



The Corporation of the Town of Milton

Report To: Council

From: Tony D'Alessandro, Director, Transit Services

Date: March 17, 2025

Report No: CORS-005-25

Subject: 2024 Transit Services Annual Report

Recommendation: THAT the 2024 Transit Services Annual Report be received.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Council approved two (2) key planning initiatives in 2024 guiding long-term service improvement, growth and modernization:
 1. Milton Transit Five-Year Service Plan and Master Plan Update (CORS-021-24)
 2. Zero-Emission Bus Feasibility Strategy and Fleet Transition Plan (COMS-003-24, CORS-021-24)
- 2024 annual ridership surpassed one-million revenue passenger trips, influenced by an increase in youth, post-secondary and local/regional employment trip demand - including GO Transit connections.
- Comparing 2024 to 2023, annual ridership (revenue passenger trips) has:
 - Increased by 73% on conventional (fixed-route) and OnDemand services; totalling 1,072,922 revenue passenger trips in 2024
 - Increased by 13% on specialized (door-to-door, paratransit) services; totalling 27,253 revenue passenger trips in 2024
 - Increased by 70% per capita; totalling 7.5 revenue passenger trips per capita in 2024
- 2024 financial performance was guided by external factors, service-related impacts and consumer behaviour, including:
 - Annually adjusted contract costs
 - Relatively static Provincial Gas Tax allocation
 - Post-secondary-related service additions

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- High school-related service additions/adjustments, expansion of OnDemand
- Increased fare media (ticket and pass) sales and mobile e-ticket adoption
- Post-secondary financial contributions

- Milton Transit OnDemand continues to play a supportive and transitional role to achieve service efficiency and effectiveness, where currently applied.

- The 2025 Transit Division Work Plan focuses on the following deliverables:
 - Phase 1 implementation of the Five-Year Service Plan and Master Plan Update, including:
 - Improved service reliability and schedule timeliness
 - Service growth to Boyne
 - Introduction of service on Sundays
 - Extended weekday evening service to 10:30 pm
 - Launch of Diesel-to-Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Conversion Pilot Project
 - Procurement of new Transit Fleet (growth)
 - Further development of the Transit Garage Facility

- 2025 annual ridership (revenue passenger trips) is projected to exceed 2024 levels by approximately 15-25%.

REPORT

Background

Milton Transit continues to foster mobility options for residents, visitors and people of all abilities. As a strategic theme to the Milton 2051 Vision, Milton Transit delivers conventional (fixed-route), specialized (door-to-door paratransit) and OnDemand (microtransit) services to provide access to employment, retail, education, community resources, medical care and social/recreational opportunities across town. Free connections with GO Transit, Brampton Transit, MiWay and Halton Hills Activan services give customers additional travel options to a broader service area in the GTHA that is comprised of many regional trip generators and destinations.

Background

The 2024 Transit Services Annual Report provides an overview of operational performance, key accomplishments and outlook for the coming year. The report includes the following sections:

- 2024 System Performance (using indicators as outlined in Appendix 1)
- Ridership Composition
- OnDemand Service Update
- Steeles Avenue Service Update
- 2025 Transit Division Work Plan and Ridership Outlook

Discussion

Milton Transit achieved record annual ridership in 2024, surpassing one million revenue passenger trips for the first time. A significant catalyst for ridership growth was the opening of post-secondary satellite campuses in 2024 (ES-012-23, ES-001-24). These institutions necessitated consistent and frequent transit service to accommodate the travel needs of full-time student enrollments.

Additionally, strategic policy decisions and service expansion adopted by Council over the last few years have been influential to support ridership growth in 2024, including:

- Changes to Fare Policy; fare products
 - Introduction of Term Pass for post-secondary students, Jan 2024
- Adoption, expansion and transition of Alternative Service Deliveries (ASDs)
 - Launch of Milton Transit OnDemand, Sept 2021
 - Additional capacity for school-related trips, Sept 2022, 2023
 - Service expansion into Boyne and Derry Green, Sept 2022
 - Service expansion into Mattamy National Cycling Centre, Sept 2023
 - Service transition and adjustment from OnDemand to fixed-route to accommodate Conestoga College - Park Hill, Steeles Campus, Jan 2024
- Service growth to meet increased post-secondary demand, April 2024
 - Addition of Wilfred Laurier University - Milton Academic Centre, Sept 2024
- Adjustment to GO Transit Fare Integration Program (Metrolinx initiative)
 - Elimination of co-fare for trips connecting with GO services, March 2022



Discussion

- Introduction and continued implementation of cross-boundary services
 - Service connection with Halton Hills Activan, March 2022
 - Service connection with Peel TransHelp, Sept 2022
 - Service and fare integration with MiWay, Brampton, GO Transit, Sept 2022

These directives have broadened the reach of transit to diversified markets while expanding service uptake.

