

REPORT

REPORT TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

REPORT FROM: Maureen Van Ravens, Manager of Transportation

DATE: May 28, 2018

REPORT NO.: TPW-2018-0018

RE: Transit Service Strategy and Direction Report

RECOMMENDATION:

THAT Report No. TPW-2018-0018, dated May 28, 2018, regarding the Transit Service Strategy and Direction Report, be received;

AND FURTHER THAT Council endorse the three proposed transit alternative scenarios to conduct further analysis on ridership demand, phasing, and financial impact;

AND FURTHER THAT staff report back to Council on the analysis and preferred recommendations for the Transit Service Strategy in 2019.

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 all potential users, prior to or as part of the next Transportation Master Plan update.

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 proposed 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.

COMMENTS:

The Transit Service Strategy will evaluate service alternatives and explore opportunities for a made-in-Halton Hills transit solution to meet the current and future mobility needs of the community. The strategy will align with Halton Regions' Mobility Management Strategy and the Town's Strategic Action Plan and build on the existing ActiVan

Specialized transit service, Youth Transportation and the Metrolinx Regional Transportation Plan.

The study team has developed a set of three 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.

Indicators of Transit Demand in Halton Hills

The analysis completed to date 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.
- 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, but the three trends will work together synergistically to create demand for expanded levels and types of transit service that will need to be met if the Town's development and transportation goals are to be met between now and 2031.

Projected Population, Employment and Development Growth

The proposed growth by 2031 will increase in both the population and employment densities in many areas of Georgetown and Acton. Halton Hills population is anticipated to grow from 61,161 in 2016 to 94,000 in 2031. Employment is projected to grow with an anticipated concentration in the south of Halton Hills in the designated Employment Lands area just north of Highway 401, along Steeles Avenue.

A significant employment node is growing around Toronto Premium Outlets, located at the Steeles Avenue and Trafalgar Road intersection just north of the 401 interchange. Through 2031, employment is anticipated to spread westward along Steeles Avenue to Milton, and, eventually, eastward towards Brampton. This employment area will attract workers not only from Halton Hills' main population centres in Acton and Georgetown, but from Milton, Brampton and Mississauga, as well as other surrounding communities. The combination of both the population growth and employment will produce demand for various types of transit services.

It is anticipated that the demand for ActiVan specialized transportation service will grow at a rate equal to the rate of population growth within Halton Hills. As growth in specialized service grows, demand for trips between some specific origin and destination locations will grow to such high levels that these trips would be more efficiently served by scheduled, fixed-route service.

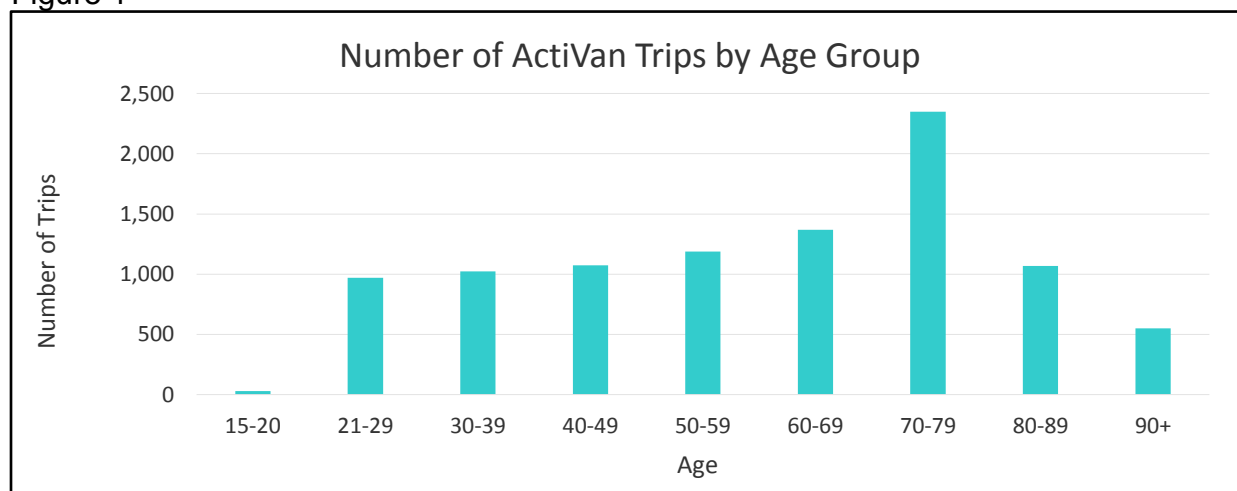
The development within and around Georgetown and Acton will increase population and employment densities to levels that would support efficient, shorter-distance transit service within those areas. In addition, many of the newcomers to the community will rely on public transit to provide some of their transportation needs, and expect transit to be among the services offered by a community. This difference in attitudes will increase demand for public transit service at a rate faster than the rate of population and employment growth.

