

## REPORT

**REPORT TO:** Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

**REPORT FROM:** Maureen Van Ravens, Manager of Transportation

**DATE:** June 3, 2019

**REPORT NO.:** TPW-2019-0026

**RE:** Transit Service Strategy and Executive Summary

### RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. TPW-2019-0026, dated June 3, 2019, regarding the Transit Service Strategy and Implementation be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council approve in principle Report No. TPW-2019-0026 and the Transit Service Strategy and phasing approach as indicated in the Executive Summary in Attachment 1;

AND FURTHER THAT the Development Charges By-law and background study be prepared for transit services based on the Transit Service Strategy;

AND FURTHER THAT Council approve the continuation of existing contracts for the ActiVan transit operators and administrative staff required to fulfill the ActiVan operations in-house for one additional year;

AND FURTHER THAT discussions related to the implementation of the Transit Service Strategy be referred to Budget Committee;

AND FURTHER THAT implementation shall not be considered until all matters related to the Provincial Government initiatives such as the Regional Review, Provincial Gas Tax review, budget implications and Bill 108 are all clearly understood;

AND FURTHER THAT when the CAO determines that all matters related to the Province are resolved, staff will report back to Council on implementation;

AND FURTHER THAT the Transit Service Strategy be forwarded to the appropriate staff at the Federal Government, Province of Ontario, Halton Region, Metrolinx, City of Brampton, City of Burlington, Town of Oakville, and the Town of Milton for their information.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Halton Hills 2014-2018 Strategic Action Plan identifies Transportation and Mobility as a Strategic Priority for the 2014-2018 term of Council. Under this Strategic Priority, the Action Plan directs staff to develop a Public Transit Strategy to address the needs of potential users, prior to or as part of the next Transportation Master Plan.

The Transit Service Strategy evaluates service alternatives and explores opportunities for a made-in-Halton Hills transit solution to meet the current and future mobility needs of the community. The strategy aligns with Halton Regions' Mobility Management Strategy and the Town's Strategic Action Plan and builds on the existing ActiVan Specialized transit service, youth transportation and Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan.

Council endorsed Report No. TPW-2018-0003 which provided details on the Strategic Transit Visioning workshop, the public consultation process and the Vision Statement with any potential refinements for the Transit Service Strategy.

On March 26, 2018, a Council workshop was held so that the project team was able to present the revised Vision Statement after receiving public input and describe the various transit service alternatives prior to receiving comments from the public.

Based on input received from the various workshops and meetings including community stakeholders and the public, the project team developed a vision statement that encapsulates the community's goals for its future transit system. The Vision Statement is as follows:

“Expand on the existing Halton Hills transit service to provide an affordable and accessible system that is tailored to needs and opportunities in Halton Hills. The transit system will service the needs of residents, businesses and visitors within the Halton Hills urban, rural and hamlet communities and provide links to surrounding municipalities by 2021. The transit system will continue to evolve to accommodate planned growth with the town by 2031.”

Based on this vision, the project team used these elements as requirements to develop alternative transit scenarios to serve the Town's existing and future transit needs.

Report TPW-2018-0018, provided an update on the Transit Service Strategy and endorsement from Council to review the potential alternatives for transit and the necessary financial analysis.

On February 11, 2019, a Council workshop was held to present the endorsed transit service alternatives and the financial implications associated with each alternative of transit prior to presenting and receiving comment from the public.

## **COMMENTS:**

Due to the recent Provincial Government announcements, including but not limited to Bill 108, Provincial Gas Tax and the Regional review, staff recommend that the planned phased-in approach for transit in Halton Hills be suspended until all matters related to the Province are resolved.

Notwithstanding, the Transit Service Strategy as indicated in Attachment 1, provides phased-in alternative transit scenarios to serve the potential and identified transit needs of Halton Hills through 2031. These alternatives have been developed to address the specific transit markets that have been identified through the course of the study, and the community's vision and priorities for transit service as expressed in the series of workshops and public information centres.

The priority for transit service indicates that there will be an increase in future transit demand based on the following:

- Projected population, employment, and development growth in Halton Hills through 2031.
- Steady ridership growth for the Town's ActiVan specialized transportation service over the past several years.
- Anticipated growth and changes in GO rail service demand coinciding with implementation of two-way, all-day service to Georgetown and improved service to Acton, by 2025.

