



## Staff Report PW2024-15

Committee 2024-12-16

Council 2025-01-13

Amendments

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**Submitted To:** Committee of the Whole | Council  
**Submitted By:** Peggy Slama, Director, Public Works, Engineering and Environmental Services  
**Prepared By:** Sandy Falcon, Community Transportation Coordinator  
**Subject:** Accessible Taxi Survey, Outcomes and Recommendations

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### Recommendation

**THAT** Staff Report PW2024-15, Accessible Taxi Survey, Outcomes and Recommendations be received;

**AND THAT** Council endorse the next steps outlined in the report for the enhancement of the Town's transit services provided through Colltrans and TransitPLUS, as the Town's commitment to accessible transportation services within the Town of Collingwood, and

**AND THAT** Council direct staff to provide 30 days notice of cancellation of the ACE Cabs accessible taxi service contract, with service to cease as of January 30, 2024,

**AND THAT** Council direct staff to work with Landmark to increase the operating hours of service for Colltrans and TransitPLUS to 6am to 11pm, seven days a week starting as soon as possible.

### Amendments

None.

## 1. Executive Summary

The staff report summarizes the findings of the accessible taxi service community survey completed in 2024. The completion of a community survey is a requirement of the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA), such that the need for the

service can be transparently and fairly determined by members of the community to guide Council's decision on level of service to provide. The survey was completed by 98 residents and users, and demonstrated there is interest in an accessible on-demand or taxi service, used most between the hours of 7am and 9pm, with a desire for two vehicles and for the service be extended to 12am.

Staff recommend the delivery of accessible transportation through an extension of operating service hours of the Colltrans and TransitPLUS service contract, the cancellation of accessible taxi services provided by ACE cabs and further action items to be implemented by staff including community outreach on the transportation services offered in Collingwood, a re-launch of on-demand transit service, implementation of user enhancements and increased public forums and user feedback to learn and create a positive user experience and increase ridership.

The bus terminal continues to be a connecting hub for local public transit and interregional public transportation provided by LINX. Although staff recommends an extension of service hours, the terminal will remain closed after 9:00pm, with driver access only to the building to use the restrooms.

## 2. Analysis

### Background

The accessible taxi survey was aimed to assess the need and usage of accessible on-demand or taxi services in Collingwood. The project engaged the community through a public survey and collected data on their awareness, usage, and opinions regarding accessible on-demand transportation options.

The municipality has no obligation to offer accessible taxi services, however the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005) (AODA) does identify the responsibility to consult with the AAC on the need for accessible taxi service within the community and demonstrate a progress towards meeting the identified needs within the Town's accessibility plan. This survey was completed as a means of consulting with both the public and the AAC to establish the need for on-demand accessible taxicab

services as per Section 79(1) of O.Reg 191/11 Integrated Accessibility Standards. The Town stopped the regulation of taxi services in Collingwood in 2023. Following this change in service delivery, the obligation to complete community consultation related to on-demand accessible taxi service was required and provides an open and transparent decision-making process for a community service that is funded by the general tax levy.

The survey was shared through the Collingwood Engage page on September 25, 2024, and closed on October 18, 2024. Paper copies were shared at Town Hall and at the Collingwood Public Library to broaden access of community awareness and ease of survey access.

The survey information was shared at the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) meeting on November 21, 2024 as part of the consultation and input process. Members of the AAC fostered a positive discussion and provided valuable insight on the use and need for an on-demand accessible service. Sharing of the survey outcomes with the AAC is also in line with the AODA requirements.

### **Survey Data Collected**

The following information is being provided in addition to the full responses in Appendix A, to provide Council with a clear understanding of the community engagement, the number of participants who took part in the community survey and to highlight the feedback received;

Key Metrics of the survey, provided through the Engage Collingwood webpage:

- Total Visits: 327
  - Maximum Visitors Per Day: 52
  - **Completed Surveys: 98**
1. Current Status of Participants:
    - a. Resident (year-round): 91
    - b. Other: 7

2. Awareness of Transit Systems:
  - a. CollTrans (Conventional Transit): Yes (89), No (8)
  - b. TransitPLUS (Accessible Transit): Yes (65), No (34)
3. Usage of Transit Services:
  - a. Have used services: Yes (62), No (36)
  - b. Who used the services: Myself (22), Family Member (24), Friend (26),  
Dependent(s) (7)
4. Frequency of Accessible Taxi Usage:
  - a. Daily: 12
  - b. Once a week: 14
  - c. More than once a week: 21
  - d. Once a month: 11
  - e. More than once a month: 5
5. Preferred Transit Service:
  - a. CollTrans: 35
  - b. TransitPLUS: 40
6. Reliance on Accessible Taxi Services:
  - a. Yes: 45
  - b. No: 52
7. Typical Usage Hours:
  - a. 7:00 a.m. - 9:00 p.m.: 26
  - b. 9:00 p.m. - 11:00 p.m.: 16
  - c. 11:00 p.m. - 12:00 a.m.: 8
  - d. 12:00 a.m. - 2:00 a.m.: 8
  - e. Other: 8
8. Reasons for Using Accessible Taxi:
  - a. Employment: 13
  - b. Social (visit friends): 20
  - c. Entertainment (movies, restaurants, bars, etc.): 28
  - d. Other: 44

