



REPORT

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Deanna Locey, Transit Supervisor

DATE: October 15, 2021

REPORT NO.: TPW-2021-0038

SUBJECT: Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH) ActiVan Shuttle Bus Pilot Project

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. TPW-2021-0038, dated October 15, 2021, regarding the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH) ActiVan Shuttle Bus Pilot Project be received;

AND FURTHER THAT staff be authorized to initiate the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH) ActiVan Shuttle Bus Pilot Project commencing November 16, 2021, until June 30, 2022;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to Council in Q2 2022 with an update on the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH) ActiVan Shuttle Bus Pilot Project and provide recommendations for next steps in service planning;

AND FURTHER THAT Council approve that the Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH) ActiVan Shuttle Bus Pilot Project be funded from ActiVan program's existing 2021 operating budget and upcoming 2022 operating budget subject to Budget Committee approval.

KEY POINTS:

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

- Staff are proposing to commence a thirty-three (33) week pilot program, ending June 30, 2022, to provide a shuttle service from Halton Hills to Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH).

- The proposed pilot program will support registered ActiVan clients by providing improved cross-boundary travel and access to OTMH for cooperative programs, medical appointments, and transfer to other Municipal transit services.
- Staff will report back to Council in Q2 2022 on the successes of the proposed pilot program and will provide recommendation for next steps in service delivery.
- The existing budget has sufficient operating funds to absorb the cost of service for the pilot program in 2021.
- The 2022 costs to June 30 can be accommodated within the existing operating budget due to the reduction in demand observed due to COVID.
- Funding for the program beyond June 30, 2022 will need to be confirmed as part of the review of the pilot project.

BACKGROUND AND DISCUSSION:

The 2019-2031 Transit Service Strategy and Council Report No. TPW-2019-0026 provided recommendations for a phased in transit approach to serve the identified transit needs of Halton Hills through 2031. This approach had been developed to address the specific transit markets that were 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 Centre (PIC) meetings.

Additionally, the 2021-2031 Specialized Transit Plan was completed as an update to the 2013 Halton Hills ActiVan Master Plan. The study was driven by the need to evaluate service delivery models and conversely built on recommendations made in Report No. TPW-2019-0026 and the Transit Service Strategy.

Both the Specialized Transit Plan and the Transit Service Strategy included in-depth consultation meetings with Technical Agencies, Stakeholders, Halton Hills Accessibility Advisory Committee, and the public. The public was engaged through PIC meetings and through the online platform 'Let's Talk Halton Hills'. Each public meeting and presentation provided key project information and acquired necessary feedback for the ActiVan program and the future of conventional transit in Halton Hills.

Public consultation processes through the Transit Service Strategy and Specialized Transit Plan allowed convenient opportunity for community comment and input through surveys and interactive engagement tools. The survey results combined from each strategy received a total of 1,428 responses. The following key points are shared indicators from each of the strategies surveys and community feedback comments:

- Request for connections and/or extension of service to other regions and municipalities.
- Topmost desired destinations of transit included: Toronto Premium Outlets (TPO), employment areas along Steeles Avenue and Armstrong Avenue and Oakville Trafalgar Memorial Hospital (OTMH).

In addition, staff from Halton District School Board (HDSB) have recently requested transportation services through ActiVan to OTMH for Halton Hills students that attend the annual one-year cooperative placement program that accommodates high school students with intellectual and developmental challenges. Project SEARCH helps students transition from high school to employment after graduation. The co-op project is solely operated out of OTMH and is available annually to twelve (12) selected students throughout Halton Region.

Due to the noted demand for service to the OTMH, with Council endorsement, staff are recommending that a pilot program be initialized commencing November 16, 2021, and running until June 30, 2022, for thirty-three (33) week trial period. Staff will report back to Council in Q2, detailing impacts on current ActiVan resources, ridership uptake and financial impacts required for continuation of service delivery.

For the fare cost of \$4.00 each way, OTMH ActiVan shuttle service would be available for use Monday through Friday and will allow registered riders the ability to call for reservation of the service up to 24 hours prior to travel. Arrival and departure times at OTMH are proposed to be designated fixed service intervals of 8:30AM, 11:00AM and 3:00PM. This will allow registered riders the ability to coordinate appointments with the scheduled arrival and departure times and allow ActiVan to continue operating effectively during peak periods. Staff propose that if a specific arrival/departure shuttle is not pre-reserved by riders, then an ActiVan vehicle would not be required to travel to OTMH for that specific trip and would re-deployed as a recovery vehicle to relieve ActiVan driver schedules and/or accommodate further "will-call" trips. Fixed service times are subject to change as staff gauge levels of service requests to better accommodate service demand.