Each of these trends in isolation would increase public demand for expanded ActiVan service and for development of other types of public transit service. The three trends will work together synergistically to create a demand for expanded levels and types of transit service that will need to be achieved if the Town's development and transportation goals are to be met between 2020 and 2031.

The three-phased transit scenarios are as follows:

### **Phase #1: Universal Access Service**

The Universal Access Service provides curb-to-curb service, similar to ActiVan, but not limited to seniors or persons of disabilities. Customers are picked up at their homes or pickup points and would be dropped off at their final destinations. Vehicles picking up Universal Access Service customers could pick up multiple customers going from nearby origin points traveling to common or nearby destination points. Direct, private curb-to-curb service would not be guaranteed.

Customers would arrange for pickup days or hours in advance of their trip. Contact may be made by phone or through an on-line or mobile application. The requirement for pre-arrangement may differ from that of ActiVan service and could vary over time, depending on the volume of service requests, capabilities of the scheduling system, customer interface applications, fleet and operator availability and any other variables.

The Universal Access Service may be operated by various or multiple operators, including the private or public operator of local taxi companies, transportation network companies (TNC's), and/or other private or public transit providers. Specialized scheduling software will provide the ability to group riders to maximize the occupancy of a vehicle. Fares for customers is estimated at \$3.75 for trips less than 10 kilometres and \$1 for each additional kilometre travelled over 10 kilometres. The fare structure will be confirmed as part of the implementation plan.

The demand for the Universal Access Service will be monitored to determine when a fixed-route service should be considered using the tools and guidelines provided in the Transit Service Strategy.

### **Phase #2: Universal Access Service + Limited Fixed Route**

This phase introduces a limited fixed route bus service that would be provided in addition to the ActiVan and Universal Access Service. Regularly-scheduled, fixed-route service would operate on routes connecting to key destinations within Halton Hills, and nearby Metrolinx GO stations of surrounding communities where connections or transfers with other bus routes are available. Fixed-route service would serve high-demand connections more efficiently than Universal Access Service. With the introduction of limited fixed-route service, some Universal Access Service trips may be converted from curb-to-curb travel to trips that would connect customers from their point of origin to a nearby transit stop or transit hub.

Based on growing demand for connections to Toronto Premium Outlets (TPO) and other employers and destinations along the Steeles Avenue, a fixed route service along this corridor is justified in the near term.

### **Phase #3: Universal Access Service + Expanded Fixed Route**

This phase expands the fixed-route service to make additional connections, or to provide more frequent service, based on anticipated higher ridership levels on existing services and demand for new services in response to continued population and employment growth. Additional routes, particularly longer distance routes, may also be incorporated. Universal Access service would remain in place, but may be modified to home-to-hub service connecting riders to fixed-route transit hub in areas where fixed-route transit service are in place. Increased transit funding would be required beyond the levels that supported Phase #1 and #2, and the required vehicle fleet will expand to provide increased levels of service.

The Transit Service Strategy allows all phases of the service to have flexibility to enhance the service as ridership and service demand increases, and as funding is available. Ridership, service efficiency and productivity and funding availability will be reviewed on a regular basis to maintain the efficiency and cost-effectiveness of Halton Hills transit system.

## **Proposed Implementation Plan**

For analytic purposes, 2020 has been referred to as starting date of service within the Transit Service Strategy, but implementation is subject to available funding. The implementation schedule is meant to be flexible, and the dates used in the primary plan were used to establish cost and rider forecasting for the service.

The implementation of a Universal Access Service as recommended in the Transit Service Strategy is being proposed as phase 1 of the proposed implementation plan. The service area would include all of Halton Hills and key destinations outside Halton Hills (Lisgar GO, Milton GO and Mount Pleasant GO stations). Universal Access Service would be provided by local taxi vendors and/or transit network companies (TNC's) for the contractual service of professional drivers through a Request for Proposal process. The current Taxi Scrip Program would be dissolved and folded into the Universal Access Service. The implementation date will be determined through the Town's budget approval process.

