

Staff Report 2023-0419

Meeting Date: September 12, 2023
Subject: Brampton Transit Service Expansion to Bolton
Submitted By: Arash Olia, Manager, Transportation Engineering

RECOMMENDATION

That Brampton Transit be contracted to provide local transit services for the Community of Bolton as outlined in Staff Report 2023-0419;

That the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute the necessary agreements with the City of Brampton for the expansion of local transit services in the Community of Bolton;

That the incremental cost associated with Brampton Transit providing transit services in the Community of Bolton in 2024, estimated at \$138,000, be added annually to the 2024 Transit budget with funding from the Provincial Gas Tax Reserve;

That the current contract with Voyago for local transit services for the Community of Bolton be extended monthly until such time as Brampton Transit can commence transit services in the Community of Bolton, which is anticipated in Q2 2024; and

That a copy of this report be forwarded to the City of Brampton and Brampton Transit.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- A private transit provider (Voyago) has provided transit services in Bolton since 2019. The contract with Voyago is set to expire in November 2023.
- In 2022, Council directed staff to work with Brampton Transit to explore the feasibility of expanding their transit services throughout major corridors in Caledon and report back to Council on the level of service and budget implications.
- Brampton Transit currently provides local transit services in Southfields Village, Tullamore, and along Dixie Road.
- Brampton Transit is prepared to expand its transit service in Caledon, subject to cost recovery.
- Leveraging Brampton Transit to service the Community of Bolton brings several significant customer-focused benefits, such as PRESTO Electronic Fare Payment, fare integration and free transit among major transit agencies across GTA, one-stop customer service, and integrated trip planning throughout the GTA.

DISCUSSION

In 2019, Council approved the initiation of local transit services in the Communities of Bolton and Southfields Village. The Town partnered with Brampton Transit to provide transit services to the Community of Southfields Village, but unfortunately, Brampton Transit wasn't able to provide transit services to Bolton at that time due to operational constraints. Therefore, the Town retained a private

transit provider (Voyago) to service the community for a four year-term, which will expire in November 2023.

In 2022, Council directed staff to work with Brampton Transit to explore the feasibility of expanding transit services throughout major corridors north of Mayfield Road. Since then, staff have been actively working with Brampton Transit to explore the options and the potential for the expansion of the service, which provided significant benefits and consistency for transit riders in Caledon. Currently, Brampton Transit is providing transit services in the Communities of Southfield Village, Tullamore, and along Dixie Road through a service agreement with the Town.

The contract with the private transit provider for Bolton will expire in November 2023.

Local transit services were initiated in 2019, just prior to the Covid-19 pandemic. The existing transit routes in Bolton connect residents and employees from Columbia Way, along Highway 50 and Coleraine Drive, to Queen Street/Highway 7 station in Brampton. At this location, riders have the opportunity to connect with Brampton Transit, Mississauga Transit, and the York Regional Transit (YRT and Viva), which leads to the subway station at Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC).

Currently, bus service is provided for a total of six hours per day during peak AM and PM periods, from Monday to Friday. The agreement with the service provider has been in place for four years and is set to expire in November 2023.

Brampton Transit is prepared to expand its service to Bolton starting Spring 2024.

Pursuant to Council direction, Transportation Engineering staff have been actively working with Brampton Transit to explore the opportunity and secure the expansion of their service in Caledon. Brampton Transit has recently confirmed that they have the capacity to expand their bus service to Bolton in Spring 2024 as set out in the letter from Brampton Transit, which is attached to this report as Schedule A. It is to be noted that the plans for the expansion of Brampton Transit service in Bolton will include a phased-in approach, with the first stage reflecting a continuation and refinement of established services, as outlined in Figure 1, and the intention to explore subsequent phases of service expansion through consultation with community members, service agencies, and employers to ensure community transit demand needs are met.

The expansion of Brampton Transit in Caledon is a foundational step towards further integration between Caledon transit riders and other transit agencies across GTHA. The objective is to develop a practical approach to transit and fare integration, which makes the trips more affordable, convenient and consistent for transit riders in Caledon. This approach is more critical than ever to support efforts to rebuild transit ridership and the local economy. Severely constrained municipal budgets necessitate this level of cooperation that reduces duplication and allows for more efficient use of collective resources.

There are tangible benefits to expanding Brampton Transit services in Caledon.

