



REPORT

Council

Meeting Date: September 18, 2023

FROM: Oakville Transit

DATE: September 5, 2023

SUBJECT: **Oakville Transit Ride On-Demand 2024 Transit Expansion Plan**

LOCATION: Town-wide

WARD: Town-wide

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the 2024 Oakville Transit On-Demand Transit Expansion Plan identifying On-Demand service expansion in select areas of the Town, be endorsed.

KEY FACTS:

The following are key points for consideration with respect to this report:

- The Town of Oakville, through Oakville Transit, has been providing transit services to the residents of Oakville since 1972.
- Oakville Transit provides a family of services from conventional fix routes, Care-A-Van, Home to Hub, and Ride On-Demand (pilot) services.
- “On-Demand” type services (Home to Hub) started in 2015 in select areas of the Town where fixed routes are not offered.
- An evolution of the Home to Hub service, Ride On-Demand Transit, was identified as a more flexible and cost-effective way to offer transit service in low transit demand areas.
- Oakville Transit implemented Ride On-Demand transit services as a pilot in select areas of north and southeast Oakville which have been successful.
- Staff are planning expansion of the On-Demand service by making Ward 3 and 7 service permanent; to other geographic areas, and replacing late night service in 2024.

BACKGROUND:

The Town of Oakville, through Oakville Transit, has been providing transit services to the residents of Oakville since 1972.

Oakville Transit provides conventional and specialized transit services to the Town's 215,710 residents. Conventional transit services are provided within the urban boundaries of the Town for a total service area of approximately 140 sq. km. These services connect with Burlington Transit to the west and Miway (Mississauga Transit) to the east. As well, Oakville Transit connects with GO Transit's Lakeshore West train service at four different stations; Bronte GO Station, Oakville GO Station, Clarkson GO Station (Mississauga), and Appleby GO Station (Burlington). Connection with GO Transit bus services occurs at these same stations with additional connections occurring at the GO Transit Carpool lots at Dundas Street / Highway 407 and Trafalgar Road / Highway 407.

Oakville Transit provides a family of services from convention fix routes, Care-A-Van, Home to Hub, and Ride On-Demand (pilot) services.

Oakville Transit operates a conventional fleet of 101 buses and provides service on 21 fixed routes and 8 school specials. This service is operated on a fixed schedule and operates various routes throughout the entire week.

Care-A-van, also operated by Oakville Transit, is a door-to-door service for registered customers who have a disability that prevents them from using conventional transit. The service is provided by fully accessible transit vehicles, which are supplemented by taxis. The service operates within the municipal boundary of Oakville and provides cross-boundary connections with Burlington Handi-Van and Peel TransHelp.

Home to Hub is a shared pre-booked transit service offered in select areas where fixed route is not offered. Customers are able to book their ride by Interactive Voice Response, web, mobile app or by contacting our call centre during business hours (Monday to Friday 8:30 am – 4:30 pm). Customers are picked up from their home and taken to the nearest hub to connect with fixed route. Home to Hub service utilizes fully accessible small capacity vehicles driven by Oakville Transit drivers.

Ride On-Demand (pilot), an evolution of Home to Hub, is a shared ride service providing customers the ability to for travel from any address to another within a designated zone or to transit hubs within the zone where they can transfer to other Oakville Transit services. Ride On-Demand operates Monday to Friday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

COMMENT/OPTIONS:**“On-Demand” type services (Home to Hub) started in 2015.**

Home to Hub, a shared On-Demand type transit service, began operating in June 2015, using smaller capacity buses to pick up customers at their home and drop them off at the closest hub to connect with fixed-route services. This service was designed to allow customers to pre-schedule a trip from their curbed address location to a predetermined hub. This service requires customers to pre-book their trip in advance of their journey and only allows customer to travel to one predetermined hub.

At the time, On-Demand transit service was a relatively new service concept in Canada and was originally proposed within the Five-Year Transit Service Plan (Oakville Transit Services Review, 2015). This subscription-based service was an affordable alternative to fixed route conventional services in low demand, low ridership areas, or newly developed neighbourhoods while still offering a transit solution for residents.