It is also recommended that the Town investigate partnerships with the Town of Milton to have Milton Transit provide a bus route along the Steeles Avenue corridor that would connect Milton GO – Toronto Premium Outlets (TPO) – Lisgar GO. This service would address the growing demand for access to Toronto Premium Outlets (TPO) and other employers along Steeles Avenue. Town staff will work with the Town of Milton to plan and install bus stops and concrete pads along Steeles Avenue to support the required route infrastructure and future development of the service route. The timing for implementation of this service would be based on budget approval and negotiations with the Town of Milton.

As part of the implementation of the Universal Access Service, administration, trip booking and dispatch are recommended to remain in-house in order to continue maintaining the high standards of customer service of the existing ActiVan system and to monitor ridership and growth of the program. Administration staff of one additional full-time employee would be required in addition to the current ActiVan administration complement for the Universal Access Service hours of operation. In addition, a pool of part-time administrative staff also would be required for weekend service and backup coverage for the FTE administrative staff.

The Universal Access Service also will require specific software to provide an efficient and effective 'rideshare-ride pooling' model of service. Rideshare and ride pooling platforms use a smartphone app which connects drivers with passengers in the area. The Universal Access Service would allow the contracted driver of a local taxi and/or TNC provider to log into the app to set their status to online, which indicates that they are available to accept a ride. Once the customer has selected a destination and requested the pickup, the driver will get a notification of the requested ride. The driver will pick up the passenger(s) and start travelling towards their destination. If another rider requests a ride and the destination is along the driver's current route, the driver is then assigned to pick up the second passenger and drop him/her off along the way.

Riders that do not utilize smart phones will have the ability to book a trip via telephone by calling the Town. The rideshare/ride pooling scheduling system will control and cap public subsidy, and provide other controls to prevent the program from being over-subscribed or too costly for Halton Hills to continue to operate.

Staff will need to go to market with an Expression of Interest approximately 8 months prior to implementation of Universal Access Service to determine the vendors that offer the service and available technologies behind the applications. This information will be used to develop a Request for Proposal for a software as a service (SaaS) required to implement Universal Access Service.

To launch the implementation of Universal Access Service, a strong marketing and educational plan will need to be developed well in advance of service implementation. As this will be a new service, a well thought-out comprehensive communication, outreach and branding strategy needs to be developed. The purpose for the marketing plan involves clearly defining the Town's service goals and educating existing riders of changes to service for the ActiVan, Taxi Scrip and Youth Taxi Scrip programs and also will develop strategies to promote service goals to future customers. A critical component to a successful transit system is the marketing and promotion of services to both potential and existing riders. It is recommended that the Town utilize the expertise of Town communication staff for the planning and execution of the marketing plan.

Prior to the development and launch of any communication and branding exercise Town's communication staff will engage the public for their input. Town staff will utilize their expertise to help guide participants through working sessions and/or online platforms to help inform the identification of a preferred "look and feel" of the service. This will support public's understanding and ensure that the plan and proposed level of service resonates with the public. It is expected that a communication plan would take 6-12 months to develop and implement prior to commencement of the Universal Service.

### **Monitoring of Service**

As demand for the Universal Access Service grows, service standards would trigger implementation of fixed route bus services to replace Universal Access Service trips on the most heavily used trip patterns. Fixed route service becomes more cost effective than Universal Access Service when the cost of Universal Access Service trips from one area or in one travel corridor approaches the cost of providing fixed-route bus service. Based on cost estimate for both Universal Access Service and fixed-route services, this level is reached when Universal Access Service in one area or corridor reaches between 200 to 250 daily trips. The service standards would be used to monitor the service to ensure that it progresses towards achieving productivity standards.

The Town will monitor the efficiency and productivity of the Universal Access Service using key performance indicators (KPI's). Implementing conventional fixed route service is subject to Budget Committee approval as well as satisfactorily meeting service

demand KPIs. Staff will continue to provide Council recommendations annually to assess improvements on existing routes, implementation of additional conventional fixed routes, and other transit service level considerations.

### **ActiVan Program - Existing and Proposed Changes**

The Town of Halton Hills ActiVan service is a specialized transportation service for seniors age 65 and older and persons with disabilities residing in Halton Hills. The Town has provided accessible transportation service through the ActiVan program since 1981. Since the inception of the program, Tyler Transport Limited has provided operational support to the ActiVan service from inception to July 1, 2018, when Tyler Transport Limited chose to dissolve all business dealings inclusive of the ActiVan services. The Town has stepped in to provide seamless operational services in-house through contracted employment of drivers and administrative staff.

