



The Transit Action Alliance of Guelph (TAAG) has been working for four years to build support for a fast, frequent, affordable, and reliable transit system for Guelph. We support a high-quality transit network that serves high numbers of riders simply and efficiently and contributes to achieving the vision for the Guelph as described in the City of Guelph Community Plan. TAAG is the voice of residents, businesses, community groups, and others interested in high-frequency transit as endorsed by our Essential Elements of Good Transit (Appendix 1 & 2).

Guelph residents clearly stated during the development of Guelph's [Community Plan](#) that our city and our region's ability to move freely within neighbourhoods was important. The Route Review proposal also supports the Navigating our future priority in the City's [Strategic Plan](#) by improving the transportation system's safety, efficiency, and connectivity.

We strongly support Guelph Transit's research that found four key priorities:

- more routes that take people where they need to go
- quicker travel times
- frequent service
- more service reliability

We believe those priorities will make up critical principles to anchor the upcoming Transit Master Plan process. These would need to be implemented robustly in a redesigned transit network.

We are suggesting those principles be:

- Increase the proportion of resources dedicated to high ridership services
- Build a simplified, transfer-based system
- Invest in service quality and reliability
- Give transit increased priority in the transportation network

TAAG believes that Guelph Transit's proposal is an important and necessary first step toward a transit network that satisfies these principles. In particular, TAAG strongly supports Guelph Transit's proposal to concentrate service on busy **Core Routes** and provide enhanced service along the *Transit Quality Network*, as seen in the proposed **Transportation Master Plan** (Appendix 3). TAAG feels that these routes are the all-important first steps toward creating a high-quality frequent transit network of 15 minutes or better that residents can depend on.

TAAG will support Guelph Transit's proposal with improvements to key areas of the draft plan, including those highlighted below and in Appendix 4:

- The core corridors will need higher frequencies; with a simplified 15-minute and 30-minute schedules for easy transferring among the entire network;
- The proposal will need transit priority measures and the infrastructure required;
- The proposed network has an opportunity for downtown crosstown connections;
- The proposed network should consolidate stops to improve transit speed;



- The proposed network should show the potential transfer points and how quick trips could be made.
- The proposed network could be implemented faster than Guelph Transit plans to, and it must be implemented with the least number of changes year to year, impacting the public.
- The proposal will need to create better connections to Sunday evening services.



- Develop a network that meets industry standards, internal budgets, and public need
- Stakeholders are and feel engaged
- Improve service utilization
- Improve service reliability
- Develop key initiatives for a strong transit network

TAAG believes in a transit network that satisfies the Goals, as set out in your report to Transit Advisory Committee (see above). Our four recommended principles (possibility for the Transit Master Plan) will be a transit network that supports the Transportation Master Plan's goal of 15% of trips being made by public transit. Fully implementing these principles is also critical to achieving the goal of public transit progressing "into a whole new level of public acceptability by making its use vastly more convenient and treating users as customers with much-improved levels of service.". In what follows, TAAG will highlight several ways that Guelph Transit's Route Review proposal could be improved and better support those goals.

Recommendations on proposed Route Review Network

What this plan does well

- **New crosstown routes:** Routes 96, 97, 98 will significantly help cut travel times across the city.
- **Elimination of one-way loops on routes:** The shortening and elimination of one-way loops on various routes will help make transit more attractive.
- **New and expanded suburban terminals:** The new terminals at the Guelph Transit Garage, West End Community Centre, and Clair Maltby Hub will provide enhanced facilities for transferring passengers.

What could be improved?

- **The lack of increased Sunday evening service space:** Most routes in Guelph will still not operate past 7:00 p.m. Sunday, which significantly reduces the attractiveness of



transit for people accessing jobs and university students returning the campus via transit.

- **Reductions of service:** Some routes servicing key destinations are proposed to have their Saturday service span reduced (e.g., Route 1, 3, 7). Alternatives such as On-Demand Transit or minor route deviations (i.e., Route 98 Speedvale could service St. Joseph Hospital on Saturday evening) could maintain some coverage in these areas with the proposed reduced Saturday span.
- **Removal of uniform frequency:** With many routes changing to every 20 minutes on weekdays, middays, and Saturdays, some transfer times will be lengthened, and trip times will have a greater degree of variability. Ideally, routes should operate every 15 or 30 minutes to ensure that journey times are more consistent no matter when traveling.
 - We understand that the resources and schedule timings to make this happen and transit more attractive on most routes are challenging. However, frequent transit has been mentioned by riders several times in your research. Our research has indicated that the industry standard for frequent service is considered 15 minutes or better.
 - Over the years, there have been several instances where customers have missed (and complained) connections with the 20 and 30-minute midday journeys. Not having all routes share a 20-minute all-day schedule will create those issues again.

Advocacy points

- **Transfer time:** Given the increase in the size of the network, it is likely that a 60-minute transfer will no longer be sufficient for a greater proportion of journeys. TAAG recommends a longer transfer time (65, 75, or 90 minutes) to ensure the expanded network would not penalize riders with longer trip times. We understand that this will be considered through the Fare Strategy as part of the Transit Master Plan and look forward to the discussion.
- **Interlining:** Although the network greatly expands service, there are places where additional transfers may be required, which could increase journey time. More information will need to be provided on the planned route interlining and scheduling, eliminating some of these transfers.
- **Missed Connections:** While many routes have the advantage of connecting to one or more terminals, there are many places on the network that will require on-street connections and the construction of additional driver relief points. There are also a few opportunities to extend routes a short distance to eliminate transfers and create a more connection system:
 - Route 97 extension to Clair Maltby
 - Route 17 extension to University of Guelph
 - We recommend combining Route 20 and 22 to create more industrial connections at the Woodlawn SmartCentre routes. We understand that this was initially considered and seen as a challenge. However, TAAG believes having one simple direct route would be more attractive for workers in these areas than transferring mid-route and/or up-to three times potentially.