Brampton Transit is a recognized leader in fare and service integration in the GTHA, and providing seamless cross-boundary travel has been a large part of Brampton Transit's success in generating ridership growth. Most 905-area transit agencies have some degree of fare and service

coordination or integration, with cross-boundary fare integration managed through PRESTO. PRESTO is an electronic fare payment system that eliminates the need for tickets, tokens passes and cash. PRESTO works across local transit in the Greater Toronto, Hamilton, and Ottawa areas. It allows customers to travel seamlessly across multiple transit agencies, including Brampton Transit, York Region Transit, Mississauga Transit and GO Transit, with one electronic fare card by tapping their card at stations and on buses. For most trips, transfers between Brampton Transit and other service providers are free and no different than transferring between different Brampton Transit routes.

Metrolinx has recently introduced even more fare payment options to customers on GO Transit, Brampton Transit, MiWay, and Oakville Transit. Customers traveling on GO Transit, Brampton Transit, MiWay, and Oakville Transit can now pay their fares by tapping their credit card on a PRESTO device using contactless payment options. PRESTO contactless payment allows customers to pay their adult fare at participating transit agencies with just a tap of their credit card, including those cards on the phone or watch.

Accordingly, and since the existing contract with the private service operator in Bolton will expire in November 2023, Transportation engineering staff have been closely working with Brampton Transit on service improvements and ongoing service integration initiatives. By leveraging Brampton Transit's use of PRESTO and our continued service coordination initiatives, Caledon residents together with the regional workforce, will benefit from mostly seamless travel throughout the GTHA. Using Brampton Transit in Bolton provides residents with a great opportunity for a seamless, faster, coordinated, and cheaper transit service to and from Bolton. Brampton Transit also has a great experience working with employers to optimize the route and service planning, and as part of the transition of the service to Brampton Transit, Town staff will continue working with Brampton Transit to optimize the route and timing of the service to improve the service level and residents experience.

Also, using Brampton Transit as a service operator in Bolton brings several customer-focused benefits, including:

- **Increased affordability** of the service for the residents by eliminating the double fare between the existing Bolton Line Service and Brampton Transit (currently \$4 for Bolton line plus \$3.4 to transfer to Brampton Transit, as well free transfer to almost all other transit agencies in GTHA.
- **Improved Convenience** using PRESTO electronic fare payment, which allows for:
 - Fare and service integration agreements allow for
 - The ability for customers to use a credit card, debit card, or a card in a mobile wallet on the phone or watch to pay for the transit.
- **Integrated trip planning** throughout the GTHA using Triplinx.
- **Using larger Buses** helps to improve the transit culture in the community.
- **One-stop customer service** for trip planning, general inquiries, lost & found, etc.
- **Service levels will be scalable** in the future as the ridership demands grow.

Brampton Transit's proposal comprises a 10-hours per day service, including an AM and PM peak and a new mid-day service.

The service design provides 60 to 75 minutes of frequency and operates ten hours per day. In order to improve the coverage and local connectivity between the north and south of Highway 50, staff recommend adding a loop to the service between Highway 50 and Coleraine Drive for both AM and PM Peak (Figure 1). The benefits include:

- The same route in both AM and PM peak operating periods, which makes the routing easier for the riders.
- Improves service levels and two-way service on Highway 50 local connections.
- Improves direct connections between Highway 50 commercial areas and the rest of Bolton compared to existing routing, which makes the service more attractive for residential, commercial and industrial areas.

This routing option represents a good option for improving travel connections (particularly in higher demand areas), enhancing local service, and its overall ridership potential, and as such, staff supports it. In order to improve efficiency, since AM and PM are work-related, the service will cover both residential and industrial areas, and mid-day service will provide a direct service along Highway 50.