9. Impact of Ace Cabs Closing:

- a. Considering Collingwood's Accessible Transit: Yes (63), No (30)

10. Support for Tax Increase for Accessible Taxi Services:

- a. Yes: 66
- b. No: 28

11. Preferred End Time for Transit Services:

- a. 10:00 p.m.: 3
- b. 11:00 p.m.: 21
- c. 12:00 a.m.: 37

12. Need for Accessible Taxi Service:

- a. No: 3
- b. Yes, one taxi: 13
- c. Yes, two taxis: 33
- d. Yes, three taxis: 19
- e. Yes, four taxis: 31

13. Impact of Absence of Accessible Taxi Service:

- a. Rating 1 (least impact) to 5 (most impact): 1 (17), 2 (10), 3 (10), 4 (15), 5 (42)

In addition to this collected data, several comments were received as part of the survey feedback. These comments range in "response theme" and have been provided as supplementary information as Appendix B.

### **Data Summary, Interpretation of survey responses**

After completing a detailed review of all the data and comments collected, staff have attempted to summarize this information into key points to guide the recommended next steps. Staff have considered potential action items related to promotion, further investigation and the future use of the survey take-aways as an additional tool to assist in mapping out the desired outcomes for Community Transportation options moving forward.

**1. Increase Awareness and Information:**

- a. **Educational Campaigns:** Launch campaigns to increase awareness about Collingwood's Accessible Transit System (TransitPLUS) and its benefits. This should also include working with Economic Development to increase vendor awareness about the availability and needs for taxi services within our community.
- b. **Community Outreach:** Engage with community centres, senior homes, and disability organizations to distribute information about accessible transit options.

**2. Expand Accessible Services:**

- b. **Extended Service Hours:** Extend the operating hours of accessible taxis beyond 9:00 p.m., with a preference for services until 12:00 a.m. as indicated by the survey responses.

**3. Improve Service Accessibility:**

- a. **Flexible Booking Options:** Implement user-friendly booking systems, including phone, online, and app-based options to cater to different user preferences.
- b. **Real-Time Tracking:** Introduce real-time tracking of accessible taxis to provide users with accurate arrival times and reduce wait times.

**4. Enhance User Experience:**

- a. **Feedback Mechanism:** Establish a robust feedback mechanism to continuously gather user experience and improve service quality.
- b. **Driver Training:** Ensure that drivers are well-trained in assisting passengers with disabilities and providing excellent customer service.

**5. Financial Support and Sustainability:**

- a. **Funding Initiatives:** Explore funding options, including grants and partnerships with local businesses, to support the expansion and sustainability of accessible taxi services.

- b. **Tax Increase:** Consider a modest tax increase, as supported by the majority of survey participants, to fund the necessary improvements in accessible transit services.

**6. Community Engagement and Participation:**

- a. **Regular Surveys:** Conduct regular surveys to monitor community needs and satisfaction with accessible taxi services.
- b. **Public Forums:** Hold public forums and town hall meetings to discuss transit issues and gather community input on proposed changes.

By utilizing these survey outcomes as the focus for future decisions related to accessible on-demand or taxi service, Collingwood can enhance community transit, accessible taxi services/providers and better meet the needs of residents while ensuring a more inclusive and accessible transportation system for all.

**Current State of Accessible Taxis in Collingwood**

The closure of ACE Cabs has heightened the urgency for additional accessible transit options, and the need for on-demand or taxi services within the Town. As of October 1, 2024, ACE Cabs only provides service Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm with 48 hour advance notice. This change in service significantly impacts the riders who were using the subsidized taxi service as an “on-demand” service - calling with no notice and receiving a ride in real time. This change in taxi service has increased the usage of TransitPLUS.

It should be noted that a new taxi service provider has introduced their service in the Collingwood and surrounding area, Wasaga Taxi. This taxi service began operating in July 2024 with two taxis. In October 2024 they increased their fleet by four vehicles, one of which is an accessible taxi. The four taxis are parked in Collingwood and the other two remain in Wasaga Beach area. Their hours of operation are 7am-10pm, 7 days a week.