As the population growth increases in Georgetown and Acton, the demand for travel between the two communities, and other nearby communities such as Brampton, Milton and Oakville will generate demand for transit service. As mentioned previously, the employment growth along the Steeles Avenue corridor is expected to grow rapidly. Employment growth along Steeles Avenue will attract workers from Acton and Georgetown as well as from Brampton, Milton, Mississauga and other surrounding communities that will also generate demand for public transit.

Growth in ActiVan Demand

The number of trips provided by the ActiVan program has increased dramatically. Demand for ActiVan is expected to continue growing due to both the projected population growth as well as the aging of the population, which is expected to continue through 2031. Our review of the ActiVan passenger trips by age groups indicates the highest demand for service is between the ages of 70-79 as indicated in Figure 1.

Figure 1



These trips generate nearly twice as many ActiVan trips as any other age groups. With members of the baby-boomer generation only beginning to enter the 70-to-79 age group, ActiVan demand can be expected to continue growing as this age group increases over the next 25 years.

ActiVan provides its customers with curb-to-curb service from their homes to hundreds of destinations throughout Halton Hills. However, most ActiVan trips begin or end at a handful of locations, mostly in and around Georgetown and Acton. The majority of these include Horizon Packaging (an employer which employs people with disabilities), grocery and retail stores, Georgetown hospital, medical and rehabilitation facilities and assisted living residences.

Nine of the ten top destinations are within Georgetown, and six are located within a short distance of one another along Guelph Street and near the intersection of Guelph Street and Mountainview Road. Destinations of disabled persons are often indicative of the destinations of other transit-dependent people, particularly for start-up services. The clustering of these destinations, along with the location of the Georgetown Hospital and the Extendicare Halton Hills, provides a basis for scheduled transit service providing connections within Georgetown. As well as serving non-disabled customers, accessible fixed-route service is a more efficient way to serve people with disabilities whose disabilities do not prevent them from using the service.

Attracting some people with disabilities to use fixed-route service for some of their trips will be necessary to serve the demand efficiently, to control the costs of specialized transportation service, and to maintain capacity on that system for those whose disabilities make it impossible for them to use fixed-route services.

Go Rail Service Improvements

GO's Kitchener Line currently provides commuter rail service to Toronto from the GO rail stations in Georgetown and Acton. Rail service currently is limited to the morning and evening peak periods, and the peak direction (morning trips inbound to Toronto, evening trips outbound from Toronto). Acton is served by four trains in each direction each weekday, four inbound trains originating in Kitchener each morning and connecting to Georgetown and Mt. Pleasant GO stations on their way to Toronto, and four outbound each afternoon, originating in Toronto and connecting to Mt. Pleasant and Georgetown on their way to Kitchener. Six trains in each direction connect Georgetown to Toronto, with two additional inbound trains originating in Georgetown each weekday morning, and two outbound trains terminating each evening. GO bus service provides limited midday and evening service in both the Toronto and Kitchener-Guelph directions, including service connecting Acton and Georgetown, and anti-peak direction service (outbound service in the morning and inbound in the evening) during peak periods. The Metrolinx Big Move and Regional Express Rail (RER) plans propose two-way, all-day rail service along the Kitchener Line by 2015.