As part of the continuation of the ActiVan program, staff recommends that the in-house operations with the contracted drivers and administrative staff continue until staff evaluate service costs of the ActiVan program and provide a recommendation back to Council on the future operations of the service (anticipated Q3 2021).

When the Universal Access Service is implemented, the current Taxi Scrip under the ActiVan program and Youth Taxi Scrip program would be dissolved and folded into the Universal Access Service. A detailed communications plan would be established to educate and assist current riders in the transition of service delivery.

In addition, upon implementation of Universal Access Service, the existing criteria for the ActiVan application process will require a change in approval process. Eligibility for ActiVan service will be evaluated under 3 main categories:

- **Unconditional** - A person with a disability that prevents them from using conventional transit.
- **Conditional** - A person with a disability where environmental or physical barriers limit their ability to consistently use conventional transit. An applicant who qualifies for conditional service may be able to use conventional transit for all or part of their trip, but may also qualify for specialized transit under specific circumstances for some or their entire trip.
- **Temporary** - A person with a temporary disability that prevents them from using conventional transit. An applicant who qualifies for temporary service requires specialized transit for a defined period of time.

All existing ActiVan clients will be “grandfathered” into the ActiVan program and will not be required to reapply for the ActiVan service based on the three above noted eligibility criteria’s.

Currently the Town of Oakville has retained Medisys Canada which are health care professionals that review, access and approve all specialized transit applications. The Town of Milton and the City of Burlington have both partnered with the Town of Oakville to utilize these services. To ensure consistency with all the municipalities within Halton Region for specialized transit, it is recommended that the Town of Halton Hills use Medisys Canada to approve all the Town's applications and enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Oakville (at the appropriate time) for the administration of the contract and agreed costs.

It is anticipated that the annual costs to the Town of Oakville for our portion of Medisys Canada's review of applications would be approximately \$25,000 annually. These costs would not be incurred until Universal Access Service has been implemented.

### **Sustainability and Climate Change**

On May 6, 2019, Council adopted the Climate Change Resolution No. 2019-0088 with the required need to reduce overall emissions from the Town, and as stated in the resolution, 'can be addressed but not limited to, transitioning of the Town's fleet to electric vehicles wherever possible, and as soon as possible'.

The Universal Access Service and implementation of the fixed route on Steeles Avenue does not require any additional fleet; as it will be operated by the Town of Milton. Further discussions with the Town of Milton will be required to determine the fleet requirements to operate this service. As transit service increases throughout the years, additional fleet will be required along with the replacement of the existing ActiVan vehicles. It is recommended that alternative fuel vehicles be considered at the time of purchase to reduce energy consumption, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions, subject to Budget Committee approval in future years.

### **Development Charges**

Municipalities in Ontario are allowed to levy charges on new development to help cover the cost of new infrastructure to service that development. The mechanism for calculating development charge contributions toward transit expenses was recently changed. Previously eligible growth-related capital expenditures had to be based on levels of service in the prior 10 years. This meant that new transit agencies did not have any eligible costs and had to build up a history of expenditures over the next 10 years. Under the revised Development Charges Act, eligible growth related capital expenditures can be based on planned levels of service for Transit projecting 10 years in the future.



Should Council approve the Transit Service Strategy, it will be used to prepare the Development Charges By-law and background study to include growth related transit costs. The Development Charges By-law and background study needs to be initiated this year to establish new rates as it relates to transit.

### **Next Steps**

Staff have considered the Transit Service Strategy and recommends that the initial background work to implement Universal Access Service be completed when all impacts related to the Province are resolved and approved through Budget Committee. Upon resolution staff will complete the following next steps prior to delivery of service:

- Commence discussions with local taxi vendors for implementation of Universal Access Service;
- Expression of Interest and Request for Proposal for a software as a service (SaaS) Rideshare program;
- Request for Proposal for contracted driving services of local taxi vendors and/or TNC's required to provide the Universal Access Service;
- Liaison with the Town of Milton for the implementation of the fixed route along the Steeles Avenue corridor which would be operated by the Town of Milton be assessed as part of budget committee. To initiate this service, staff will be required to commence negotiations with the Town of Milton and bring forward an agreement to be executed by the Mayor and Clerk;
- Develop and implement a communication, education and marketing plan;
- Enter into a Memorandum of Understanding with Oakville for the approval process for specialized transit applications, to commence once Universal Access Service is in place;

Staff are recommending an evaluation of the in-house services for the ActiVan program and will provide recommendation to Council and Budget Committee upon completion of the review.