In addition to supporting the request for transportation to OTMH, the service route will also align with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA); in which as of January 1, 2017, requires all specialized transportation service providers in Ontario to broaden their eligibility and ensure equal access to services for all persons with disabilities. This requires specialized transportation service providers to facilitate connections between their respective services. Providing service to OTMH will allow additional connections and travel options to other specialized and conventional services available within Halton Region.

Since the inception of the COVID-19 pandemic, ActiVan has seen a significant decline in ridership. In response, to limit the spread of COVID-19, ActiVan has reduced capacity onboard vehicles, installed fare boxes to reduce hand-to-hand contact, applied screening questions prior to boarding and increased the amount of cleaning required, focusing on one daily deep clean and multiple cleanings of touch surfaces throughout the service day. To date, ActiVan continues to operate at a reduced capacity due to the COVID-19 pandemic and accommodates all trip requests up to a maximum of one (1) passenger per minivan, three (3) passengers for the 7-metre low floor vans and up to six (6) passengers for the 8-metre low floor accessible bus. The reduced capacities

have been achievable primarily due to the decline in demand for the service throughout the pandemic period.

Given trips on both the ActiVan and the OTMH ActiVan shuttle service are pre-booked, operational requirements including vehicles and driver's in-service can be adjusted in response to ridership demand while maintaining ActiVan COVID-19 protocols. As of September 2021, ActiVan ridership has reached a fifty percent (50%) ridership recovery rate compared to pre COVID-19 rates and continues to see a steady five percent (5%) increase in ridership month-to-month. To maintain the current ridership recovery rate and service the proposed OTMH ActiVan Shuttle Service pilot program, while reduced capacities remain in place, the existing ActiVan staff resource pool can be utilized to respond to the demand for service.

As services open and Provincial and Federal COVID-19 restrictions are lifted, ActiVan vehicle passenger capacities will also increase to respond to demand in service and relieve service pressures on the ActiVan schedules. Presently there are no significant staffing impacts anticipated to service the proposed OTMH ActiVan shuttle bus pilot service and any additional ActiVan driver resources that may be required to extend the service beyond the pilot project will be evaluated with recommendations as part of the report back to Council in Q2 of 2022.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report aligns to the Town's Strategic plan recognizing the value to foster a healthy community that provides a clean environment and range of economic and social opportunities to ensure a superior quality of life in our community.

This report also identifies transportation as one of the Town's Strategic priorities.

RELATIONSHIP TO CLIMATE CHANGE:

This report is administrative in nature and does not directly impact or address climate change and the Town's Net Zero target.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Public Engagement will be required; consultation with Communications staff to follow.

All previous public engagement conducted through the Transit Service Strategy and the Specialized Transit Plan 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. All public engagement conducted was constant in meeting all three spectrums of the Engagement Matrix to Inform, Consult and Collaborate.

With endorsement of this Report No. TPW-2021-0038, consultation with communications staff will be conducted to assist with marketing and promotion of the OTMH ActiVan shuttle service pilot program.

INTERNAL CONSULTATION:

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

This report will be funded through an existing approved budget source.

The estimated operating expenditures associated with the thirty-three (33) week OTMH ActiVan shuttle service pilot program is \$37,000. Farebox revenue is not included in the calculation of the total operating impact and will be applied against the actual program expenditures associated with the pilot program, once they are realized, to offset the overall cost of the service.

As a result of the pandemic, the ActiVan operating budget has had a surplus in operating funds annually since 2020. As such, the \$8,000 cost for the service in 2021 can be absorbed into the current operating budget with no negative impacts (budget or service) and the remaining \$29,000 cost for the service through June 30, 2022, can be accommodated within the proposed 2022 operating budget with no negative impacts to the base ActiVan service.

Staff will report back to Council in Q2 of 2022 with key findings from the OTMH ActiVan shuttle bus pilot service and will provide an update on the required next steps for service delivery. Should a decision be made to continue the OTMH ActiVan shuttle service beyond the pilot program length, all costs related to the OTMH ActiVan shuttle service would require additional funding. Should Council decide to have the service continue beyond the pilot program, approximately \$30,000 in additional funding would be required to fund the service for the remainder of 2022 and will be confirmed as part of the report back to Council in Q2 of 2022, along with a recommended funding source. The annual cost to provide the service on a go forward basis is approximately \$60,000/yr. and would be included as part of the 2023 budget process and be forwarded to Budget Committee for consideration.

Additionally, staff will continue to look for additional funding opportunities in support of these transit initiatives as they become available.

Reviewed and approved by,

Maureen Van Ravens, Director of Transportation

Moya Jane Leighton, Director of Finance & Town Treasurer

Bill Andrews, Commissioner of Transportation and Public Works

Chris Mills, Acting Chief Administrative Officer