1. 2024 System Performance

Table 1 provides a summary of 2024 conventional (includes OnDemand) and specialized service KPIs compared to 2023 annuals. Milton Transit delivered 69,229 service hours in 2024, representing a 19% growth in service compared to the previous year. The amount of service provided in 2024 is mainly attributed to accommodating post-secondary demand as well as additional secondary-school trips.

Table 1. KPIs - Conventional (includes OnDemand), Specialized Services, 2023-2024

Indicator	2023	2024	% Change 2023-2024
Conventional + OnDemand Services			
Amount of Service			
• Contracted Service Hours	58,256	69,229	+19%
• Contracted Service Hours per Capita	0.42	0.48	+14%
Ridership*			
• Boardings*	681,199	1,211,510	+78%
• Revenue Passenger Trips**	619,927	1,066,254	+72%
Service Utilization			
• Boardings per Contracted Service Hour	11.7	17.5	+50%
• Revenue Passenger Trips per Contracted Service Hour	10.6	15.4	+45%
• Revenue Passenger Trips per Capita	4.4	7.5	+70%
Specialized Services			
Ridership			
• Revenue Passenger Trips	24,215	27,253	+13%

*Boardings are all trips recorded, including transfers from one bus/route to another. Revenue Passenger Trips are fare-paying and linked trips, excluding transfers.



Discussion

Conventional ridership (revenue passenger trips) surpassed 1.06 million, representing an increase of 72% compared to 2023 levels. Service utilization performance (a measure of how well and often the service is used) followed a similar positive trajectory.

Consistent with the conventional service, specialized transit ridership grew by 13% to 27,253 revenue passenger trips in 2024, representing an increase of approximately 3,000 trips. Capacity available on specialized services continues to support the delivery of comingled, OnDemand services in key areas of town. Staff will continue to monitor capacity on specialized transit should ridership maintain a similar growth rate throughout 2025.

Table 2 provides a summary of 2024 financial performance compared to 2023. The rate of revenue generated by ridership growth outpaced the rate of expenditure. As a result, the revenue/cost ratio increased by 40% in 2024 to 45%, while net expenditure decreased by 7%.

Table 2. Financial Performance (all services), 2023-2024

Indicator	2023	2024	% Change 2023-2024
• Expenditure	\$9,916,440	\$11,303,118	+14%
• Revenue	\$3,205,988	\$5,085,126	+59%
• Net Expenditure	\$6,710,452	\$6,217,992	-7%
• Revenue/Cost Ratio	32%	45%	+40%

Financial performance on Milton Transit Services in 2024 was driven by the following factors:

- External Pressures and Contributions
 - Inflationary contract costs
 - Relatively static Provincial Gas Tax allocation
 - Post-secondary financial contributions
- Service Growth and Improvement
 - Post-secondary-related service additions
 - High school-related service additions/adjustments, expansion of OnDemand
- Fare Revenue Growth
 - Increased fare media (ticket and pass) sales
 - High adoption rate (74%) for mobile e-ticketing (Token Transit)

Discussion

2. Ridership Composition

While ridership has recovered and exceeded pre-2020 levels on a month-to-month basis (Appendix 2), the travel patterns and priorities for Milton Transit riders have shifted due in part to the continued existence of remote/hybrid working environments, broader labour force reach, as well as the launch of post-secondary campuses in town. These transformational changes, coupled with community growth, has diversified ridership composition. Figure 1 illustrates 2024 ridership percentage by method of fare payment classification.

