



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To: Council

From: Kristene Scott, Commissioner, Community Services

Date: March 22, 2021

Report No: COMS-001-21

Subject: 2020 Transit Services Annual Report

Recommendation: THAT COMS-001-21 be received for information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Staff have implemented a number of COVID-19 restart and recovery initiatives throughout 2020, including: Fare Policy updates, mobile fare payment (e-ticketing) and service modifications aligned to demand requirements.
- 2020 annual ridership decreased by 59% (conventional) and 49% (specialized) compared to 2019, influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and associated Provincial orders restricting discretionary trip making.
- Revenues losses in 2020 resulting from the decline in ridership were \$1.3 million, of which almost \$1.0 million was offset by cost savings resulting from service modifications
- The Town has been allocated Federal and Provincial funding which offset the balance of COVID-19 related costs and ridership/revenue loses in 2020.
- The 2021 Transit Division work plan focuses on three (3) key initiatives, including: 1) alternative service delivery (ASD) implementation, 2) installation of a fleet-wide onboard vehicle surveillance system (OBVSS) and 3) the progression toward a Town-owned transit garage facility.

REPORT

Background

This report provides a summary of the following:

1. 2020 Milton Transit System Performance (using indicators as per Appendix 1)
2. COVID-19 Transit Response and Update; and
3. 2021 Transit Division Work Plan and Progress to Date.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented significant operational challenges to the transit industry throughout 2020, affecting overall system performance and passenger use. In



Background

response, staff revised service delivery objectives to focus on enhanced safety and non-discretionary passenger transportation through the lens of an essential service. Provincial emergency declarations and orders to halt discretionary travel triggered the need to adjust transit capacity requirements with lower demand. As a result, these events affected Milton Transit ridership throughout 2020.

In order to mitigate financial impacts and low utilization, staff implemented a modified, enhanced-Saturday service level. Working with our service provider, staff have been able to implement adjustments quickly in light of changing demand and capacity needs while still providing a basic level of mobility for essential trip making.

From March 20th to August 31, 2020, Milton Transit froze fare collection in conjunction with introducing rear-door boarding (for promoting operator-passenger physical separation, restricting access to the farebox). Staff recorded ridership data during this period though the Automatic Passenger Counter (APC) system, verified via operator manual counts on the farebox. This technique was equivalent to other systems with similar limitations and available technology. Milton Transit reintroduced fare collection on September 1, 2020 with Council approved Fare Policy updates (ES-008-20) and mobile/e-ticketing fare-payment options with Token Transit (mid-September).

The Federal and Provincial governments have committed to the continued investment into transit services through COVID-19 relief funding programs namely:

- Municipal Transit Enhanced Cleaning (MTEC)
- Safe Restart Agreement (SRA)

In particular, the SRA program has helped to offset revenue losses and incurred costs (e.g. enhanced cleaning/disinfecting) to ensure that consistent and reliable transit services remain available. The key performance indicators (KPI) presented in this report incorporate all funding allocated to date for operational impacts in 2020.

Discussion

2020 ridership during COVID-19 has ranged from 15-35% of pre-pandemic daily averages. Staff continue to anticipate that ridership recovery to pre-pandemic levels will be incremental and prolonged due to shifted travel demands and other external factors (e.g. reinstatement of GO Train services/demand, consistent in-person learning, etc.). There will also need to be further understanding of how remote working environments will progress in the medium-to-long term and the subsequent movement patterns of goods and services.

2020 Milton Transit System Performance

Discussion

Table 1 provides a summary of 2020 conventional KPIs. Milton Transit delivered 42,617 conventional service hours in 2020, equating to approximately 15% less than in 2019 due to service modifications implemented throughout the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g. shifting to an enhanced-Saturday level of service). Conventional ridership (revenue passenger trips) surpassed 247,000 trips but decreased by 59% compared to 2019. This decrease was attributed to Provincial restrictions implemented upon increases in COVID-19 incidents (first and second waves). Service utilization performance followed the same downward trajectory.