### **RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:**

Through report PDS-2015-0035, Council endorsed the 2014-2018 Strategic Action Plan as the Town's priorities for the 2014-2018 term of Council.

Transportation/Mobility was identified as a strategic priority as part of the 2014-2018 Top 8 Strategic Priorities. The following Strategic Action was identified:

- F. Develop a Public Transit Strategy to address the needs of all potential users.

## **FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

In view of staffs recommendation to not proceed with implementation until all impacts and outcomes of the Provincial Government initiatives and reviews are known, there is no financial impact associated with this report. As part of the implementation, finance staff will update the long range financial plan to fully define the financial impacts of transit.

The Transit Service Strategy is proposed to be implemented over 10 years based on transit ridership, level of service and funding availability.

Once clarity has been determined on the above noted issues related to the Provincial Government, an implementation plan for the Universal Access Service will be established. It is anticipated that the approximate net cost to operate the Universal Access Service will be approximately \$1 million which includes all contracted services, staffing and software requirements.

Once it has been determined when to introduce the fixed-route transit service along the Steeles Avenue corridor, it is anticipated to be operated by the Town of Milton at an approximate cost of \$400,000 annually (Halton Hills share). This amount reflects cost sharing with Milton transit for the operation of this route. These costs will be refined prior to implementation.

In addition, it is anticipated that a one-time cost of \$100,000 will be required to install concrete pads and bus shelters along Steeles Avenue within the municipal boundaries of Halton Hills and an additional \$50,000 annually for the maintenance.

In addition, in advance of the implementation of the Universal Access Service, a comprehensive communication, outreach and branding strategy needs to be developed to promote the service and provide the necessary advertising materials. It is anticipated that \$100,000 will be required to complete this work.

The costs to provide these services will be brought forward to Budget Committee for consideration.

As part of the implementation of the Universal Access Service, staff will request the necessary funding at that time to be considered as part of Budget Committee. All budget considerations will be weighed against other corporate initiatives, external influences and unknown budget constraints from the Province.

## **CONSULTATION:**

The following Departments and associated staff were consulted through the development of this report: Office of the CAO, Corporate Services, Planning and Sustainability, and Transportation and Public Works.

## **PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

All public engagement conducted followed the Town's fundamental principles for the Public Engagement Charter and remained consistent in the Town's commitment to the promise of Transparency, Notification and Participation.

Development of the Transit Service Strategy included three consultation meetings with Technical Agencies, Stakeholders and the public. The public was engaged through workshops, presentations, Public Information Centre (PIC) meetings which were held on February 15, 2018; May 14, 2018 and March 27, 2019 and through the online platform 'Let's Talk Halton Hills' that allowed convenient opportunity to provide comment and input through surveys and interactive engagement tools. Each public meeting, presentation and workshop provided key project information and acquired necessary feedback on where transit is required in the community and the opportunities and challenges associated with it.