Currently, GO rail customers in Halton Hills access the stations in various ways such as: parking at park-and-ride lots at the stations; riding a GO bus; kiss and ride; walking or cycling to the station. The park-and-ride lots at the Acton and Georgetown GO rail stations, which consist of surface lots, are very limited, with 625 spaces at Georgetown and only 45 at Acton. Based on the information provided by Metrolinx, in 2017 the average weekday ridership is 1148 and 205 in the Georgetown and Acton stations respectively.

The Georgetown GO generates nearly two GO rail trips for every available parking space, and the Acton GO generates more than four trips for every space. Informal observation of the stations in Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 indicates that the station park-and-ride lots are nearly full, with only a few spaces remaining during the midday period.

It is anticipated that the demand for GO rail service will grow at a rate comparable to the growth in population within the community. The proposed changes to GO rail service, such as an increase in the frequency of peak-period, peak-direction service, and the addition of two-way, all-day rail service, will further increase demand for the service in Halton Hills. With the park-and-ride lots already filled to near-capacity, local transit service in Acton and Georgetown will be required to provide an additional mode of access to the station, to control the growth in demand for station parking and to mitigate the increase in traffic volume generated by station drop-offs.

Vision Statement

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.

Alternative Scenarios

The consultant team developed three alternative transit scenarios to meet the needs for our community. The three scenarios are as follows:

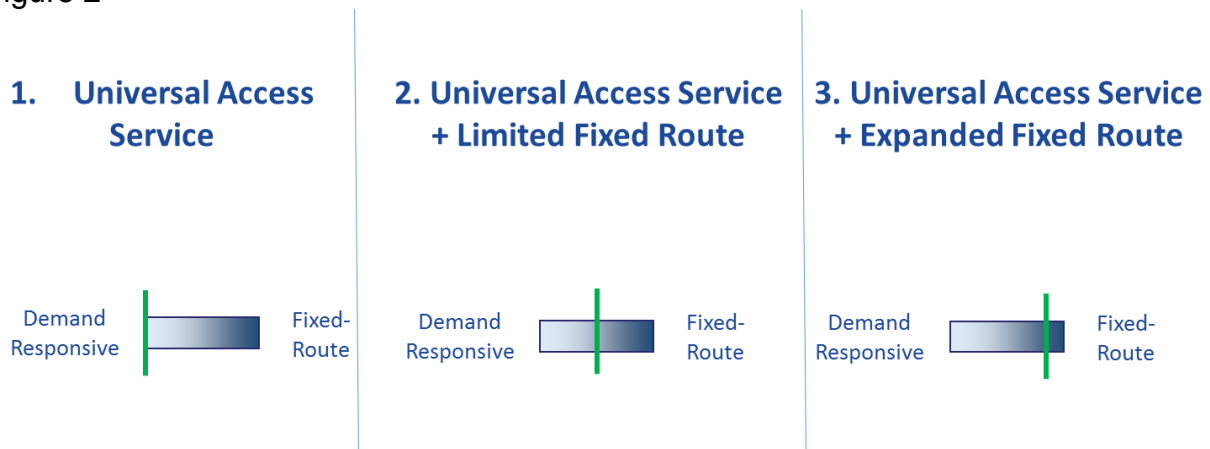
Scenario 1: Universal Access Service

Scenario 2: Universal Access + Limited (or Local) Fixed Route Service

Scenario 3: Universal Access + Expanded (or Local and Longer Distance) Fixed-Route Service

The three scenarios vary according to the degree to which they rely on demand-responsive or fixed-route transit services, with the first scenario consisting exclusively of demand-responsive services, the third relying more heavily on fixed-route services. This is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2



The three scenarios build upon each other, with the elements of Scenario 2 containing the elements of Scenario 1, and Scenario 3 containing the elements of Scenarios 1 and 2. The three scenarios may be considered three layers of service to be combined to form the Town's ultimate 2031 transit system. It may also be three phases of the development of that system, which would be phased in as demand requires, or a combination of three types of alternatives. The three alternative scenarios all assume the continued operation of the ActiVan service, or similar service to provide specialized transportation for people with disabilities.

