

On-Demand Transit Pilot – Evening and Weekend Service**Report Purpose**

To provide Council with information on the on-demand transit pilot for evening and weekend service to be implemented in May 2022.

Recommendation

THAT the on-demand transit pilot for evenings and weekends from May 2022 to December 2023, using Mobility Bus vehicles, be approved.

THAT the temporary expansion of the Mobility Bus fleet, from 13 vehicles to 15 vehicles to accommodate the on-demand transit pilot, be approved.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents

Goal 6 - Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents

Report

On February 26, 2019, Council approved an update to the 2012 Transit Master Plan (TMP), in which Dynamic (on-demand) Transit Services was proposed as a mobility management tool.

On-demand transit services are shared-ride, demand-responsive services that typically use smaller vehicles and mobile app technology to provide mobility to customers. The service model is similar to Dial-A-Bus, however, leverages new technology to provide:

- instant access to booking services;
- near real-time tracking of vehicles, and;
- the most efficient route to a requested destination.

On-demand transit would operate and replace the current fixed route local and weekend service periods which currently requires five (5) vehicles to provide the service.

The implementation of an on-demand transit service is expected to have a significant benefit to Strathcona County Transit passengers. While current users of the local network will be the biggest beneficiaries of this initiative, the entire community will benefit from our accessible and convenient transit services. One of the benefits will be the ability to dispatch the appropriate size and number of vehicles to meet the demand for local transit services.

SCT looked at several service delivery models including internal operation using 40-foot buses, internal operation using Mobility Bus vehicles, contracted services using 10-15 passenger vans and rideshare partnerships. A market scan was completed and using pre-COVID (2019) ridership levels, Transit developed a model to determine the resource requirements and financial impacts of each option. This exercise included the impact of ridership growth and regression.

Year 1 costs (which span May to December 2022) took into consideration the operating and maintenance cost of each option, as well as up-front implementation costs such as software licensing, tablet and mounting hardware requirements, ITS chargebacks and project readiness.

Year 1 - May to December 2022				
	Existing Service	On-demand (40 ft)	On-demand (Mobility Bus)	On-demand (Contracted)
Total Expenses	\$1,069,831	\$1,178,818	\$873,201	\$880,660
Existing Budget	\$1,069,831	\$1,069,831	\$1,069,831	\$1,069,831
Net Cost/Savings	\$-	\$108,987	-\$185,630	-\$189,171

Year 2 costs, which span an entire calendar year and are inclusive of project implementation costs, realized greater savings through on-demand transit service delivery.

Year 2 - 2023				
	Existing Service	On-demand (40 ft)	On-demand (Mobility Bus)	On-demand (Contracted)
Total Expenses	\$1,604,746	\$1,561,227	\$1,141,801	\$1,166,490
Existing Budget	\$1,604,746	\$1,604,746	\$1,604,746	\$1,604,746
Net Cost/Savings	\$-	-\$43,519	-\$450,945	-\$438,256

To ensure a bus spare ratio is maintained and daily book-outs for both Mobility Bus and on-demand transit service can be maintained, SCT has proposed retaining two (2) Mobility Bus vehicles set to be retired in 2021 for the duration of the on-demand pilot project. As such, maintenance costs of \$11,000 in 2022 and \$12,000 in 2023 were added to the budget for the Mobility Bus option.

Based on the modelling, staff recommend the internally operated Mobility Bus option. When approved, the pilot's success would be measured based on the following performance indicators:

- overall customer satisfaction with on-demand transit service;
- ridership – returning to pre-COVID levels;
- decreased time on-board transit, and;
- reduced wait times for transit services.

Council and Committee History

February 26, 2019 Council approved the Transit Master Plan including strategic direction MM1: Dynamic Transit Services.

Other Impacts

Policy: N/A

Legislative/Legal: N/A

Interdepartmental: An on-demand transit option would impact Fleet Services and Information Technology Services.

Master Plan/Framework: 2019 Transit Master Plan

Communication Plan

If approved, a communications plan would be developed that could include rider education/awareness opportunities, social media, local media, the County's website and other forms of communication.

Enclosure

- 1 On-Demand Transit presentation