



The road ahead

Grand River Transit Business Plan



Land acknowledgement

The Region of Waterloo is situated on the lands within the Haldimand Tract of 1784, a formally ratified agreement acknowledging six miles on either side of the Grand River as treaty territory belonging to Six Nations of the Grand River. The Region of Waterloo serves an area within the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Chonnonton and Haudenosaunee peoples. This territory is within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon wampum — which calls upon us to share the land and its resources fairly, represented by a shared dish and spoon, and to keep the dish clean by caring for the land and ensuring peace among all who share it. We acknowledge the enduring presence, knowledge and philosophies of Indigenous Peoples. We acknowledge the continuing accomplishments and contributions Indigenous Peoples make in shaping Waterloo Region.

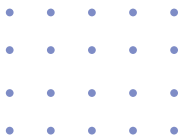


Table of contents

3	Message from Region of Waterloo Chair, Karen Redman
7	Conventional Bus and Train Business Plan
8	Frequent transit network
10	Overnight network
14	Consistent schedules
15	Fares strategy
16	GRT MobilityPLUS and Kiwaniis Specialized Transit Service Plan
19	Township Transit Strategy
22	Engagement

Message from Region of Waterloo Chair, Karen Redman

Dear Residents of the Region of Waterloo,

As we celebrate 25 years of Grand River Transit (GRT), I am proud to unveil our new transit business plan. It is a plan that honours our past while steering us toward a future where we are ready for a population of one million.

Since launching in January 2000, GRT has been central to how we live, work and move across our community. From 9.4 million rides in our first year to the thriving network we have today, this growth reflects our shared vision for reliable, accessible and efficient transit.

The new plan builds on that legacy, outlining a bold strategy that positions transit as a driver of equitable service and climate-aligned growth. It sets clear priorities to improve travel times, expand service across all our Cities and Townships and make public transit the easy choice for everyone.

Shaped by extensive community input, this plan reflects the future you envision. A future where transit is more than a service; it is a catalyst for connection and progress. We invite you to explore the full plan and continue sharing your valuable insights.



Karen Redman
Region of Waterloo Chair





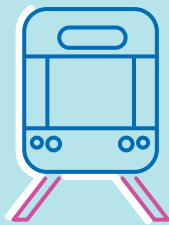
Region of Waterloo WELCOME



Grand River Transit was formed by the Region of Waterloo in 2000, assuming the operations of the former Kitchener Transit and Cambridge Transit.

GRT's fleet consists of 344 vehicles

15



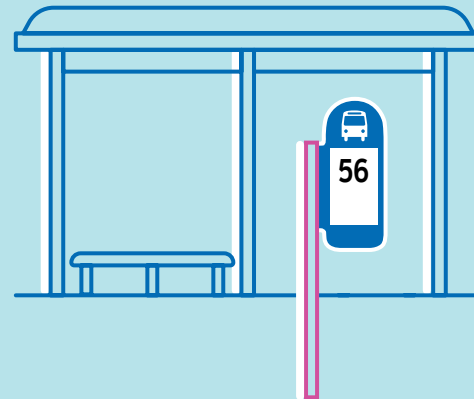
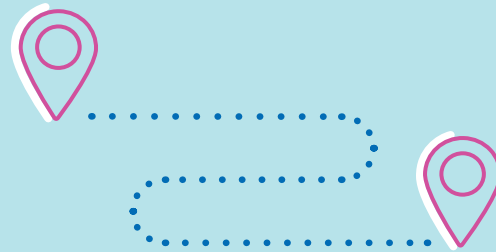
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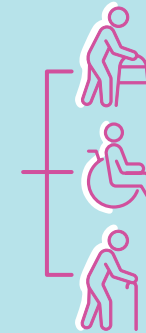
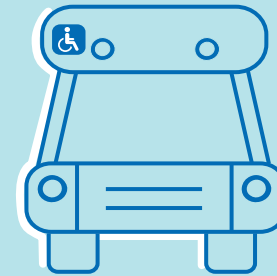
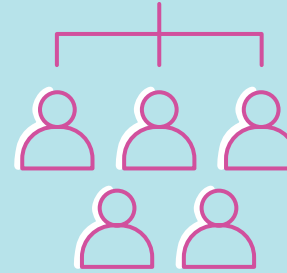


Today, GRT operates more than **50 routes** and covers more than **17 million kilometres** every year.