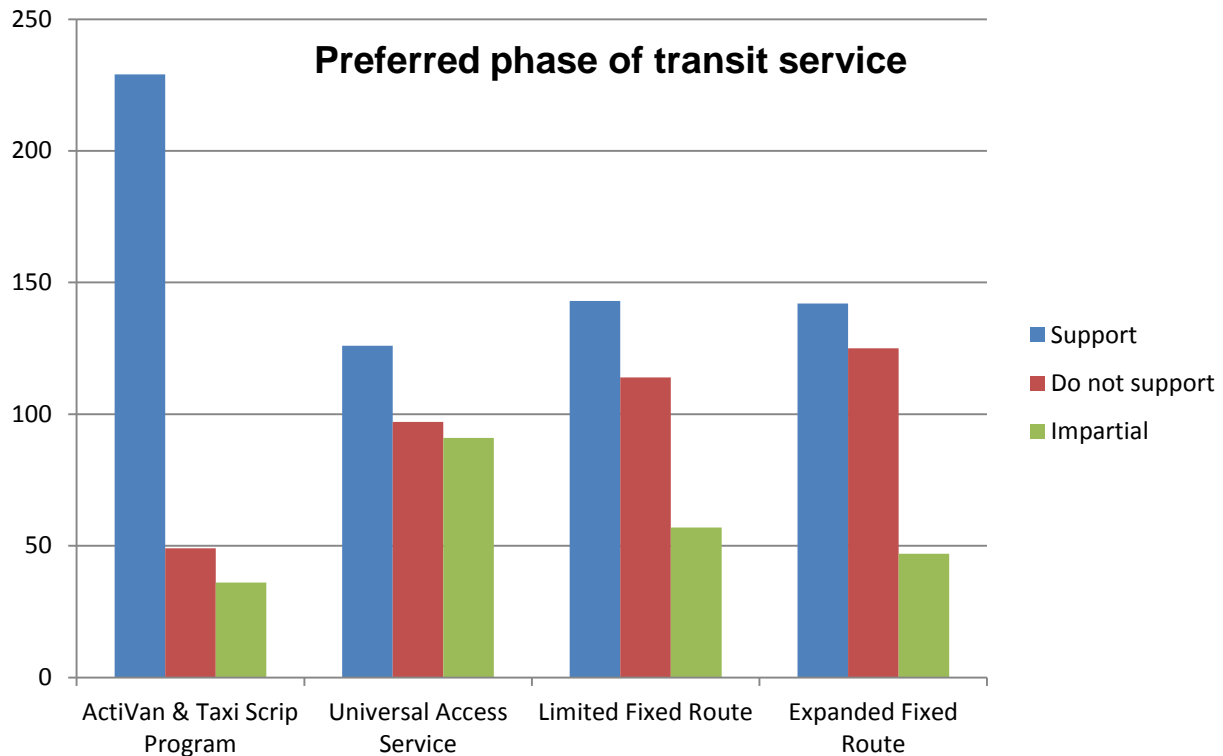
The initial survey process received 983 responses. Combined with the survey results and consultation through workshops, the following key points were identified:

- Widespread acknowledgement that some level of additional transit is needed today in Halton Hills
- Request for connections to other regions and municipalities
- Desired destinations of transit included Downtown Georgetown, Toronto Premium Outlets (TPO), employment areas along Steeles Avenue and Armstrong Avenue, Trafalgar Memorial Hospital in Oakville, Sheridan College and Square One Shopping Centre in Mississauga

The third round of public consultation included a second survey for public input. The survey received 314 responses which identified the following:

- The top three identified contributors of implementing transit in Halton Hills are:
  - Reduces carbon footprint
  - Facilitates travel throughout the Town
  - Facilitates travel to surrounding areas
- 16% of participants of the survey said while living in Halton Hills they had to pass on employment or educational opportunities due to lack of transit in Halton Hills.

In addition, based on results in the second survey, it was determined that the following phases of transit that are ‘supported’ or ‘not supported’ in Halton Hills are:



A full list of public consultation, stakeholders and technical agencies sessions are attached in Attachment 2.

**SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS:**

The Town is committed to implementing our Community Sustainability Strategy, Imagine Halton Hills. Doing so will lead to a higher quality of life. The recommendation outlined in this report advances the Strategy’s implementation.

This report supports the Environmental Health and Social Well-being pillars of Sustainability and in summary the alignment of this report with the Community Sustainability Strategy is Excellent.

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

Once approved by Council, this report will be made available on the Let’s Talk Halton Hills Transit Service Strategy webpage, and the Town website as part of the Transit Service Strategy information page that was created.

**CONCLUSION:**

As stated earlier in this report, with the numerous Provincial announcements, Regional review, changes to the Provincial Gas Tax program and budget cutbacks; staff are recommending that implementation of the Transit Service Strategy not be advanced at this time until all impacts are known and completely understood. When all relevant information is known, staff will report back to Council and all discussions related to cost and budget will be forwarded to and presented at Budget Committee at that time.

Upon implementation, all future phases and other priority routes of transit will be assessed based on the success of Universal Access Service, Council's future direction on the pace/speed at which additional conventional service routes is to be implemented, and through available funding.

Reviewed and Approved by,



**Maureen Van Ravens, Manager of Transportation**



**Chris Mills, Commissioner of Transportation and Public Works**



**Brent Marshall, Chief Administrative Officer - Jun 11, 2019 - 11:20 AM**