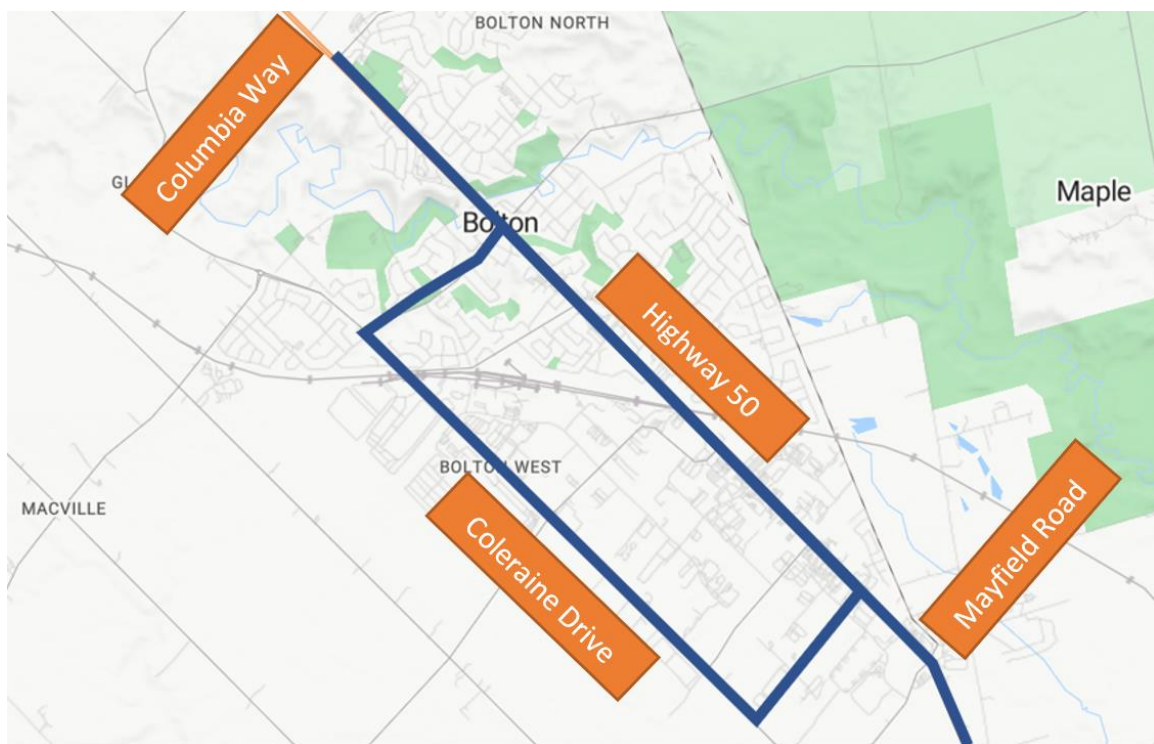


Figure 1: Proposed Transit Service in Bolton

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The cost of the service is in accordance with our existing agreement for the Mayfield West (Route 81), Tullamore (Route 30), and Dixie Road (Route 18) services, whereby the Town only pays the operating costs for the portion of the service, which is currently outside Brampton Transit's service area, with fare revenue for boardings within Bolton credited to Town and deducted from operating cost. The net cost to the Town for Brampton Transit to provide transit services in Bolton is estimated at \$320,000 per year.

The breakdown of the net cost is as follows:

Annual Operating Costs (Caledon's share)	\$373,872
Annual Estimated Fare Revenue (credited to the Town)	(\$53,872)
The net annual cost estimate to the Town	\$320,000

The existing service in Bolton is funded in the existing operating budget, but since the Town has been eligible for the Province's Gas Tax for Transit Program (current uncommitted reserve balance of \$1,622,251.69), and this service is also eligible to be funded from the program, staff recommend the incremental cost to be funded from the Provincial Gas Tax program. Ontario's Gas Tax program supports public transit in municipalities across Ontario by providing two cents per litre of provincial Gas Tax to improve and expand transit based on population, ridership and the municipality's own spending on transit. Provincial gas tax funds received based on previous municipal transit funding have been allocated to reserves pending the expansion of Transit services in Caledon.

It is to be noted that Ontario's Gas Tax for Transit funding is capped at 75 percent of municipal own source funding for transit and municipalities must use funding incremental to their spending on transit. This ensures that municipal governments support local transit as the primary funder and do not reduce municipal spending.

Therefore, staff recommend that the incremental cost associated with Brampton Transit providing transit services in the Community of Bolton in 2024, estimated at \$138,000, be added annually to the 2024 Transit budget with funding from the Provincial Gas Tax Reserve as outlined below:

Ontario Transit Gas Tax Program	\$138,000
Existing budget	\$182,000
Total	\$320,000

NEXT STEPS

Subject to Council approval, staff will continue to work closely with Brampton Transit on marketing, customer service, stop administration, and service and operational planning. Staff will also work with Brampton Transit to engage local residents, employers, and community agencies to assess ridership and travel patterns as part of ongoing service improvements for future service changes and ensure local transit needs are met. Town staff will also make the necessary arrangements with Brampton Transit for the expansion of transit service to Bolton and, in consultation with Corporate

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Communication, Economic and Development Division, develop a communication plan to inform the residents and employers of the new service in 2024.

ATTACHMENTS

Schedule A: Brampton Transit Proposal