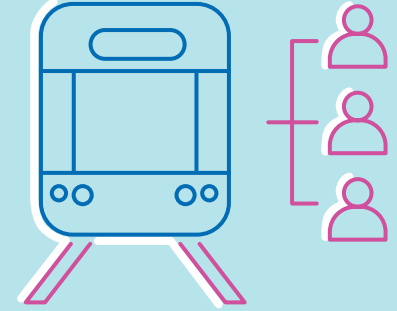
more than **2,500 stops** & more than **560 shelters**

26.2 million/year
customer trips



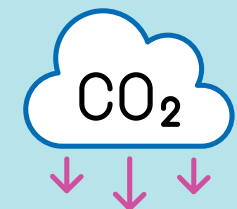
170,000/year
MobilityPLUS trips

17,000/weekday
LRT trips



977 employees

In 2024, GRT buses prevented an estimated **9,500 tonnes** of auto-based greenhouse gas emissions.



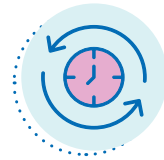
Who we are, what we do

The **GRT Business Plan** responds to transit priorities identified through the Region's Strategic Plan engagement, the Region's projected population growth, post-pandemic ridership recovery, changes to travel patterns in the community and commitments of Council.

GRT's Business Plan consists of three sections:

- **Conventional Bus and Train Business Plan**
- **GRT MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Specialized Transit Plan**
- **Township Transit Strategy**

The GRT Business Plan lays out transit investment priorities to increase frequency and speed, improve customer focus, add new coverage, and make transit simple and easier to use for everyone over the next 10 years and beyond.



frequency



speed



customer
focus



new
coverage



simple and
intuitive

The proposed investment priorities for each section of the GRT Business Plan will help make transit the easy transportation choice for more people by significantly expanding the service area of GRT, improving transit travel times and better connecting communities across Waterloo Region. Implementation of plan priorities will be subject to Regional Council's annual Plan and Budget process.

Conventional Bus and Train Business Plan

The Conventional Bus and Train Business Plan proposes:

- A frequent transit network
- More consistent schedules
- Strategic expansion
- The introduction of highway express buses
- A plan for more overnight service

This investment will transform GRT's network to support a growing population and enable more Waterloo Region residents and visitors to use transit to get to where they need to go, when they need to go.

Supporting rapid transit to Cambridge

Region of Waterloo Council approved extending light rail from Fairway Station to downtown Cambridge, marking a significant milestone toward connecting residents across the community with rapid transit.

The GRT Conventional Bus and Train Plan's investment priorities lay the foundation for a fully integrated bus network that serves the rapid transit system across Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.

Frequent transit network



To create a Frequent Transit Network, GRT will improve frequency to every 10 minutes on weekdays (7 a.m. - 7 p.m.), and every 15 minutes all other times, on 16 routes. An estimated 400,000 people and 200,000 jobs will be within 800 metres of the expanded network. On average, residents and visitors will be able to reach approximately 38,000 more people and 15,000 more jobs within a one-hour trip compared to today.

The frequent transit network would include the following routes:

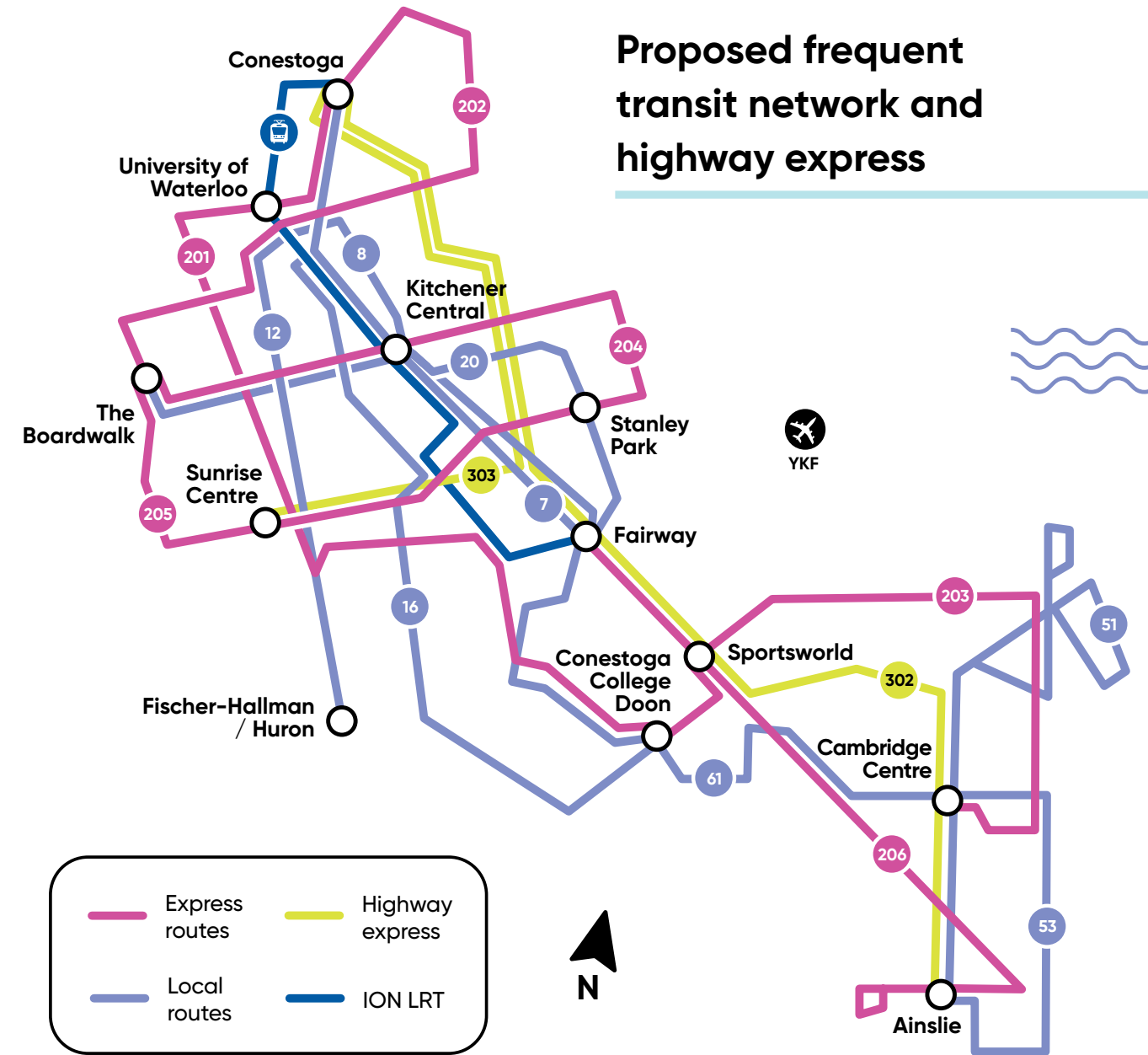
- ION LRT 301
- ION Bus 302 with a highway express extension
- Highway express 303
- Express Routes 201, 202, 203, 204, 205 and 206.
- Local Routes 7, 8, 12, 16, 20, 51, 53 and 61.

Highway express



Highway express routes will give riders up to 20 minutes back in their day. Services include combining 302 ION Bus with a direct highway connection between Fairway and Conestoga Stations, and introducing a new route connecting Conestoga and Sunrise Centre Stations. The highway express and frequent transit network support ridership growth ahead of future rapid transit and passenger rail projects.

Proposed frequent transit network and highway express



Overnight network



GRT will launch 24/7 service on key routes, with 30-minute overnight frequency supporting shift workers, students and core areas. The overnight network would include:

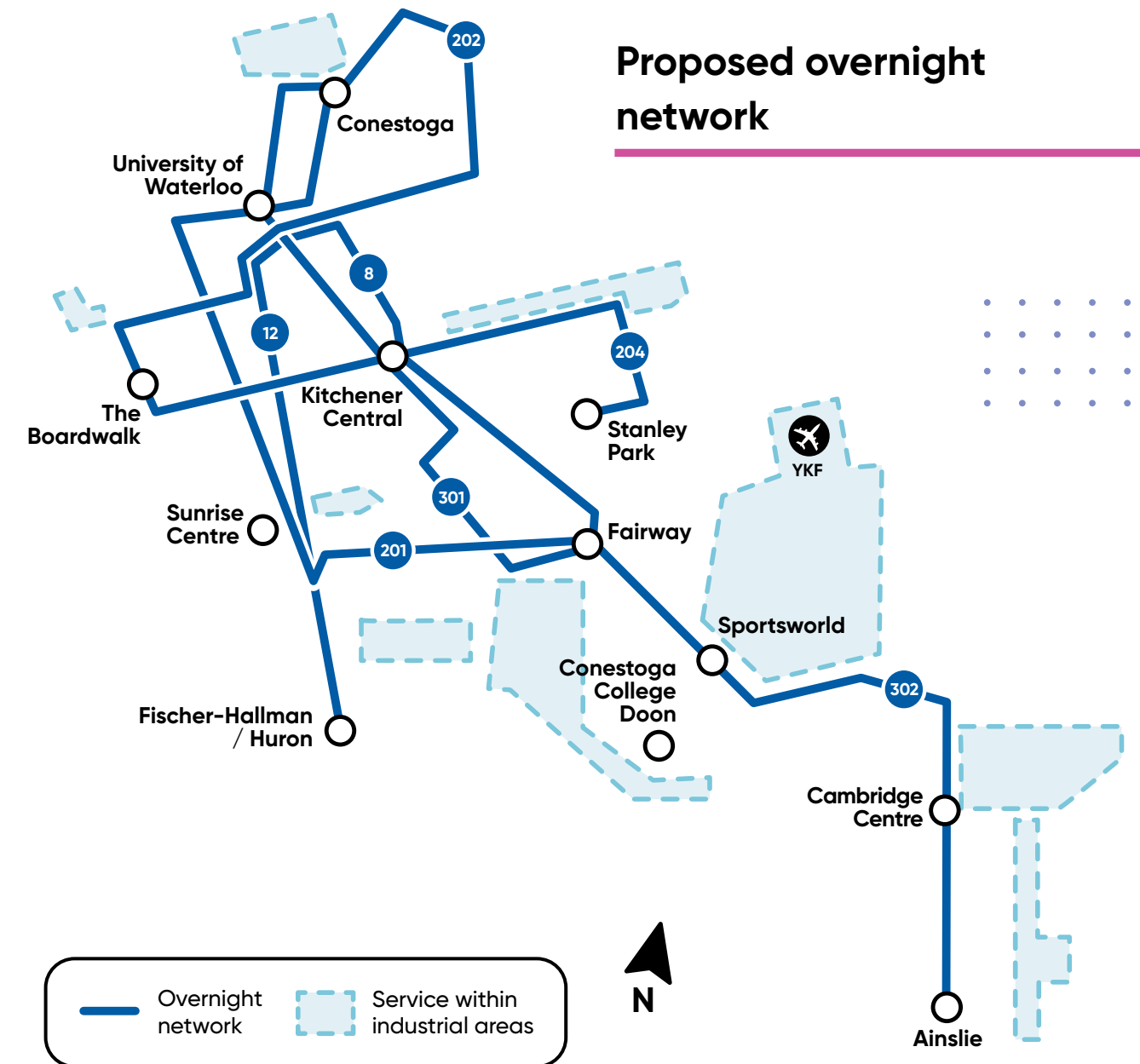
- Route 301 (modified bus service integrated with routes 7 and 91)
- Route 302 (modified service integrated with route 51)
- Routes 201, 202, 204, 8 and 12

Additional industrial trips will support overnight work at employment centres in East Cambridge, Northwest Cambridge/Southeast Kitchener and North Waterloo.

Transit security enhancements and station and stop improvements along the overnight network will focus on supporting safe and inclusive overnight trips for operators and riders.



Proposed overnight network





Consistent schedules

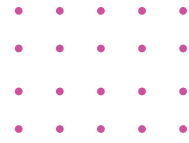


GRT will add trips to make schedules more consistent, so transit schedules and transfers are intuitive. GRT will focus on improving existing evening, weekend and mid-day schedules making transit easier to use. Riders will enjoy more consistent travel times all day, every day.