Alternative Scenario 1: Universal Access Service

While most residents, workers and visitors to Halton Hills travel in or near the main population centres of Acton and Georgetown, Halton Hills is a geographically diverse community that has many residents and businesses located in rural areas and in many hamlets throughout the Town. Universal Access Service is a concept for providing a basic level of transit service to all residents, workers and visitors in Halton Hills, regardless of disability status or income. The service would be available for trips to-and-from any location within Halton Hills, including both the Acton and Georgetown areas and the rural and hamlet areas. The service also could be introduced, perhaps at a limited scale, relatively easily and in a short period of time, allowing some level of service to be in place well in advance of 2021.

Many details of the implementation, operation, governance, funding, and fare policy of the Universal Access Service are highly flexible and will be worked out in detail in

subsequent phases of planning and implementation, and the service would change and adapt as fixed-route service is introduced and expands. However, some elements of the service, or options for providing the service, can be described as follows and illustrated in Figure 3:

- The Universal Access Service provides curb-to-curb service, similar to ActiVan. Customers are picked up at their homes or pickup points and would be dropped off at their final destinations. With the implementation of fixed-route services in Scenarios 2 and 3, some trips could be converted from curb-to-curb to “home-to-hub” services, in which customers are picked up at their homes or origin points and dropped off at a bus stop or transit hub, where they can access fixed-route bus service or connect to other Universal Access vehicles to complete their trips.
- Vehicles picking up Universal Access Service customers could pick up multiple customers going from nearby origin points traveling to nearby destination points. Direct, private curb-to-curb service would not be guaranteed.
- Similar to the ActiVan program, customers would arrange for pickup days or hours in advance. Contact may be made by phone, 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 capabilities of the scheduling and dispatch system, customer interface applications, fleet and operator availability and any other variables.
- The service may be operated by various or multiple operators, including the private or public operator of the ActiVan service, taxi companies, transportation network companies like Uber and Lyft, and/or other private or public transit providers.
- Cost of the service will be dependent on arrangements made with the various operators, fare policy and level of service provided.
- Fares for non-disabled customers may be higher than the current fare for ActiVan service, or fares for typical fixed-route services in surrounding communities. This reflects the premium nature of a curb-to-curb service. Fares may vary based on travel distance, time of day, or based on a zone-fare system. For example, service within Georgetown or Acton could be priced at one level, service between the two priced at a higher level, and service from that area to the Steeles Avenue area priced at a still higher level.
- Vehicles used for the service may range from passenger vehicles to the cutaway vehicles currently used for the ActiVan service, and may use any form of motive power available (such as gasoline, diesel, hybrid, natural gas or battery-electric).