Table 1. 2018 - 2020 Key Performance Indicators - Conventional Services

Indicator	2018	2019	2020	% Change 2019-2020
Amount of Service				
• Contracted Service Hours	48,959	50,031	42,617	-15%
Ridership				
• Boardings	599,363	647,301	262,100	-60%
• Revenue Passenger Trips	553,934	604,205	247,399	-59%
Service Utilization				
• Boardings per Contracted Service Hour	12.2	12.9	6.2	-52%
• Revenue Passenger Trips per Contracted Service Hour	11.3	12.1	5.8	-52%
Financial Performance				
• Expenditure	\$6,221,136	\$6,551,294	\$6,020,418	-8%
• Revenue	\$2,671,664	\$2,757,279	\$2,568,450	-7%
• NET	\$3,549,472	\$3,794,015	\$3,451,968	-9%
• Revenue/Cost Ratio	43%	42%	43%	+2%
• Net Operating Cost per Revenue Passenger Trip	\$6.41	\$6.28	\$13.95	+122%

The COVID-19 pandemic had also affected ridership on Milton access+ (specialized) service. Since registered clients are mainly comprised of seniors with mobility limitations, specialized transit trip demand decreased by 49% to 11,301 trips in 2020. However, additional capacity on the specialized system has provided an opportunity to replace non-dedicated alternative services (e.g. Trans-Cab services) and provide focused essential trips for seniors during the initial wave (e.g. dedicated shopping service).

COVID-19 Transit Response and Update



Discussion

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, Milton Transit has followed the direction provided by Public Health authorities and has worked closely with the Town's Crisis Management Team (CMT) and service provider to continue to deliver transit services for essential purposes in accordance with provincial and federal guidance and industry best practices. Since mid-March, Milton Transit instituted numerous health and safety measures for customers and contracted operators, including but not limited to:

- Increased and enhanced vehicle cleaning, including all human touchpoints (e.g. buttons, pull-cords, stanchions, etc.)
- Installation of bio-shields at operator compartments
- Implementation of signage and pre-screening protocols
- Adoption of personal operator supports (e.g. protocols, PPE, etc.)
- Implementation of mandatory face covering/mask policy
- Communication of "essential trips only" messaging to customers when requested by the Province

In partnership with Halton Region, Milton Transit has supported vaccine rollout efforts, providing passenger transportation services to/from the local vaccine centre. Staff will continue to update Council on COVID-19 related initiatives as they become available.

Funding of COVID-19 Pressures

Total lost revenue in 2020 due to the pandemic amounted to \$1.3 million. Collaboration with our service provider to quickly adjust service in response to changing demands and capacity needs enabled the Town to reduce costs by almost \$1.0 million, offsetting most of the lost revenue during the year.

In addition to internal mitigation, the following Federal-Provincial funding has been announced to date for Milton to assist with mitigating the financial impacts of COVID-19 in the area of transit services:

Program	Allocation Amount	Eligibility Criteria
Municipal Transit Enhanced Cleaning (MTEC)	\$48,536	To be used towards the cost of enhanced cleaning on local transit
Safe Restart Agreement - Transit Support - Phase 1	\$460,236	For eligible transit related financial pressures resulting from the pandemic incurred between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021



Discussion

Program	Allocation Amount	Eligibility Criteria
Safe Restart Agreement - Transit Support - Phase 2	\$585,581	For eligible transit related financial pressures resulting from the pandemic incurred between October 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021
Safe Restart Agreement - Transit Support - Phase 3	\$437,158	For eligible transit related financial pressures resulting from the pandemic incurred between April 1, 2021 and December 31, 2021 (with the possibility of extension to December 31, 2021); funds may also be used for fare and service integration, on-demand microtransit and transformation of transit structures/governance

While internal mitigation was successful to the point that the Town was unable to use the full extent of the funding provided for 2020, the MTEC and Safe Restart - Phase 1 programs did provide the funding required to offset the balance of the lost revenue.

The Town and its service provider will continue to modify service to align with the demands throughout 2021 which is expected to offset a significant portion of the continued lost revenue. The Phase 2 and 3 Safe Restart funding will allow the Town to further manage the projected financial pressures through 2021 and possibly into 2022.

2021 Transit Division Work Plan and Progress to Date

Table 2 illustrates key 2021 Transit Work Plan initiatives that support and align with the Council-Staff Work Plan (ES-009-20).