New coverage



Introduce routes serving the growing residential and industrial areas in Southeast Cambridge, Northwest Cambridge/Southeast Kitchener, Southwest Kitchener and North Waterloo. New transit routes will open up more housing and employment opportunities for residents of Waterloo Region.



Fares strategy



The future transit network features about 60 per cent more service hours compared to today. The following fare recommendations diversify revenues, support service improvements and promote affordable access for those who need it most:

- **Kids ride free:** Provide support to families and caregivers by introducing free transit for children 12 years and under, riding with a fare-paying customer.
- **More discounts for those in need:** Enhance GRT's Affordable Transit Program to provide bigger discounts to those with the greatest financial need. Increase awareness of the Affordable Transit Program and support through the application process.
- **Fare pricing:** Future fare price increases will be proposed to match annual service expansion, inflation and to align to comparable transit systems.
- **Support employers and employees:** Expand transit business account offerings using GRT Pay.
- **High school program partnerships:** Explore opportunities to increase transit affordability for high school students through administrative and financial partnerships.
- **Seniors tax credit:** Promote reduced public transit costs for seniors through the existing Ontario Seniors' Public Transit Tax Credit.



GRT MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Specialized Transit Service Plan

Within Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and North Dumfries, specialized services are operated by GRT MobilityPLUS. Kiwanis Transit offers specialized services in Wellesley, Wilmot and Woolwich townships.

The recommendations in the GRT MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Specialized Transit Service Plan modernize technologies and policies; introduce new staff resources; increase the fleet to meet growing demand for MobilityPLUS services; and work toward the target of no unmet trips.



availability



customer
focus



new
coverage



simple and
intuitive



Service investment



- Introduce new staff resources
- Modernize technologies: Modernize MobilityPLUS software and explore adding Kiwanis Transit to the new system, implement taxi tracking and continue efforts to install validators in taxis
- Increase fleet to meet growing demand for MobilityPLUS services and pilot the use of small vehicles specialized trips

Expand service hours



- Extend MobilityPLUS service hours, in coordination with GRT overnight service expansion, by using accessible taxi partnerships

Improve MobilityPLUS customer experience



- Use new technologies and improve data collection
- Evaluate fare-free policy for conventional services
- Better understand customer needs
- Improve coordination between MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Transit