Figure 3



Alternative Scenario 2: Universal Access Service + Limited Fixed Route

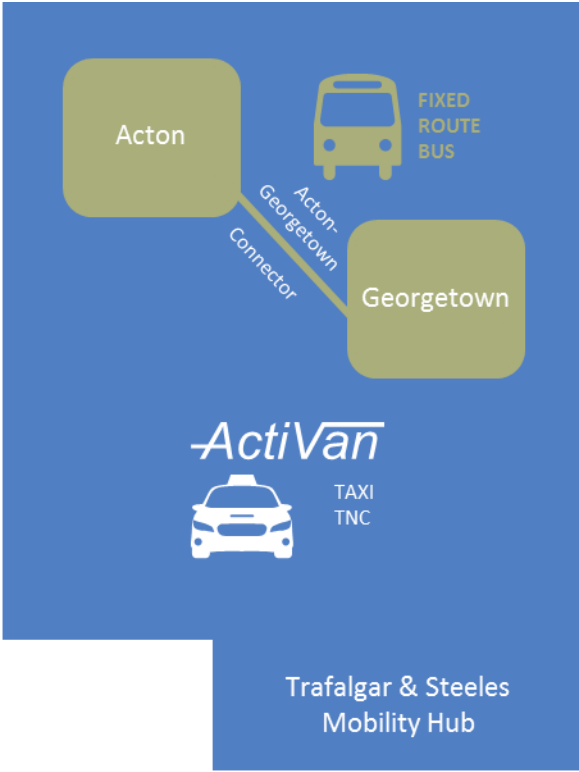
Under this second scenario, a limited level of local bus service would be added to the ActiVan and Universal Access Service, providing regularly-scheduled, fixed-route service on routes providing key connections within Halton Hills, or to nearby areas of surrounding communities. Fixed-route service would serve high-demand connections more efficiently than ActiVan or Universal Access Service. Fixed-route service also is more visible in the community, and may be accessed without advance arrangement, allowing customers to use the service more spontaneously. Both factors tend to increase transit ridership while assisting in controlling transit costs. With the introduction of limited fixed-route service, some Universal Access Service trips may be converted from curb-to-curb trips to trips that would connect customers from their point of origin to a nearby transit stop or transit hub, if that is a reasonable and cost-effective way for the customer to complete the trip. Increase transit funding would be required for expansion beyond the levels that supported Scenario 1.

Potential early fixed-route services may include shuttle or circulator services within Georgetown or Acton, connecting high volume origin and destination pairs within those two communities as shown in Figure 4. Other possible early fixed route services may include connections between Acton and Georgetown that complement, as opposed to compete with, the existing GO bus service connecting the two communities; connections between Acton and/or Georgetown and the Steeles Avenue/Toronto Premium Outlets area; Georgetown Industrial Area; and/or connections to nearby areas of surrounding communities like Brampton and Milton. The fixed-route connections that move forward first would be based on demonstrated ActiVan and/or Universal Access Service demand, growth in population or employment, customer demands or other requests.

Growing demand for connections to Toronto Premium Outlets and other employers and destinations in the Steeles Avenue area may result in either Milton or Brampton Transit developing services to that area in partnership with Halton Hills. A transit hub facility, located at or near Toronto Premium Outlets, would provide a terminal for bus routes for Halton Hills services along with Brampton, Milton or other surrounding communities serving the area. It will also provide a connection point for customers to access the Toronto Premium Outlets area and to connect for transfers with other bus routes. As part of the next phase of the study further analysis will be completed to determine if the Town should secure land for such a facility in the short-term to avoid cost increases related to the ongoing development of the area.

The fixed-route services, like ActiVan, may be provided either by a private vendor or directly by the Town, using vehicles owned by the vendor or the Town. Fixed-route service initially may be provided using vans or smaller cutaway-style buses similar to those currently used for the ActiVan service. These vehicles have been acceptable to the community and have the capacity to carry up to 20 passengers plus several wheelchair spots in the short-term.