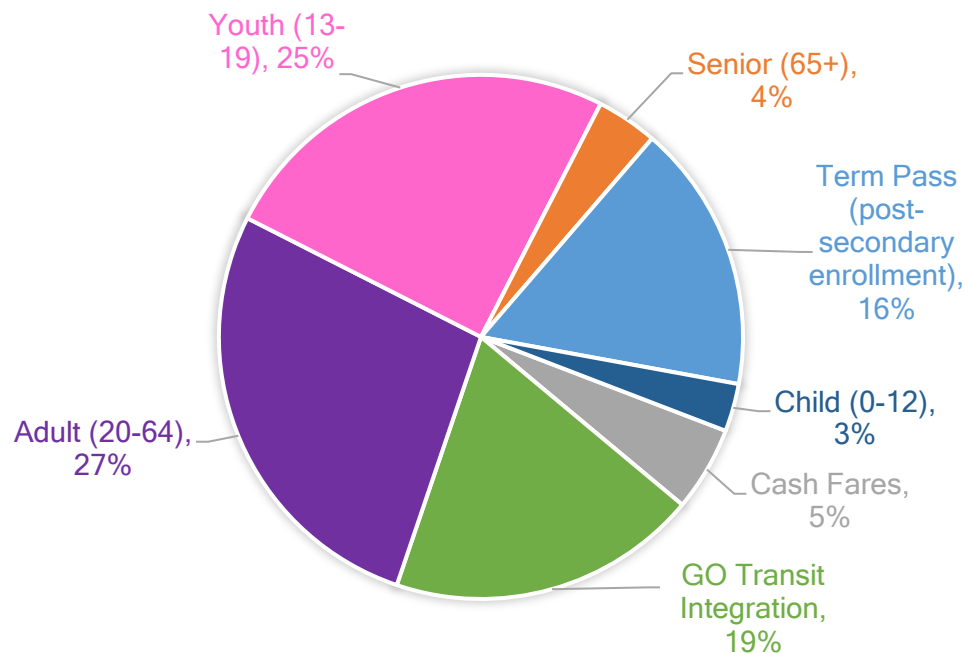


Figure 1. 2024 Conventional Ridership by Method of Fare Payment Type - Concession (%)¹

Observations are summarized below:

- 95% of transit riders leverage concession-based, discounted products and/or programs to pay their fare compared to cash
- 44% of transit fares are classified as child, youth and/or post-secondary students

¹ Data excludes transfers – the 2024 system transfer rate is approximately 12% (e.g. percentage of all transit trips that include a transfer from one transit route to another transit route).

Discussion

- While 19% of transit trips involve connections with GO Transit, the quantity of trip connections has increased. This trend is partially attributed to growth of post-secondary trips from outside of Milton.

3. OnDemand Service Update

In an effort to improve service productivity and efficiency, Milton Transit OnDemand was launched in 2021, replacing existed-conventional route(s), or introducing service in low demand, transitional areas. OnDemand service is currently provided in parts of Boyne, Derry Green and parts of the 401 Industrial Park using criteria defined in the Alternative Service Delivery Strategy (COMS-005-21).

In 2024, Transit service in the 401 Industrial Park was streamlined to meet growing demand from post-secondary institutions (Conestoga Steeles and Parkhill campuses, and Wilfred Laurier Milton Academic Centre) and increased uptake at the RR25 & Hwy 401 Park-and-Ride location. This demand was met with the relaunch of Route 1 while reorganizing and condensing of the existing OnDemand service area. Transitional areas including parts of Boyne, Derry Green and 401 Industrial Park, continue to be serviced by OnDemand.

4. Steeles Avenue Service Update

The 21 Steeles route is delivered under a shared funding model with the Town of Halton Hills. This route has been in operation since September 2022 serving the Milton GO Station, Lisgar GO Station and stops in-between along Steeles Avenue and Winston Churchill Boulevard, including Toronto Premium Outlets and Amazon Fulfilment Centre YYZ3. The route also provides free transfers with MiWay and Brampton Transit - Züm along shared stops in Mississauga.

Ridership on the 21 Steeles route grew in parallel with system patterns, surpassing 180,000 boardings in 2024, representing a 79% increase compared to 2023 levels. While initial uptake had been marginal upon route commencement, staff are observing month-to-month ridership growth throughout 2024 (Appendix 3). Other ridership insights include:

- Majority of trips originating and/or destined from/to Milton GO Station (16%), Lisgar GO Station (19%) and Toronto Premium Outlets (26%)
- Evidence of reverse commuting into Milton from Mississauga, including post-secondary related trips from broader GTHA areas

Discussion

- Positive response with fare integration - free transfers between services (greater than 60% of all trips include connections with other services/service providers)

Staff continue to forecast sustained ridership growth on this route, supported by service level changes approved during the 2025 Budget process, starting in September 2025.