Township Transit Strategy

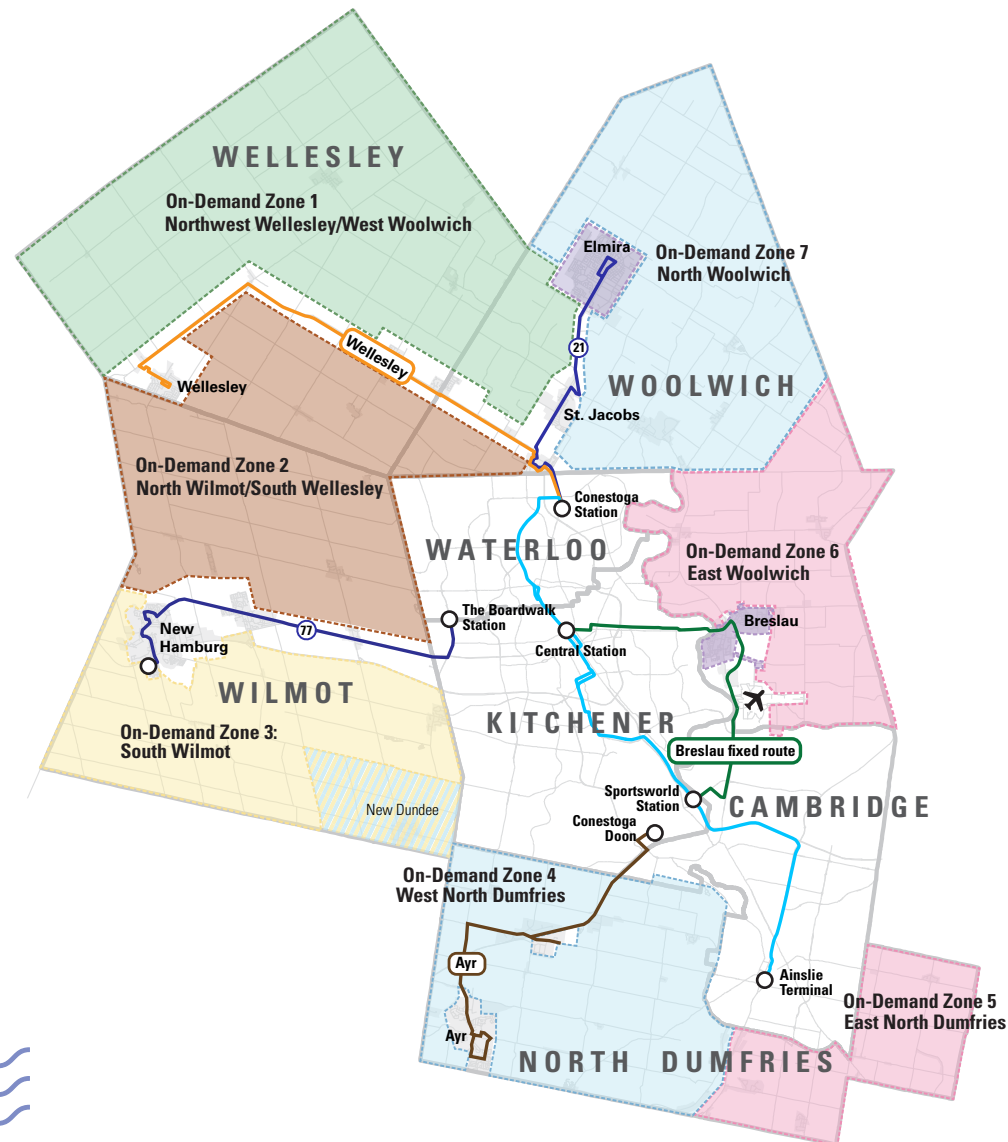


Rural transit solutions enhance access to essential goods and services. They also expand the labour pool, making it easier for employers to find and retain workers. For those with unreliable transportation or other mobility barriers, rural transit can be a lifeline to overcome access challenges affecting communities and support a higher quality of life.

Under the Township Transit Strategy, all townships will have village-to-urban transit routes connecting township population and employment centres into the GRT network. These routes are complemented by on-demand service, bringing single-fare transit conveniently and cost-effectively to all municipalities in Waterloo Region.



Proposed future township transit network



Consistent schedules

- Enhance existing fixed routes in Wilmot and Woolwich



New coverage areas

- Introduce future fixed routes for North Dumfries and Wellesley to connect to GRT's core network



Airport service

- Introduce a new frequent, all-day, fixed route service to Breslau and the Region of Waterloo International Airport



New on-demand transit

- Add on-demand transit zones in each township to support access to fixed-routes and expand GRT's township service area



Alternative delivery models

- Investigate using the same vehicle for specialized and conventional transit customers to cost savings, reduce emissions and maintain service.



Engagement

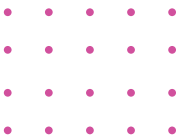
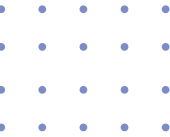
The GRT Business Plan displays our commitment to collaboration. By using a variety of approaches, we aimed to enhance community involvement and transparency in the plan’s development. The output of this engagement was a Business Plan that was influenced, shaped and directed by residents from across Waterloo Region that is reflective of the community’s current and future transit needs.

To identify community priorities, GRT:

- Received approximately 2,500 responses to surveys
- Considered more than 450 ideas contributed to a service map
- Hosted dedicated workshops with key stakeholders and hundreds of participants
- Attended more than 30 events, with pop-up sessions held at transit stations
- Partnered with the Region’s Neighbourhood Nursing team to hear new voices in each municipality

- Completed ride-alongs on MobilityPLUS and conventional bus routes to promote surveys and hear riders’ experience onboard
- Engaged transit staff through workshops and in-person sessions
- Conducted additional engagement sessions for the MobilityPLUS and Kiwanis Specialized Transit Service Plan and Township Transit Strategy to ensure specific perspectives were represented

GRT is committed to ongoing consultation and engagement with the public as we deliver the business plan to ensure our projects and plans align with public feedback.



More information
can be found at:
[**grt.ca/
businessplan**](https://grt.ca/businessplan)





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