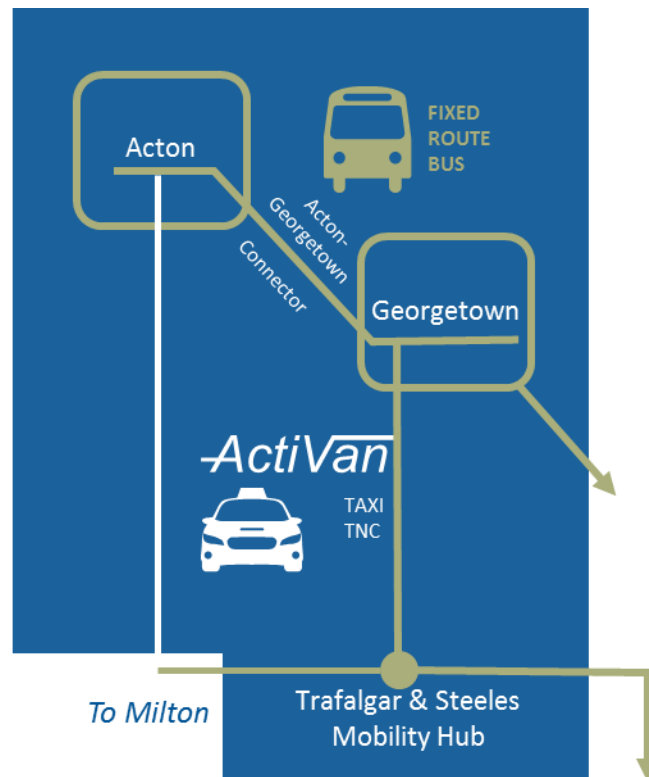
Figure 4



Alternative Scenario 3: Universal Access Service + Expanded Fixed Route

Under this scenario, fixed-routes operated in Scenario 2 may be modified or improved to make additional connections, or to provide more frequent service, based on higher ridership levels on existing services. Additional routes, particularly longer distance routes, may be added to the Scenario 2 network to provide additional connections that were not made under Scenario 2. ActiVan and Universal Access service would remain in place under this scenario, but may be modified to provide more home-to-hub services and less curb-to-curb service in areas where fixed-route transit service is good. Both ActiVan and Universal Access service could be expanded to provide connections to nearby areas of surrounding communities like Brampton and Milton, and connections to important destinations such as the Oakville Hospital. This is illustrated in Figure 5. Increase transit funding would be required beyond the levels that supported Scenarios 1 or 2, and the vehicle fleet will require expansion to provided increased levels of service. As the demand and ridership grows, standard 30 foot (9.1 metre) or 40 foot (12.2 metre) transit buses similar to those used in surrounding communities may gradually replace the cutaway vehicles on some or all routes, to provide greater capacity and to take advantage of the higher durability and reduced maintenance of standard transit vehicles.

Figure 5



Next Steps

The consultant team has developed three proposed transit alternatives to meet the needs of the community. During the next phase of the study the project team will develop detailed operating and implementation costs for all three transit scenarios including fare strategies for the Universal Access Service. It will also include vehicle fleet estimates and facility requirements. In addition, the next phase will provide a phase recommendation for implementation.

The three alternatives will provide the required technical information to propose a recommended service strategy along with an implementation plan.

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:

There is no direct financial impact as a result of this project.

Financial impact of each alternative and the preferred service strategy will be presented to Council in the next report.

CONSULTATION:

The Chief Administrative Officer and Senior Management Team were consulted throughout the development of this report.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

A public consultation and engagement program is a key element of the Transit Service Strategy. Through the Let's Talk Halton Hills platform, the Town has been consulting the public by providing them an easy way to participate in making guided choices by completing a survey, as well as asking questions and using the 'places tool' to note points for potential routes, stop locations and destination places. Furthermore, a separate survey was developed and sent out to the registered stakeholders/businesses within the community to receive their feedback.

To date the project team has held two Technical Agency and Stakeholder workshops on both February 15, 2018 and May 14, 2018. The workshops provided key project information and feedback on where transit is required in the community and the opportunities and challenges associated with it. In addition, there has been two Public Information Centres on both February 21, 2018 and May 17, 2018. At both public open

houses, it was formatted as a drop-in session with a formal presentation at 7:00pm. Member of the project team were available to answer and questions and interactive display materials were prepared and made available for public input.

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:

The consultant has developed a communication strategy to be implemented by the Town. The communication strategy provides various opportunities for input from the public, technical agencies and stakeholders. Throughout the study, consultation continues to be available both on-line through the Town's website and Let's Talk Halton Hills platform and in-person through public information sessions.

CONCLUSION:

The consultant team has developed three proposed transit alternatives to meet the needs of the community. During the next phase of the study the project team will develop detailed operating and implementation costs for all three transit scenarios including fare strategies for the Universal Access Service. It will also include vehicle fleet estimates and facility requirements. In addition, the next phase will provide a phase recommendation for implementation.

Staff will be reporting back to Council in 2019 with the detailed analysis on the three proposed transit alternatives and preferred recommendations on the Transit Service Strategy.

Reviewed and Approved by,

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Chris Mills, Commissioner of Transportation and Public Works

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brent Marshall". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a large initial "B" and "M".

Brent Marshall, CAO