Table 2. 2021 Work Plan Initiatives

Work Plan Initiative	Council-Staff Work Plan Alignment	Timing
1. Alternative Service Delivery (ASD) Implementation	Community Attractiveness and Competitiveness	Throughout 2021
2. Onboard Vehicle Surveillance System (OBVSS)	Community Attractiveness and Competitiveness (COVID-19 response)	Mid-2021
3. Transit Garage Facility	Planning for Growth	Throughout 2021-2023 (TBD)

Alternative Service Delivery (ASD) Implementation

The 2019-2023 Milton Transit Service Review and Master Plan Update (ENG-021-19) recommended the adoption of new mobility/alternative service delivery solutions to address complex service requirements. The 2020 Capital Budget approved the procurement of an on-demand platform to facilitate specialized service growth as well as introduce Home-to-Hub services. The intent of the project is to define not only a scope of services that meets current and future needs, but can also be deployed selectively for longer-term crisis management. Through a competitive procurement process, Spare Labs was awarded a two (2) year contract for delivering an OnDemand solution (CORS-058-20).

As recommended in the Transit Master Plan Update, staff intend on implementing the OnDemand solution as a transitional mechanism to rationalize transit routes and services based on trip demand and meeting productivity objectives. Staff are accelerating this project in 2021 to enable testing of various scenarios for business case development and formal implementation in the fall subject to Council approval. The following provides a summary of project scope and anticipated implementation timelines:

- Specialized transit service administration, scheduling, dispatching and online trip booking capabilities, including connectivity with Halton Hills Activan - Q1/Q2
- OnDemand service pilot testing where an on-demand service is used in newly developed neighbourhoods (or other) to connect to the Milton Transit conventional network via a transfer point - Q2
- Business plan development - Q2
- Formal implementation of Home-to-Hub service - Q3 subject to Business Plan approval

In conjunction with Transit Labs, staff will be providing a presentation and OnDemand platform demonstration at the Council Workshop tentatively scheduled for April 26.

Onboard Vehicle Surveillance System (OBVSS)

In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, this project compliments existing Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) to implement an onboard surveillance system on all conventional and specialized transit buses. Council approved this project as part of the 2021 Capital Budget. The camera system provides added security and critical emergency support in addressing customer and operator needs during service operations.

Through the Metrolinx Transit Procurement Initiative (TPI), the OBVSS project was awarded to Fleetmind Seon Solutions Inc. (CORS-006-21). Staff are currently in project and policy development phases, with anticipated implementation in mid-2021.



Discussion

Transit Facility

As approved through the 2020 Budget, the Town is currently pursuing land acquisition opportunities that satisfy program requirements recommended in the Transit Operations Facility Feasibility and Functional Design Study (ENG-022-19). The Town was successful in acquiring funding through ICIP - Public Transit Stream to an upset allocation of \$7,187,583 in combined Federal and Provincial funding to support project costs. Upon further developments, staff will bring back recommendations for Council and next steps for consideration later in 2021.

Financial Impact

The pandemic resulted in a decline in ridership through 2020 and lost revenue of \$1.3 million. However, active and ongoing coordination with our provider to adjust service to demand, coupled with federal/provincial funding received, resulted in a net cost of Transit services being in line with the 2020 budget and a revenue/cost ratio consistent with previous years.

Respectfully submitted,

Kristene Scott
Commissioner, Community Services

For questions, please contact: Tony D'Alessandro, MCIP RPP Phone: Ext. 2548
Director, Transit Services

Attachments

Appendix 1. Key Performance Indicators Definitions

CAO Approval
Andrew M. Siltala
Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix 1. Key Performance Indicators Definitions

Amount of Service <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Service Hours (total amount of contracted revenue service hours operated)
Ridership <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boardings (all trips recorded, including transfers)• Revenue Passenger Trips (number of fare-paying trips recorded, less transfers)
Service Utilization <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Boardings per Contracted Service Hour (a measure of how well the service is used; all trips including transfers)• Revenue Passenger Trips per Contracted Service Hour (a measure of how well the service is used; fare-paying, linked-trips)
Financial Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Net Operating Cost per Revenue Passenger Trip (a measure of service cost effectiveness. Also called municipal subsidy/tax levy per trip)• Revenue/Cost Ratio (a measure of overall system cost recovery from external revenue sources; e.g. fares, advertising, Provincial Gas Tax contributions, etc.)