The implementation history of Home to Hub service is noted below:

- June 2015 - Home to Hub began operating replacing the Route 5A Dundas conventional fixed route service in newly developed areas north of Dundas Street.
- January 2018 - service expanded to areas served by Routes 11 Linbrook, 12 Winston Park and 26 Falgarwood during the day.
- March 2019 - Home to Hub expanded in Southeast Oakville to include Reynolds Street. The service hours were also expanded to include new weekend and holiday service.

An evolution of the Home to Hub service, Ride On-Demand Transit, was identified as a more flexible and cost-effective way to offer transit service in low transit demand areas.

Ride On-Demand transit services have been identified as a cost-effective way to deliver transit in areas of low transit demand without having to implement conventional fixed route scheduled transit service. Ride On-Demand is designed to be more flexible by providing a shared-ride service for customers who will be able to request a trip, on demand, using a Ride On-Demand app, Interactive Voice Response (IVR), web booking, or by calling the transit call-centre. The Ride On-Demand service is very flexible as customers will be able to request a ride at any time during operating hours, travel from any address to another or to transit hubs in a designated zone, and transfer to other conventional Oakville Transit services.

In October 2022, Oakville Transit implemented Ride On-Demand transit services as a pilot in select areas of north and southeast Oakville which have been successful.

Currently, the Ride On-Demand pilot provides customers the ability to book travel through Oakville Transit Mobility Coordinator during call centre business hours or use self-serve features after-hours. Operational hours of the services are noted below:

- Monday to Friday: 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Saturday: 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday: 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

The service allows for travel from one address to another within a designated zone (new) or to transit hubs within the zone where they can transfer to other Oakville Transit services. In preparation for the pilot, staff conducted a survey of Ward 3 and 7 residents to better understand travel patterns of residents in the pilot areas. The survey was available to customers in early June 2022 over a three-week period through oakville.ca and oakvilletransit.ca. Data collected from the survey helped determine the potential frequency and resources required to offer on-demand service in the pilot areas. Staff continue to assess data from the pilot to determine on-demand service delivery requirements for future expansion throughout the town.

To date, the On-Demand pilots have been a success in providing services to residents in Wards 3 and 7. Since the On-Demand pilots started in October 2022, there have been a total of over 491 combined trips on the service (up to July 2023). This is broken down by the following:

- Ward 3 167 trips
- Ward 7 324 trips
- **TOTAL** **491 trips**

Through the Ride On-Demand pilots, staff identified and compiled the most travelled to destinations identified below by Ward:

Southeast Oakville – Ward 3

- 214 Cross Avenue – Oakville GO Station

North Oakville – Ward 7

- 385 Sixteen Mile Drive – Oodenawi Public School
- 271 Oak Walk Drive – Uptown Core Terminal
- 234 Hayes Blvd – Wal-Mart Super Centre

Technology will play a significant role in driving Ride On-Demand ridership.

Staff are in the process of implementing new scheduling technology for On-Demand services. This technology will be supplemented with self-serve booking options for customers which includes a ride-hailing mobile app, web portal booking and IVR (interactive voice response). Customers will continue to have the option to speak to a Mobility Coordinator during call centre business hours to book their trips or use our self-serve features after-hours. Staff are planning to integrate the new scheduling software and app into the service by the fall of 2023.

Staff are planning expansion of the On-Demand service in 2024.

Through valuable Ride On-Demand operating and travel pattern insight, staff are recommending the expansion of Ride On-Demand service within the town. Staff used the following performance measures to identify where to implement/expand the service:

- Ride On-Demand may replace underperforming fixed route services (ie: less than 10 passengers per hour) during standardized service hours
- The service area should be centered around popular destinations such as bus terminals, GO stations, employment areas, shopping centres, and other popular attractions
- Service implementation is subject to the potential to achieve minimum passenger trips per service hour targets depending on the service area and service model
- The operating cost for Ride On-Demand service should not exceed the operating cost to operate a fixed route service replacement within the same area
- Ride On-Demand services operating over 10 passengers per hour may be considered for conversion into a fixed route service where possible
- Service performance will continually be evaluated for modification, expansion into new service areas, service periods, service reduction or discontinuation

Using the above performance measures, staff are planning to implement the following changes to the Ride On-Demand service in 2024:

Permanent implementation of Ride On-Demand service in Wards 3 and 7

Staff recommend permanently implementing the service in Wards 3 and 7 as the service is providing transit coverage for residents in the areas where conventional fixed route service is not provided.