Route 21 Online Passenger Survey

In an effort to further understand customer views and travel patterns, Town staff collaborated with Halton Hills staff to conduct an online survey specific to Route 21 passengers (Appendix 4). The survey was open from November 2 to December 4, 2024 and received 128 responses illustrating the following themes:

- 80% of respondents use service for work/school
- More than 70% of respondents use the service on weekdays and Saturdays
- 70% of respondents use the service at least four (4) days per week
- If service was not available, over 70% of respondents would take Uber/Taxi or would not be able to complete their trip
- A majority of respondents connect to other transit services (such as GO Transit)
- Many respondents indicated a desire to see more service throughout the week, including service on Sundays

With customer support, ridership growth and the Town of Halton Hills' continued partnership interest (and associated financial contribution), service levels on Route 21 Steeles are expected to be maintained in 2025 with the addition of Sunday service as well as later weekday evening trips, commencing in Fall 2025.

5. 2025 Transit Division Work Plan

In 2024, Council approved two (2) key planning initiatives that guide long-term service improvement, growth and modernization:

- Milton Transit Five-Year Service Plan and Master Plan Update (CORS-021-24)
- Zero-Emission Bus Feasibility Strategy and Fleet Transition Plan (COMS-003-24, CORS-021-24)

Table 3 summarizes Transit Division work plan initiatives for 2025 that align with both transit studies and the 2023-2027 Town Strategic Plan. A significant project currently in progress is the Transit Garage Facility. The 2020 and 2021 Capital Budget approved land acquisition, design and construction commencement for a Transit Operations Facility. Staff are currently



Discussion

evaluating 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. Staff will provide Council with an update upon further developments.

Table 3. 2025 Work Plan Initiatives

Key Projects/Deliverables	Strategic Themes	Timing
a. Phase 1 implementation of 5-Year Transit Service Review and Master Plan Update <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved service reliability and schedule timeliness • Service growth to Boyne • Introduction of service on Sundays • Extended weekday evening service to 10:30 pm 	Connected Transit and Mobility; Planned Community Growth	Q3-Q4
b. Launch of Diesel-to-Battery Electric Bus (BEB) Conversion Pilot Project	Innovate in Technology and Process	Q1-Q2
c. Procurement of transit fleet: replacement and growth - place order	Connected Transit and Mobility; Planned Community Growth	Q1-Q2
d. Further development of the Transit Garage Facility	Connected Transit and Mobility	On-going

Notwithstanding the work plan above, fare policy updates have been adopted effective January 1, 2025 (ES-020-24; Schedule L), including:

- Fare adjustment on transit tickets and monthly passes
- New single use e-ticket fare for Adult, Youth, Senior fare categories
- Expansion of Subsidized Passes for Low Income Transit (SPLIT) program to subsidize 100% of the cost of transit passes for eligible participants

Summary

Demonstrated by an 73% growth in 2024 ridership, the Milton Transit system is meeting objectives to promote safe and sustainable mobility options for residents and visitors of all



Discussion

abilities. Transformational ridership composition changes, coupled with planned community growth, will continue to accelerate ridership demand throughout the coming years. 2025 annual ridership (revenue passenger trips) is projected to exceed 2024 levels by approximately 15-25%.

Financial Impact

The net cost of providing transit service in 2024 was favourable to budget by \$1,523,566 which was largely driven by revenues associated with increased fare media sales, GO Transit fare integration subsidies in addition to savings in fleet maintenance.

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
- Appendix 2. 2019-2024 Month-to-Month Ridership Recovery
- Appendix 3. 2023-2024 Month-to-Month Boardings - 21 Steeles Route
- Appendix 4. Route 21 Steeles Ridership Survey

Approved by CAO
Andrew M. Siltala
Chief Administrative Officer

Recognition of Traditional Lands

The Town of Milton resides on the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We also recognize the traditional territory of the Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee people. The Town of Milton shares this land and the responsibility for the water, food and resources. We stand as allies with the First Nations as stewards of these lands.