**Recommended Next Steps**

Focusing on the six categories determined from the survey feedback, Staff recommend the following next steps for Council’s consideration:

1. Increase Awareness and information
  - a. Q2 2025 - Launch a new public communications campaign related to all transit services, highlighting what is offered for accessible transportation needs through the Town's communications team.
  - b. Work with the Town's economic development teams to promote taxi like companies offering service in Collingwood
  - c. Community outreach – Starting February 2025 and August 2025. A relaunch of on-demand service will take place early 2025. A how-to-video will be created to support the usage and instruction of the TransitPLUS system to enhance the understanding of the system. An introduction to the new map and user tools, public engagement and user feedback in person and through social media will support the creation and implementation of a friendly and accessible transportation system.
2. Expand Accessible Services
  - a. Extend operating hours of Colltrans and TransitPLUS from 7am to 9pm to 6am-11pm, seven days a week. This has been proposed through the 2025 budget. This would include the cancellation of the ACE cabs contract with 30 days' notice, and the implementation of three additional operating hours for Colltrans and TransitPLUS to the Town's service contact with Landmark.
3. Improve Service Accessibility
  - a. Users of TransitPLUS utilize the Blaise application that was purchased of the conventional transit on-demand system. Staff and Landmark have worked through many complications and issues with the system. User issues have greatly decreased, and staff have optimized resource utilization effectively through user feedback and questions.
  - b. The Transportation Coordinator has been working closely with the Town's GIS specialist to implement real time tracking of all transit vehicles in a GIS or geographical based visualization with the Blaise application. This feature will greatly improve user experience, as users can now track the



bus they are waiting for. Also, the GIS visualization will be accessible on other geographical based applications such as Google Maps.

4. Enhance User Experience

- a. Staff are working closely with our service provider Landmark, to ensure that driver training and quality control and assurance expectations are met. Landmark has assisted Staff in providing requested information, with further performance measurement metrics to be implemented in 2025. Work on performance management will proceed and continue throughout 2025.

5. Financial Support and sustainability

- a. Staff have included an increase in service hours within the 2025 budget requests (additional 3 hours/day, both conventional and specialized). Staff recommend the termination of the ACE cabs contract as of January 30, 2025, providing the opportunity for expense reallocation.
- b. Staff included a modest increase in the transit fees in 2025. The transit fees have not been raised in the last 5 years, recognizing the reduction of use during COVID and general inflationary increases. With the stabilization of inflation, the desire for increase service, and the expressed understanding that increased service comes with an increase in expenses, the modest fare increase is recommended. The rate for a student pass was reduced by 50% to \$15/month following Staff hearing from student body representatives to encourage ridership within this demographic.

6. Community engagement and participation

- a. Staff will consult and work with the Town's communications team to determine opportunities to increase information on community transportation services, as well as create opportunities for Town staff to receive comments and recommendations.

**Financial Consideration**

Given the time of this report coming forward to Council, and the current timing and status of the 2025 Budget, the following is being provided as an update with respect to the potential financial implications.

Cancellation of ACE Cabs contract would remove annual fees included in 2025 budget, with the allocation for January remaining. Impact is a savings of \$77,000.

2025 Budget impact

(savings to be reallocated to conventional and specialized)                      -\$77,000.00

Extension of hours of service through Landmark for conventional  
(Extended hours commencing Jan 31, 2025)    \$177,856.00

Extension of hours of service through Landmark for specialized                      \$ 51,020.00  
(Extended hours commencing Jan 31, 2025)

**Net Budget impact    \$151,876.00**

Note: there is a potential that a transition period may be required for Landmark to be fully operational with the additional hours, which will be subject to the formal approval by the Town to move forward with this initiative.

Communication outreach would be realized through staff time (Communications team, Community Transportation Coordinator, Public Works Manager, Economic Development Manager)

**Conclusion**

The data indicates a significant need and reliance on accessible taxi services in Collingwood. The community has shown and voiced strong support for extending transit service hours and increasing the number of accessible taxis within the community through the proper processes.

The closure of ACE Cabs has heightened the urgency for additional accessible transit options, and the need for taxi services to operate within the Town.

The majority of participants are willing to support a tax increase to fund these services, highlighting the community’s commitment to accessible transportation.

**3. Input from Other Sources**

Reviewed by Department Heads on December 10, 2024

The survey and where to complete it were shared with the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) on October 17, 2024. The survey results were reviewed with the committee on November 21, 2024.

## 4. Applicable Policy or Legislation

Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (2005)

AODA Compliance

## 5. Considerations

2024-2028 Community Based Strategic Plan: Advances pillar(s) below:

Sustainable  Connected  Vibrant  Responsible

- Services adjusted if any: Transit
- Climate Change / Sustainability: Positive impact on climate change/sustainability (decreases GHG emissions)
- Communication / Engagement: Public Engagement has occurred
- Accessibility / Equity, Diversity, Inclusion: Vetted with Input from Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Registered Lobbyist(s) relating to content:

Next steps and future action required following endorsement:

Pending Council's approval of staff's recommended actions, Staff will provide notice to ACE Cabs of the desire for contract termination, providing notice to Landmark of the desired increase in operating hours, and commence work on the next steps items with supporting divisions.

## 6. Appendices and Other Resources

**Appendix A:** Engage Page, Data Report

**Appendix B:** Community Survey comments received

## 7. Approval

**Prepared By:**

Sandy Falcon, Community Transportation Coordinator

**Reviewed By:**

Daniel Cole, Manager, Public Works

Peggy Slama, Director, Public Works, Engineering and Environmental Services

**CAO Comments:**

Endorsed by CAO Skinner on December 10, 2024 to proceed to COW.