Expand Ride On-Demand service to replace Route 26 – Falgarwood

The current local conventional transit service operating within the Falgarwood community is currently operating at less than 10 passenger per hour. The removal of fixed route conventional service, replaced by Ride On-Demand, will provide more service coverage and service span (times transit is available) for the area.

Expand Ride On-Demand Service to Rt 34

The current rush hour only, local conventional transit service operating within the Bronte Creek community is currently operating at less than 10 passenger per hour. The removal of fixed route conventional service, replaced by Ride On-Demand, will provide more service coverage and service span (times transit is available) for the area.

Replace Late Night Service - Town Wide

Oakville transit currently operates two late night services operating from the Oakville GO station which service the east and west sides of the Town. Staff are recommending Ride On-Demand replace the existing late night transit services to enable customers a more direct trip and end stop location. Staff will monitor the service to identify potential expansion of the late-night Ride On-Demand service to analyse further late transit service access across the Town.

Table 1 below and the appended **Attachment 1** identify the changes to service with the expansion of Ride On-Demand services in 2024.

Table 1: 2024 Ride On-Demand Service Changes

Service Area	Current Service	Planned Service	Service Coverage Changes
Ward 3 and 7 Pilots	Pilots operating in Wards	Pilots to become permanent in wards 3 and 7	No impact
On-Demand expansion to Falgarwood	Fixed Route 26 service operating rush-hours only	Implement Ride On-Demand service operating from approximately 5:40 a.m. to 7:45 p.m.	Increased transit service span for neighbourhood
On-Demand expansion to Bronte Creek	Fixed Route 34 service operating rush-hours only	Implement Ride On-Demand service operating from approximately 5:40 a.m. to 7:45 p.m.	Increased transit service span for neighbourhood
Replace Late Night Service Town Wide	2 routes operating from GO train station to fixed stops	Service operating from GO train station to fixed curb addressed locations throughout the Town	Decreased travel and wait time for customers, expanded service span

Next Steps

Staff are preparing Ride On-Demand service changes for 2024 and will continue monitoring the service to identify future service expansion areas. Staff will also be preparing a Five-Year Transit business plan in the fall of 2023 which will provide staff direction for transit services over the next five years. The Five-year business plan will analyse future changes to the transit system including, but not limited to the 'gridding' of additional transit routes, review of service frequencies, service spans, and further expansion of the Ride On-Demand services. In addition to the Five-Year business plan, staff will begin work on a 2025 Annual Service Plan which will begin to implement initiatives recommended in the Five-Year business plan and identify potential service changes for 2025.

CONSIDERATIONS:

(A) PUBLIC

Oakville residents and transit customers will benefit from the expansion of the Ride On-Demand service into transit mobility deserts, areas with lower transit ridership demand, areas where road networks do not allow for the efficient use of fixed-route transit service and areas where demand for transit service is lower during specific time periods.

(B) FINANCIAL

The 2024 Ride On-Demand recommendations identified in this report will not have additional financial impacts as staff will be utilizing existing vehicle and staffing resources.

(C) IMPACT ON OTHER DEPARTMENTS & USERS

The recommendation in this report will not impact other departments or users.

(D) CORPORATE STRATEGIC GOALS

This report addresses the corporate strategic goal(s) to:

- Ensure environmental sustainability to meet future needs related to greenspaces and natural areas, and act on climate change mitigation and adaptation
- Manage growth for a vibrant local economy, meeting infrastructure needs and ensuring we have complete communities and efficient mobility across the town
- To be a vibrant and livable community for all

(E) CLIMATE CHANGE/ACTION

The implementation and expansion of Ride On-Demand has a direct effect on our climate, the vehicles for this service are entirely battery electric buses. By

using electric transit vehicles, the Town would be addressing climate change mitigation through its corporate activities.

APPENDICES:

Appendix A – Ride On-Demand 2024 Expansion areas

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Recommended by:

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Submitted by:

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