings following their inductions.

In contrast to these issues, the trial period will be taking place just prior to the development of Municipal budgets. If the service has the opportunity to initiate during the summer months, staff feel that the ridership numbers will have the most reflective representation of ridership as the tourist, and summer job season is in full effect. With only a few months of ridership the transportation task force can return to council after three months and present the ridership trends and analyze whether or not the trial extension is proving successful.

E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan

Goal #1: Create Opportunities for Sustainability

Goal #2: Engage Our Communities & Partners

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

Goal #5: Ensure Our Infrastructure is Sustainable

F. Environmental Impacts

These events will pose very little environmental impact.

G. Financial Impact

The Transit Task Force supplied Staff with the financials for the 6 month pilot project. In total, the pilot project will cost just over \$103,000 which represents a cost per municipality of \$34,000.

Staff recommend that the 2018 budget for Transit be increased from \$25,000 to \$60,000, an increase of \$35,000.

Transit is a service offered by the Town that currently does not have a reserve or reserve fund to fall back on when additional funds are required. With that in mind, Staff are limited to potential funding sources and recommend that the Working Capital Reserve fund this \$35,000.

H. In consultation with

Collingwood Regional Transportation Task Force

Town of Collingwood

Town of Wasaga Beach

Finance and IT Services Staff

I. Attached

None

Respectfully submitted,

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