- **Downtown Crosstown:** There is an opportunity for an east-west crosstown route through Downtown Guelph by combining routes. (i.e., Routes 4 and 10 or Routes 10 and 14 to create Route 95 City Centre). TAAG understands that this was a consideration in the development of this plan. We encourage that this should be reconsidered and added back in.

Service Guidelines and Service Design Standards Guidelines Recommendations

Stop Spacing

While 250m is generally industry standard, it is a bit low for stop spacing, especially on core routes and major arterial roads, thus slowing transit down. Therefore, we would recommend 400m on those roads. We also encourage the stop prioritization be located near safe pedestrian crossings, major trail networks, and significant cycling network connections.

Transit users are generally willing to walk 400 m to a local stop or 800 m to more rapid transit stations and lines. The placement of local stops between 200 and 250 m apart supports an average 400 m walking distance to local stops within an interconnected network of streets and blocks. For express, high frequency, rapid transit services backed by a network of feeder transit, spacing stops greater than 250 m apart (typically 400-500m) is often appropriate to limit stops, reduce travel times and maintain route efficiency.

Service Coverage

We recommend revising the service coverage recommendation to ensure that 90% of people within 400m are **seven days a week**. Some transit agencies have 90% of their population within 400m, but many bus stops are only serviced by a couple of trips a day.

Family of services

We recommend that Guelph Transit look to expand the Sunday evening service span on select base routes to match the core routes allowing riders to get to more destinations seamlessly.

Regarding the proposed industrial expresses, it might be a worthwhile idea. However, Guelph Transit will need to ensure that the vehicles used do not impact service availability for other routes. An example: YRT (York Region Transit) operates a few of these for employers like Aviva, who pay to run a direct YRT shuttle from their office to the subway at Finch. We encourage Guelph Transit to work with the Guelph Chamber of Commerce to connect with the top major employers to see if this idea is feasible.

A side note: While this idea is valid, some businesses and councillors may see this as “double-dipping” as they already pay property taxes and expect transit service to have predictive service to their business.

Passenger loads

We recommend clarifying the wording to say **additional frequency** rather than additional trips and would make it precise that additional frequency would lead to additional riders.

Regarding board periods, changes usually could be made between board periods if they do not impact the start/end times of a driver's shift and don't substantially change the work they signed up for. Something for consideration to talk about between the Union and Transit, similar to some



other cities. Providing this flexibility to allow specific already known schedule changes to happen during a mid-board period (i.e., June schedule changes, board period is May-August) would go a long way to improving customer service and relations.

Service Hours & Frequency

For service hour and frequency adjustments, we want to strongly stress that these measurements need to be taken on an annual basis or greater, not by board period. This would ensure that temporary, seasonal reductions in ridership do not impact service span. This is critical to getting a fair and encodable transit system for all. Note that the Presentation says something completely different than the Summary Page.

The numbers presented meet the mark for our city's size and growth and should not change.

Sunday morning and evening service must be prioritized, especially on base routes, to make the system seamless, attractive, and accessible.

On-Time performance

This appears to be industry-standard, if not better. We encourage transit to utilize the tools being presented in the Transportation Master Plan as you develop the Transit Master Plan. Implementing a wide range of transit priority measures to keep buses moving and on time will make transit more attractive. We also encourage transit to explore other initiatives such as back door boarding and/or off-board payment methods to speed up loading times on busy routes.

Service review standards

We would like to see more ridership data made public; however, this should be undertaken cautiously and with proper context for the reader.

Implementation Timeline

- **Consolidating the plan:** A more compact 6–9-year package would be better for transit users and minimize the number of changes year to year, thus making transit more attractive to more people sooner.
 - We understand that Guelph Transit is attempting to keep the proposed expansion within a specific internal budget and minimum external tax increases presented to Council. However, TAAG believes that several routes will be changing almost every other year will be intolerably confusing to riders causing a backlash to Transit and Council (again).
 - We also believe it will be critical for Guelph Transit and us to convince City Council to invest in this plan; more information will need to be brought forward. Specifically, we will need to mention the Fare Strategy and provide information on how frequent transit grows ridership and revenue.
- **ICIP Funding:** Some parts of the plan are contingent on completing the new Transit Facility (2026). Clarification on what items are being funded by the ICIP, any conditions with it, and how flexible the program is. Council and the Community understand those points.
- **Year 3 with 98 Speedvale Route:** All the changes during the year are connected and should not change.



- **Large gap increasing Sunday Service:** 7:15 a.m. to 10:15 p.m. in Year 2 (Route 99), Year 3 (Route 98 Speedvale), and Year 9 with Route 96 Victoria. We are recommending that there be some non-core routes providing feeder service.
- **Year 4 and 5 Industrial changes:** Route 20 will increase in frequency to 20 minutes weekdays daytime, but the following Year 5, the route will split into 3, and the frequency will back to every 30 minutes all day. This change will be confusing to riders and will make it appear as a reduction in service.
 - We understand that Year 5 has a significant budget impact; however, making the change once instead of twice would be better for riders and have less blowback.
- **On-demand tool:** This tool could be used to fill in gaps in the service, possibly on those routes with decreased frequency (Routes 1, 3, 7, etc.)

In conclusion

Thank you for your careful consideration of our response to the draft Route Review.

We look forward to the next iteration of the plan this fall and rapid implementation of the high-quality transit system Guelph needs and deserves